

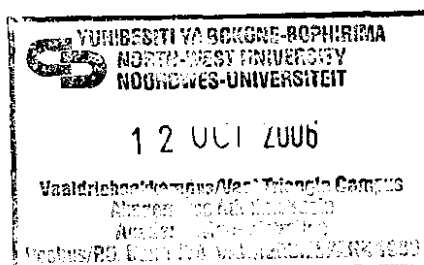
# **MANAGING SCHOOL SAFETY IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL**

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Dissertation submitted for the Master of Education in the School of  
Educational Sciences in Educational Management at the Vaal  
Triangle Campus of the North West University

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**Vanderbijlpark**  
**2006**



## DEDICATION

*In memory of my wives, Nomvula and Mapule...*

*Your spirits urged me on.*

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I thank God for His protection and for affording me a chance to complete this study.

My sincerest gratitude and appreciation is directed to the following individuals for their contribution and support in the completion of this study:

Dr. M.I. Xaba, my esteemed supervisor, for his patience and expert guidance and motivation.

Mr. L.T. Morajane, my mentor, for his unwavering support through thick and thin.

Ms. Aldine Oosthuizen for the excellent statistical consultation service rendered.

All principals and educators who participated in this study by completing the questionnaires.

Above all, my parents, Martin and Maria Nhlapo, for being super parents. Ngiyabonga Zigenge zakwaMathole ezadla umkadadewabo Zathi kananyongo, kanamhlelo, umhlelo nguBhabhakazi...

My family and friends for their encouragement and unconditional love.

## SUMMARY

This study intended to explore the phenomenon of managing school safety in the primary school. The aim was first achieved by exploring the essence of school safety through a literature review. Secondly, an empirical study was conducted to investigate the status of safety in the primary schools. Finally, recommendation on how safety can be managed in primary schools are made.

The literature review exposed a theoretical perspective of school safety based on the socio-ecological perspective of the school, which approaches the school safety as a function of people's interaction with their environment. In this regard, the school environment was revealed as comprising the physical and psychosocial environment. School safety was thus found to be related to school stakeholders' interaction with their physical and psychosocial environments. In this regard, the safety of the physical environment was found to be a function of all actions aimed at the maintenance, surveillance and safety systems and procedures. The safety of the psychosocial environment was found to be a function of actions aimed at creating safe social and psychological climates.

The empirical research found that there were perceptions of safety in primary schools. However, it was clear that there was poor or no coordination of programmes aimed at school safety. For instance, it could be deduced that school safety was seen as an *ad hoc* function, which was addressed as the need arose. There were no perceptions of the existence of well coordinated and purposeful safety planning, implementation and monitoring processes.

Recommendations focus mainly on ensuring that schools address school safety in a coordinated and well-planned manner. This includes school safety planning and advocacy to bring school safety on the nation's agenda. This way stakeholder involvement and in essence, state involvement is advocated so as ultimately to have a centralised school safety coordinating agency, which would

be instrumental in providing resources and advocating resource sharing among schools.

## OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om die bestuur van skoolveiligheid in die laer skool te ondersoek. Die doel was ten eerste bereik deur om die essensie van skoolveiligheid te ondersoek in 'n literatuurstudie. Tweedens, 'n empiriese studie is gedoen om die status van veiligheid in primêre skole te ondersoek. Laastens, aanbevelings oor die bestuur van skoolveiligheid word aan die hand gedoen.

Die literatuurstudie het 'n teoretiese perspektief aan die dag gelê, gegrond op 'n sosio-ekologiese perspektief van die skool, waar skoolveiligheid genader word as 'n funksie van die interaksie van mense met hulle omgewing. In terme van hierdie benadering, word die skoolomgewing beskou as beide die fisiese- asook die psigososiale omgewing. Dus word skoolveiligheid gesien as verwant aan die deelhebbers se interaksie met hulle fisiese- en psigososiale omgewing. In hierdie opsig, word die veiligheid van die fisiese omgewing gesien in die lig van alle aksies gemik op instandhouding, toesighouding and veiligheids-stelsels en prosedures. Die veiligheid van die psigososiale omgewing word gesien as 'n funksie van alle aksies gemik op die skepping van 'n veilige sosiale- en psigologiese-klimaat.

Die empiriese studie het ontdek dat daar wel persepsies van veiligheid in primêre skole ontstaan. Maar dit was ook duidelik dat daar swak, of selfs geen koördinasie van programme gemik op skoolveiligheid, is nie. Byvoorbeeld, die afleiding wat kon gemaak word was dat skoolveiligheid as 'n *ad hoc*-funksie beskou word, wat slegs aangespreek is wanneer die behoefte ontstaan het. Daar was geen persepsies van die bestaan van 'n goed-gekoördineerde en doelgerigte veiligheidsplan, en sy implementering- en monitoringsprosesse.

Die aanbevelings is hoofsaaklik gefokus op die versekering dat skole skoolveiligheid sal aanspreek op 'n gekoördineerde en goedbeplande basis. Dit sluit in skoolveiligheidsbeplanning asook die bepleiting dat skoolveiligheid op die

nasionale agenda gebring moet word. Op hierdie wyse word deelhebber-betrokkenheid, asook, in essensie, staatsbetrokkenheid bepleit, sodat eventueel 'n gesentraliseerde, gekoördineerde skoolveiligheidsliggaam tot stand kan gebring word, wat instrumenteel kan wees in die verskaffing van hulpbronne en die bevordering van die mededeling van hulpbronne onder skole.

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

COVER PAGE	i
DEDICATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
SUMMARY	iv
OPSOMMING	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	xiv
LIST OF ANNEXURES	xvi
<b>CHAPTER 1 ORIENTATION</b>	
1.1 Introduction and statement of the problem	1
1.2 Aims of research	3
1.3 Research methodology	4
1.3.1 Literature study	4
1.3.2 Empirical research	5
1.3.2.1 Aim	5
1.3.2.2 Instrument	5
1.3.2.3 Population	6



1.3.2.4	Sampling	6
1.3.2.5	Pilot survey	6
1.3.2.6	Ethical aspects	7
1.3.2.7	Statistical techniques	7
1.4	Tentative division of chapters	7
1.5	Chapter summary	8
<b>CHAPTER 2 THE ESSENCE OF SCHOOL SAFETY</b>		
2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Rationale for an investigation of school safety at primary Schools	9
2.3	The essence of school safety	12
2.3.1	The school environment	12
2.3.1.1	The school's physical environment	13
2.3.1.2	The school's psychosocial environment	32
2.4	Managing school safety	41
2.4.1	Orientation	41
2.4.2	Safe school planning	42
2.4.3	Implications for managing learner safety	50

2.5	Chapter summary	53
<b>CHAPTER 3 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN</b>		
3.1	Introduction	55
3.2	The research instrument	55
3.2.1	The questionnaire as a research tool	55
3.2.2	The construction of the questionnaire	56
3.2.3	Structure of the questionnaire	56
3.2.4	Administering the questionnaire	59
3.2.4.1	Reliability and validity	59
3.2.4.2	Final questionnaire	61
3.2.4.3	Questionnaire distribution	61
3.3	Population and sampling	62
3.4	Response rate	62
3.5	Administrative procedures	63
3.5.1	Approval from the Department of Education	63
3.5.2	Follow up on questionnaire	63
3.6	Data analysis	63
3.7	Summary	63

## **CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

4.1	Introduction	64
4.2	General information	64
4.2.1	Review of respondents	64
4.2.2	Biographical information	65
4.2.2.1	Gender of the respondents	66
4.2.2.2	Age of the respondents	66
4.2.2.3	Number of years' teaching experience	67
4.2.2.4	Position held	67
4.2.2.5	Post level	67
4.2.2.6	Number of learners in school	68
4.2.2.7	Number of staff members	68
4.2.2.8	The location of the school	68
4.3	The status of physical and psychosocial environments in the primary schools	69
4.3.1	Data on management aspects of school safety	69
4.3.2	Schools' physical environment aspects	77
4.3.2.1	Maintenance	77

4.3.2.2	Surveillance	80
4.3.2.3	Systems and procedures	84
4.3.3	Data on psychosocial environment	90
4.3.4	Data on the differences between independent and dependent variables	94
4.4	Chapter summary	105
<b>CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>		
5.1	Introduction	107
5.2	Summary	107
5.3	Research findings	108
5.3.1	Finding with regard to research aim 1: The essence of school safety	108
5.3.2	Findings with research aim 2 (Empirical research): The status of safety in the primary schools	112
5.3.2.1	Management aspects of school safety	112
5.3.2.2	Maintenance aspects of school safety	113
5.3.2.3	Surveillance aspects of school safety	113
5.3.2.4	Systems and procedures	114

5.3.2.5	The psychosocial aspects of school safety	114
5.4	Recommendations	114
5.5	Recommendations for further research	117
5.6	Limitations of the study	117
5.7	Chapter summary	118
	<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	119

## **LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES**

Figure 2.1	The school environment	12
Figure 2.2	The school's physical environment	13
Figure 2.3	The safe school planning process	43
Figure 2.4	Safe school environment	51
Table 3.1	Crobach Alpha values for categories of school safety	60
Table 3.2	The return rate of questionnaires	62
Table 4.1	General information	65
Table 4.2	Data on management aspects of school safety	70
Table 4.3	Data on maintenance	77
Table 4.4	Data on surveillance of the school environment	81
Table 4.5	Data on systems and procedures	85
Table 4.6	Data on the psychosocial environment of schools	90
Table 4.7	The MANOVA test of significance	95
Table 4.8	The univariate values for each dependent variable in relation to the school enrolment	96
Table 4.9	Tukey HSD test on variable- surveillance	97
Table 4.10	Tukey HSD test on variable- systems and procedures	98

Table 4.11	Tukey HSD test on variable- psychosocial environments	98
Table 4.12	The univariate values for each dependent variable in relation to independent variables- number of staff members	98
Table 4.13	Tukey HSD test on variable- management	99
Table 4.14	Tukey HSD test on variable- maintenance	100
Table 4.15	Tukey HSD test on variable- surveillance	100
Table 4.16	Tukey HSD test on variable- systems and procedures	101
Table 4.17	Tukey HSD test on variable- psychosocial environments	101
Table 4.18	Univariate values for each dependent variable in relation to independent variable- location of schools	102
Table 4.19	Tukey HSD test on variable- maintenance	103
Table 4.20	Tukey HSD test on variable- surveillance	105
Table 2.21	Tukey HSD test on variable- systems and procedures	106
Table 4.22	Tukey HSD test on variable- psychosocial environments	106

## **ANNEXURES**

Annexure A	Questionnaire
Annexure B	Accompanying letter
Annexure C	Letter to the Senior District Manager



# **CHAPTER 1**

## **ORIENTATION**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Learners learn best and achieve their full potential in safe and orderly classrooms. This positive academic environment begins with safe families and safe communities (Anon, 2002:1). Teaching and learning cannot take place in an unsafe environment. The art of creating a peaceful school environment poses great challenges to school management (Netshitahame & Vollenhoven, 2002). It is stipulated in section 24 of the Bill of Rights (Republic of South Africa, 1996) that every person has a right to an environment that is not detrimental to his health or well-being. This right also applies to learners, and in principle protects them from being exposed to harmful environments, including the school (Oosthuizen, Botha, Bray, Maritz, Van der Westhuizen & Van Schalkwyk, 1994: 26).

Children are the most precious resource as they hold in their hands the future of the state and nation, and that is why safe schools should be everyone's concern and everyone's responsibility. During the apartheid era, township schools were sites of violent political struggle (Simpson, 2001:1). Today, they are too often at the mercy of criminal activity. The answers to this lies with society as a whole and not just the school. Newspapers frequently report that learners at schools have been victims of violent crimes like rape, corporal punishment, and abductions by an estranged father or mother. School safety becomes thus a quintessential necessity (Simpson, 2001:10).

Squelch (2001:138) defines a safe school as one that is free from danger and possible harm, where non-educators, educators and learners can work, teach and learn without fear or ridicule, intimidation, harassment, humiliation and violence. A safe school is thus a healthy school in that it is physically and psychologically safe (Xaba, 2005:1). A safe school is one that is also free from

violence and crime, free from hazards or danger within the school, e.g. secure perimeter fencing, safety policies and their enforcement.

Some people, in ensuring school safety argue for 'hard' responses such as metal detectors, added security personnel and zero-tolerance for possession of weapons, while others favour 'soft' solutions that include more counselling, conflict-resolution programmes, and better communication between school and home (Anon 2002 :1).

Principals as managers of schools contribute to a large extent to the safety solutions that prevail in schools. However, school safety is everyone's business. The best safety effort will involve all aspects of a school, including classroom situations, school services and the school climate. Many parents feel that the very idea of "school safety" is overwhelming and frightening in terms of whether learners feel safe at school and what the school is doing to keep its learners safe (Anon, 2002:1).

The researcher witnessed an event at a school where a grandparent of one learner came to school brandishing a gun. He wanted to shoot the learner in full view of other learners and the educator. The question is: How did this man get access to the school with a gun? Is a school not supposed to be a gun-free zone? Learners as well as the educator were traumatized. Subsequent to that, at the same school, in the same week, a parent went straight to her child's class to fight the educator for not responding appropriately to her demands.

Also, if print media and television reports are anything to go by, schools are the most unsafe places in South Africa. Most crimes, hostage dramas, shootings in the school premises and so forth, happen mostly at primary schools. The following headlines attest to this:

"School head gunned down" (*Sunday World*, 13 March, 2005);

"Thugs target high school" (*Daily Sun*, 11 March, 2005);

"Violence at schools the order of the day" (*Cape Argus*, 19 January, 2005);

“Hostage-taker shot dead at school was ‘suspect on run” (*The Star*, 11 February, 2005);

“Gosiame died from blow to the skull” (*City Press*, 06 February, 2005); and

“Our schools need a big boost” (*City Press*, 06 February, 2005).

It is against this background that this research focuses on managing school safety in the primary school.

Learners at primary schools are vulnerable and prone to all sorts of crimes because of their ages and are possible easy targets for criminal activities. These learners cannot protect themselves and they are helpless against unsafe, criminal and violent occurrences.

Against the foregoing background of the problem the following questions arise:

- What is the essence of school safety?
- What is the safety status of primary school environments?
- How can safety be managed in the primary schools?

This research thus investigates the essence of managing learner safety at primary schools by investigating the status of safety at primary schools. This translates into research aims as concretised in the following section.

## **1.2 Aims of research**

The aims of this research can thus be stated as follows:

- to determine the essence of school safety;
- to investigate the safety status of primary school environments; and
- to discover ways of managing safety in the primary schools.

To achieve these aims, this research engaged a quantitative approach. Quantitative research is defined as a formal, objective and systematic process where data is used to obtain information about study phenomena (Stubbs, 2005). According to Vockel and Asher (1995:192), quantitative research involves description and data collection processes, research designs and statistical procedures and includes among others, questionnaires. To this end, this study makes use of a questionnaire as quantitative research instrument.

### **1.3 Research methodology**

#### **1.3.1 Literature study**

A literature review is undertaken to get a clearer understanding of the nature of the problem that has been identified, helps to focus and shape the research question and shows a path of prior research and how the current research is linked to previous research (Fouche & Delport, 2002:127). This study is based on a literature review which includes primary and secondary sources to expose accumulated knowledge in the stated field of interest (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1999:67).

A literature review of the essence of school safety was conducted so as to establish whether primary schools are safe and to discover ways of managing safety in the primary school. The following key words were used to conduct the electronic search for relevant literature data:

Safe schools; safety policies; school safety committees; crime and violence prevention in schools; school health; health promotion in schools; school safety and security, psychosocial environment, social ecology, school physical environment.

### 1.3.2 ***Empirical research***

#### 1.3.2.1 *Aim*

An empirical investigation was conducted to determine the safety status of primary schools. The investigation also determined the manner in which school safety in primary schools is managed. The study employed a quantitative approach using a structured questionnaire.

A quantitative research approach uses descriptive statistics as a method of organising data, facilitating the organisation and interpretation of numbers obtained from measuring a characteristic or variable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:30; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:191). Leedy and Ormrod (2001:180) contend that the focus in quantitative research is typically on one aspect of behaviour which is quantified in some way to determine its frequency.

In this research, responses to questions contained in the questionnaires were quantified and presented in tabular form.

#### 1.3.2.2 *Instrument*

Data for this study were gathered with the use of the questionnaire survey technique which was developed in the light of the literature study. A structured questionnaire was designed and administered to a sample of primary schools educators. Educators were purposely targeted so as to gather as much information-rich data as possible. The researcher noted the disadvantages of administering a questionnaire to primary school learners and thus decided on educators as the most appropriate population for gathering data on the status of safety at schools.

The questionnaires were personally delivered to schools and contact persons at schools were requested to administer and collect them.

#### 1.3.2.3 *Population*

The population comprised all primary school educators in the Gauteng Province. However, as the Gauteng Province consists of a large number of public schools and it would be time consuming and not be financially feasible to cover the entire province, it was decided to limit the target population to public schools in the Sedibeng Municipalities, consisting of Districts 7 and 8 of the Gauteng Department of Education. Enquiries about the target population indicated that there were on average about 20 educators per primary school. There are 154 primary school in both districts, which yielded an approximated 3 080 educators.

#### 1.3.2.4 *Sampling*

A simple random sample of educators (n=400) was drawn from the population. Random sampling sought to ensure that schools, and thus educators in both Districts were represented.

Various authors on sampling in research advocate different sample sizes for populations in quantitative research. Among others, sample sizes of between 10% and 20% are propounded as representative of population sizes larger than 1000 (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001; Strydom & Venter, 2002; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). In this research, it was decided to sample 400 in line with Leedy and Ormrod's directives (2001).

#### 1.3.2.5 *Pilot survey*

The questionnaire was pre-tested by a selected number of respondents from the target population regarding its qualities of measurement and appropriateness and to review it for clarity to determine such aspects as the duration it would take to complete and the clarity of instructions and items, and to detect any ambiguities in the questionnaire items (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001:267).

The pre-test also served the purpose of ensuring that the questionnaire was valid and reliable. In this regard, the questionnaire had to measure what was intended and could be used elsewhere and still measure what was intended, given the same circumstances for which it was developed (Delport, 2002:166; Welman & Kruger, 2001:97).

#### 1.3.2.6 *Ethical aspects*

The research permission protocol of the Gauteng Department of Education was followed and the request for permission to administer the research questionnaire to the target population was submitted to the senior managers of the Districts 7 & 8 together with the prescribed form obtainable from the Department's website (<http://www.education.gpg.gov.za>).

The questionnaire was accompanied by a covering letter requesting respondents to complete it and assuring them of the confidentiality with which their responses would be handled. The letter of approval was also attached to the questionnaire.

#### 1.3.2.7 *Statistical techniques*

The statistical consultancy services of the North-West University: Vaal Triangle Campus was approached for assistance in the analysis and interpretation of data collected from questionnaires. Descriptive data were used to interpret the data collected. Frequency counts and tests for statistical differences in data analysis techniques were used from data presented in tabularised form.

### 1.4 **TENTATIVE DIVISION OF CHAPTERS.**

1. Orientation
2. The essence of school safety
3. Empirical research design
4. Data analysis and interpretation

## 5. Summary, findings, conclusions and recommendations

### 1.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the general orientation to the study. The problem statement, research questions, aims and the research method were outlined.

The next chapter examines the essence of school safety and implications for managing learner safety at school.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE ESSENCE OF SCHOOL SAFETY**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

The safety of learners and staff at schools is of paramount importance for effective teaching and learning. It is therefore imperative to scrutinise the essence of school safety so as to ensure that safety is managed effectively and that the school becomes a safe haven for both educators and learners.

This chapter explores school safety by looking at its meaning and how it can be managed. The rationale for an investigation on school safety at primary schools presents this study's theoretical orientation to the concept of school safety and the management thereof.

#### **2.2 RATIONALE FOR AN INVESTIGATION OF SCHOOL SAFETY AT PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, safety-threatening situations are becoming a regular occurrence in South African schools. Among others, injuries, crime, violence, burglaries and damage to school property are beginning to be reported in both the print and electronic media. This is a serious issue of concern, since no effective teaching and learning can take place under unsafe school conditions (Netshitahame & Vollenhoven, 2002:313).

Primary schools are most likely to be vulnerable to safety threats. This is because the majority of learners at primary schools are at an age where they are, firstly, vulnerable, that is, physically weak, dependent and cannot run away easily and fast enough from dangerous situations; secondly, physical injuries are worse for young children as they are still growing and developing; thirdly, emotional hurts do more damage to them since their emotions flare up intensely and are less grounded; and they are reckless due to their immaturity (Salazar-Volkman, 2004).

It seems as if safety at schools is generally not what it should be. Apart from incidents of crime and violence as reported in the media, injuries at school premises seem to be occurring at a noticeable rate. Donson and Wyngaard (2003) reported 493 injuries at primary schools in Atlantis, Bishop Lavis, Khayelitsha and Strand Clusters only at beginning of February 2002. This is a very serious situation since, of these injuries, 50.8% were intentional, with the highest number of injured learners (35.6%) being between 11 and 13 years and most injuries occurring at playgrounds during break time. It is even worrying that the highest number of injuries occurred to the head and upper body extremities and required treatment.

Swart and Stevens (2002:5) found from a survey of 240 responses, 144 (67.8%) incidents of injuries most of which were associated with physical fighting or assault with 19% involving the use of an instrument or weapon. From the injuries reported, most were head, face and ears/eyes/nose injuries. These reports and many others (Zulu, Urbani & Van der Merwe, 2004; Netshitahame & Vollenhoven, 2002; De Wet, 2003, show clearly that there is a need to focus on school safety at schools, particularly primary schools.

Safe school environments are required by law (Xaba, 2005: 3). Sections 24(1) and 28(1) of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996) provide that "everyone has a right to an environment that is not harmful to their health and well-being" and every child has the right to be protected from maltreatment, neglect, abuse or degradation. The Gauteng Schools Act (Gauteng Department of Education, 1997) stipulates that all learners or educators shall be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence at schools and centres of learning.

Calabrese (2000:1) emphasises the fact that a safe school is the desire of the school community as parents want their children to be safe; educators want to teach without fear of reprisal; administrators want to concentrate on creating and maintaining an achievement-focused environment; and learners want a supportive and stimulating environment. A safe school fulfils these desires

through a collaborative process that includes members of the school community in ensuring safety of the school environment.

This process can essentially be seen as the school community's need for a school environment that provides for their educational needs in a safe and secure environment, and includes their interaction with that environment. This view is premised on the socio-ecological perspective of the school.

The ecological perspective focuses on understanding people in the context of their social environment (Monroe, 2004:145). In this regard, Monroe (2004:145) posits that the ecological perspective focuses on how people interact with one another and their environment. To this end, Hanson, Vardon and Lloyd (undated:18) argue that safety is a psychological, environmental and sociological phenomenon and that safety is an ecological concept determined by the relationship between individuals and their physical and social environment.

Thus, the social environment involves all conditions, experiences and human interactions that encompass people and includes people's dwellings, educational provisions, occupations, access to material goods and wealth and laws and social rules (Monroe, 2004:145). More precise, Hanson, Vardon and Lloyd (undated:25) express the view that "to reach a complete physical, mental and social well-being, an individual or group must be able to realise (their) aspirations, to satisfy needs and to change or cope with the environment". This can be construed to imply that the school's ecological perspective presents the school as comprising both the physical and psychosocial environments.

This research takes the view of the school's social context as the point of departure for an understanding of the essence of school safety. In line with the foregoing social-ecological perspective, school safety is viewed as a responsibility of the school community and its interaction with the school environment, which comprises both the physical and psychosocial environment. Therefore the essence of school safety is seen from a perspective of elements of the school's physical and psychosocial environment. Put differently, school

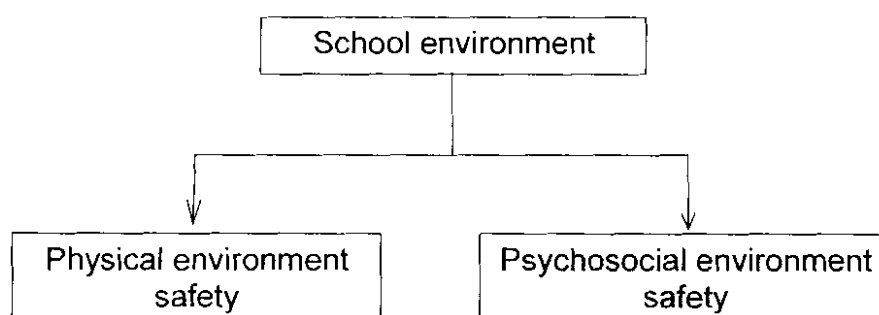
safety in this study, is premised on the school's socio-ecological context, which is a manifestation of the physical and psychosocial environments and the school community's interaction with these environments in providing safe and secure teaching and learning conditions. This then, foregrounds an explication of the essence of school safety.

## **2.3 THE ESSENCE OF SCHOOL SAFETY**

The nature of school safety requires an understanding of what a safe school is. As alluded to in the foregoing section, a safe school is seen from a perspective of elements of the school's environment, which is a manifestation of the school's physical and psychosocial environments. The school environment thus presents a holistic picture of school safety elements.

### **2.3.1 The school environment**

As alluded to earlier in this text, the school environment comprises both the physical and psychosocial environments. It is in this context that the overall school safety within the socio-ecological persuasion is viewed. Figure 2.1 illustrates the school environment in this context.



**Figure 2.1 The school's environment**

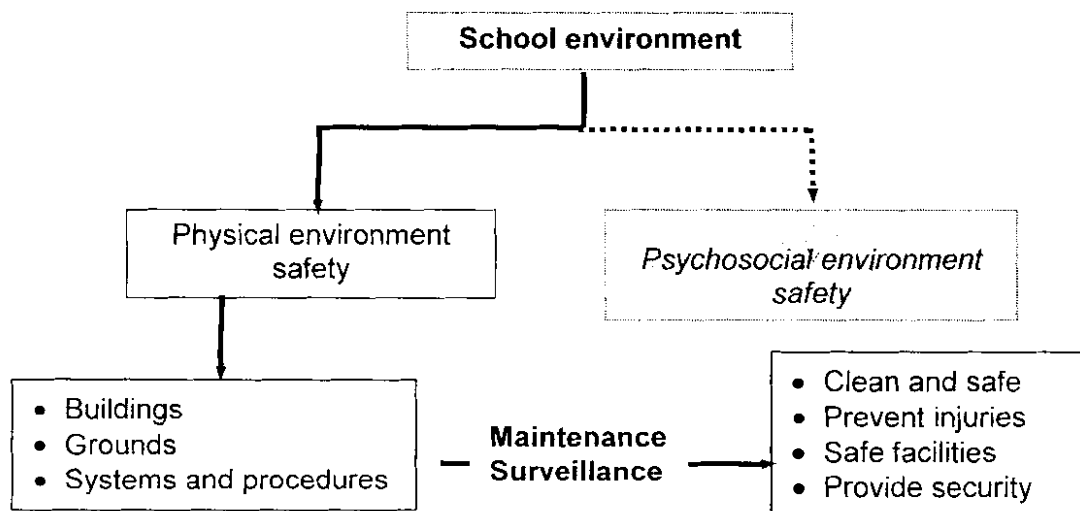
The physical environment as one aspect of the school environment presents most of a safe school's tangible aspects.

### 2.3.2.1 *The school's physical environment*

The physical environment entails those aspects of the school that are concrete, observable and visible and present interactive opportunities for school stakeholders to create a safe physical environment. The school's physical environment includes the school buildings and the surrounding grounds and includes physical conditions such as noise, temperature and lighting as well as the physical, biological or chemical agents (Henderson & Rowe, 1998:97). Wargo (2004:1) surmises the school's physical environment as encompassing the school building and all its contents including the physical structures and infrastructure, the site on which the school is located and the surrounding environment.

The physical environment comprises *school buildings, school grounds* as well as *systems and procedures* aimed at enhancing safety and security (Henderson & Rowe, 1998:98; Wargo, 2004:2). The safety of the school's physical environment entails ensuring that buildings, grounds and systems and procedures are clean and safe, prevent injuries, provide safe facilities and provide security. Figure 2.2 illustrates the elements of the school's physical environment. The key to creating and ensuring the safety of buildings entails two critical aspects, namely, *maintenance* and *surveillance*.

**Figure 2.2 The school's physical environment**



As illustrated in figure 2.2, the elements of the school's physical environment are:

i) **School buildings**

School buildings include classrooms, stairwells and passages, offices, libraries, laboratories, tuckshops, toilets/closets, gymnasias and locker rooms, cafeterias and storerooms (Henderson & Rowe, 1998; Wargo, 2004; Garret, 2005). Other aspects of the physical environment as listed by Henderson and Rowe (1998:98) include materials used in floors, walls and ceilings, signage, safety provisions and access for disabled persons.

The safety of school buildings relates to their condition as well as the manner in which they are used. In this regard, Reid (2000) advocates the general appearance of buildings as an indicator of the school's tolerance for misbehaviour, and by implication, safety-threatening situations. Reid (*ibid*) argues that school buildings must be clean, comfortable and devoid of signs of vandalism, damage and graffiti. This implies that school buildings need to be in a clean condition and that damage and graffiti need to be repaired as soon as possible so as to prevent further damage through appearances portraying a non-caring attitude.

In this regard, the "broken-window" theory attains relevance. Schnepf (2003) describes the "broken-window" theory as positing that a broken window left unrepaired sends a signal that there is lack of concern about the building and indicates that the rest of the windows are free to break because when left untended, this leads to more broken windows. To this end, this implies that whatever is damaged and needs to be fixed, has to be fixed timeously so as to avoid further damage.

The use of buildings mainly involves ensuring that building facilities are used for the purpose for which they are meant and should be used correctly and safely. This means, *inter alia*, restricting access to buildings during teaching hours, reducing congestion in classrooms and passages or stoeps and establishing

safe-movement routes to among others, classrooms, tuckshops, offices and toilets and limiting the number of learners at particular sites at various times (cf. Mackin, 1997; Reid, 2000; Kromkowski, 2003).

The use of buildings also relates to the safe use of chemicals in laboratories and those used for cleaning purposes, as well as the use of such buildings as storerooms and toilets. The safety of use of these facilities and equipment entails scrupulous supervision.

It is clear that creating and ensuring school building safety revolves around the physical maintenance of buildings, that is, the repair, replacement and general upkeep of buildings and allows for the continued use of a space for its intended purpose and serves as an additional manifestation of ownership and caring (Carter & Carter, 2001).

Carter and Carter (2001) add a dimension that creates fear and apprehension in the school buildings, namely, isolation, dim or dark areas, deserted or seldom used buildings, unsecured exit or entrances and areas hidden from view. In this regard, the solution lies in good lighting and eliminating or securing unused buildings, securing entrances and exits.

Safe and secure buildings are but one side of the school physical environment. Safe and secure buildings complement and are complemented by safe and secure school grounds.

## ii) ***Grounds***

School grounds entail shrubs, trees and grass, drainage, sidewalks, fencing and gates, and access to the school for transportation and emergency procedures (Henderson & Rowe, 1998:98). In essence, school grounds present the manifestation of safety of the whole school campus. Safety in this sense implies that the schools ground's must be free of any threats to safety, both to property and people in the school.

The point of departure in securing the school grounds is to make the campus welcoming, which implies a healthy and friendly school climate that makes everybody feel safe and part of the school (*Curriculum Review*, 1999). This entails ensuring campus cleanliness and establishing a regular maintenance system, including removal of such eyesores such as graffiti, repairing broken facilities like broken doors and windows (Mackin, 1997).

The school campus can be categorised into the following sectors:

- *The surroundings*

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990: 295) advise that the school surroundings must be properly maintained and physically attractive. Reid (2000) sees school surroundings as denoting the school community's tolerance for untoward conditions and behaviour. This is aptly expressed in the general appearance of the school. Accordingly, there should be systems put in place to ensure that school surroundings are kept clean.

The school campus must thus be welcoming, both in terms of the general appearance and the kinds of relationships displayed (*Curriculum Review*, 1999). To this end, UNESCO (2004:1) advocates surroundings that are comfortable, that are conducive to learning, healthy interaction and play and that reduce harassment and anti-social behaviour.

Among others things, there must always be vigilance against any conditions that might be hazardous to the safety of the learners. For instance, the school should be clean and free of graffiti, thus when vandalism occurs it must be fixed or covered within 24 hours and students must also be encouraged to help keep the school surroundings clean and free of graffiti and litter (Office of the Attorney General of Washington, undated: 3).



- *The perimeter fencing and gates*

Boundaries may be perceived as a critical factor in making schools safer places. San Diego County Office of Education (2003) asserts that fencing needs to provide security for learners and staff and is a great way to create territoriality. However, certain fences and blank walls may attract graffiti. Consequently, graffiti must be removed as soon as possible. Wrought-iron fencing is also reported as a solution that might work for a school campus. This type of fencing does not provide a surface for graffiti and does not require much maintenance.

A secure perimeter fence holds many safety and security benefits. Among other benefits, secure fencing eliminates trespassing. In this regard, San Diego County Office of Education (2003) suggests a few ideas to deter trespassing and these are:

- making sure that entrances and exits are securely locked;
- installing motion sensor lights;
- letting the campus be used for community services after school hours;
- encouraging the use of school grounds for weekend events and lastly,
- having law enforcement visit the school campus during off-peak periods.

Securing the perimeter fencing and gates can also be enhanced by installing high fencing and gates, having heavily-padlocked gates and where possible, establishing a regular patrol system of the whole school perimeter to detect potential damages and fixing whatever damages might have occurred.

- *Walkways*

According to FDoE (Florida Department of Education, 1993:4) walkways should be designed to accommodate occupant loads. The main walkway may need to be wider for overall safety and security and may mean that the learners should be taught to walk on the left hand side of the walkway every time to eliminate or avoid stampede. It can be asserted that orderly use of walkways is critical especially for learners in the primary school. This is because these are learners who are easily excitable and are likely to stampede as they rush to any place of interest, including their urge for competition, for instance, to outrun others. In this case, supervision and adherence to rules are of utmost importance (Brunner & Lewis, 2005:24; MMWR, 2001:24).

Making walkways safe for learners includes providing adequate lighting and providing facilities for learners with disabilities (MMWR, 2001:22).

- *The playgrounds*

Playgrounds are the most critical areas for learner safety. This is where learners play or engage in activities on their own and in their own ways. It is thus important that playgrounds be safe at all times.

Vehicular access to these areas should be restricted or eliminated, and playgrounds should be planned with separate areas of activity to keep vehicles out of sports and play areas and restrict entry to other unauthorized areas with *inter alia*, retaining walls, landscaping and steep slopes or usage of the common and practical method of achieving separation with chain-link fencing (California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office: undated).

According to Wargo (2004) playgrounds should be fenced off from the main school building so that the school building areas are off-limits during all non-school hours. He furthermore insists that consideration should also be given

to eliminating “learner hangout” areas. These areas are often cluttered with litter, are subject to wear and provide opportunities for graffiti application and harbour smoking, drinking and drug abuse and can provide a setting for conflicts or assaults.

It is also important to ensure that playground equipment is in good working order, durable and should be located to afford good visual surveillance by school staff, neighbours and police patrols (California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office, undated; MMWR, 2001:24).

- *Vehicular routes and parking areas*

It may be suggested that with regard to vehicular routes and parking areas, the first thing to be done is to separate pedestrians and vehicles. Parking areas should be visible for supervision purposes and not be convenient for racing. These parking areas should be small to reduce vandalism. California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office (undated) adds that gates and removable bollards can be used to restrict unwanted traffic from walkways and driveways and location of parking areas should allow for easy and direct visual observation.

Vehicular and pedestrian routes should be established and be clearly marked. These should also indicate the direction of flow of vehicles. For instance, there should be areas for deliveries, pick-up and drop-off points for learners and routes for entrances and exits.

- *The school's landscaping*

In this study landscaping refers to, as many authors define it, horticultural design of the school campus. This implies how the vegetation should be arranged to ensure the safety of learners and educators. Wargo (2004) points out that trees should be kept at least 10 feet from buildings to prevent window and roof access and should be trimmed to permit cross-campus

visibility and be steady enough to withstand being climbed 8 to 9 feet above ground.

According to Wargo (2004) shrub planting for landscaping purposes should be done in large masses because groupings are, as he argues, less attractive to abuse than single shrubs. He further advises that shrubs with tough and flexible stems and limbs are best. Lastly, he says that shrubs should attain mature heights of no more than 0.600 to 1.200 meters.

Paving is also one aspect that can be looked at. Paving and good ground cover should be used for the entire school yard and prickly plantings can be placed next to walks and buildings to channel pedestrian traffic. (California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office, undated).

- *Signage*

Signage refers to the display of various signs that aim to guide and welcome visitors and all other stakeholders into the school. FDoE (1993: 6) highlights the importance of signage and how this may be displayed within the school campus. Amongst others, they say that it is important that signs not provide places for persons to hide behind. Signs need to be well lit in front with care taken to eliminate unnecessary side shadows.

Furthermore, the FDoE (1993:4) adds that the ground behind the sign can be bermed up to prevent people from standing behind it. The alternative, they say, is to raise the sign high enough off the ground that a person's feet would be visible if they were hiding behind it. Therefore signs may be instrumental in cutting down on lost and wandering visitors and they should have large lettering, bold graphic, simple directions and be well lit as well.

- *Exterior lighting*

The California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office (undated) advised that break-resistant lenses should be used for exterior lighting purposes. All wall-mounted or free-standing lights should be placed at a minimum of 3.6 to 4m from the ground. The light standards should be constructed of galvanized steel or concrete. Dresser (undated) reiterates the importance of exterior lighting by advocating that the decision to use lights or some other security measure to protect buildings, driveways, walkways and parking areas is one that each school will need to discuss. Alternatives include using an intrusion-activation system that turns on lights; having law enforcement officers occupy the school at night to do their reports; or maintaining a school security police force that actively patrols the area.

California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office suggested that if lighting is used, it should be directed at the facility if the building is to be patrolled from the exterior, or directed to illuminate the grounds around the facility if the building is to be patrolled from within. Potential points of access into the building, such as the main entrance, side entrances and delivery entrances should have increased levels of illumination. There should be automatic controls for light features. Subsequently, lights should reduce shadow areas and provide non-glare light.

### iii) ***Systems and procedures***

Safety and security systems and procedures relate to service systems and procedures. Included in safety systems and procedures are, *inter alia*, systems for drainage and sanitation, waste disposal and management, electricity, alarm, fire, communications, emergencies and evacuations, visitation, vehicular drop-off and pick-up, leaving school campus during teaching and learning hours, access control, parking and vehicle control, mail, packages and delivery

systems and intrusion detection. Some of the above systems and procedures will be discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

- *Fire control*

Fire control equipment includes such items as fire extinguishers, standpipe cabinets, sprinklers and fire hoses (Florida Department of Education, 1993: 1). This department posits that fire distinguishers and standpipe cabinets should be located in main circulation paths and should be flush-mounted in walls adjacent to classrooms. Xaba (2005: 17) concurs with the FDoE by saying that fire systems must be secured in appropriate locations, out of reach and yet accessible for use. According to FDoE (1993:1) fire sprinklers should also be flush mounted in ceilings to avoid damage.

- *Drainage and sanitation*

Baghri and Wilson (2004:7) postulate that safe water and environmental sanitation services, that is, waste facilities are vital for people's dignity and health, and are especially important in ensuring the healthy development of children. Accordingly then, good organisation of cleaning and maintenance of the water and sanitation facilities at schools is of the utmost importance mainly because badly maintained sanitation facilities often cause a health risk (UNICEF, 1998:52). In this regard, stagnant water around tapstands and in blocked drainage channels attracts rodents and forms a breeding place for mosquitoes. Therefore a good cleaning and maintenance system requires funds, spare parts, people and equipment, and a clear division of roles and responsibilities among the actors involved (UNICEF, 1998:64).

For safe drainage and sanitation the following needs attention (UNICEF, 1998:32):

- presence of latrines and ratio of latrines for boys and girls;
- cleanliness of the latrines and presence of cleaning materials;

- drainage of wastewater;
- garbage disposal;
- accessibility of the latrines for the entire school population; and
- appropriateness of the design.

It is clear from this exposition that the safety of the school's sanitation and drainage relates to ensuring that there is proper water supply and usage, proper waste and garbage disposal and proper practice of hygiene in so far as the sanitation and drainage environment is concerned.

- *Electricity*

The electrical distribution at a school is of paramount importance. Extra care should be taken for the handling of electric equipment and the maintenance of electricity as a commodity. According to California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office (undated), the school should ensure that there are sufficient numbers of outlets and that these outlets are in a good working condition. There should be no ground fault interruption in wet areas. The school principal and the maintenance committee must ensure that all light switches are working, properly grounded and wired. Only approved extension cords should be used in schools and it must be ensured that the circuits are not overloaded and all wiring is properly enclosed.

- *Access control*

Xaba (2005: 17) advises that access control systems must be established by the school principal and the School Governing Body (SGB). He cites examples of equipment control like the control of keys, which means that the keys to access the systems must be put in a safe place such as a school's strong-room. Furthermore, access to school facilities should be limited. The school facilities may not be used during school holidays because there

might not be a person who will take responsibility for any loss or damage to the school property or other systems. A policy for the use of facilities must be drawn by the SGB to control the use of the facilities during weekends. According to Visser (2003: 5), the SBG and the Principal must ensure that:

- ✓ the means of access and egress are safe for use of hirers, and that all systems and equipment made available for use by hirers is safe. If the principal is aware of any hazard associated with the above, the principal should take action to make the hirers aware of it;
- ✓ fire escape routes and exits are clearly marked for the benefit of unfamiliar users of the building, particularly during the hours of darkness;
- ✓ hirers of the building are briefed about the location of fire escape routes, fire alarms and fire fighting equipment. Notices regarding emergency procedures should be prominently displayed; and
- ✓ arrangements are made for checking the security and condition of the premises and equipment used after vacation by the hirer or his staff.

These measures are important to ensure the safety of learners after the school premises have been used by outsiders. This also implies that after such use, a safety inspection should be conducted before the school is occupied by its regular users.

- *Incidents registers*

For any repairs that have been done to school property, be they minor or major, a register thereof must be kept (Xaba, 2005: 17). Maintenance of the school facilities also requires a register in order to be able to see how often one has to maintain or repair some of the amenities of the school. Xaba (2005: 17) is also of the opinion that for any incident pertaining to damage or



maintenance caused by a known person, an incident register will have to be kept and updated on a regular basis.

- *Emergency systems and procedures*

Visser (2003:7) recommends that the school's procedures for fire and emergency evacuation must be appended and also be posted in the school entrance passage or hall for obvious reasons. These procedures will be updated as it becomes necessary or appropriate. Furthermore, the principal has to ensure that the First Aid kit is available. The name of the First Aider or the appointed person should be clearly put on the kit. There should also be a person responsible for administering the accident-reporting procedure, the notification of serious accidents causing death or major injury and dangerous occurrences. The accident book and report forms and arrangements should be easily accessible in case the injured person is unable to complete an accident report form or is someone who is not an employee of the school. The arrangements for first aid for sport, outdoor pursuits and field trips are the responsibility of the supervising staff (Visser, 2003: 8).

- *Emergency drills*

Emergency drills are meant to test how effective and how well-known the procedures for various emergencies are, by both staff and learners. Emergency drills may be enacted as well as simulated. The log book for the recording and evaluation of practice and evacuation drills must be made available at all times (Visser, 2003: 7).

Creating a safe and secure physical school environment necessitates therefore, a rigorous and well-planned system of *maintenance* and *surveillance* of the school's physical environment.

a) **Maintenance**

Maintenance of the features of the school's physical environment involves the repair, replacement and general upkeep of physical features as found in the school's buildings, grounds and safety systems. This basically is in line with the broken window theory alluded to earlier. Szuba and Young (2003:43) make the point that maintenance is concerned with ensuring safe conditions for facility users, be they learners, educators, staff, parents or guests. Accordingly, Organization of American States General Secretariat (1998:1) describes school maintenance as an organisational activity carried out by the school community in order to prolong the life expectancy of school buildings, its furniture and equipment.

While maintenance is mainly concerned with the repair and fixing of broken equipment, it is important to note that there are four categories of maintenance. Firstly, there is *emergency* maintenance, *routine* maintenance, *preventive* maintenance and *predictive* maintenance (Szuba & Young, 2003:74).

*Emergency maintenance*

According to UCSC Physical Plant (2004), emergency maintenance is concerned with the repair or replacement of facility components or equipment requiring immediate attention because the functioning of a critical system is impaired or because health, safety, or security of life is endangered. Emergency maintenance may become necessary with little or no advance scheduling when there is a failure of a significant component that either makes the system unusable, or carries significant risk for continued system usability and, at times, a component that may increase the likelihood of a more widespread failure (AITS, 2004).

It is clear therefore that emergency maintenance requires that there be constant vigilance of school facilities and that these should be inspected

regularly for any signs of defects. It is also imperative that schools should have plans for dealing with emergency maintenance. For instance, in the school's maintenance budget, there should be an allowance for any emergencies that may occur. The school's incident register and monitoring of previous emergency maintenance needs would be a critical indicator for future unexpected emergencies. These can range from damaged buildings and equipment to safety systems and procedures.

#### *Routine maintenance*

This is the repair, replacement and general upkeep of the grounds and buildings (Carter & Carter, 2001: 3). Furthermore, these authors emphasize the fact that routine maintenance allows for the continued use of a space for its intended purpose and serves as an additional manifestation of ownership and caring. The conversation they had with learners, as they reported, reveal a surprising amount of disdain for broken windows and doors, stained ceilings and other signs of physical decay. These unkempt features heavily influence their perceptions of their schools and their sense of importance to the school and community. *It is therefore clear that not only is routine maintenance an obligation of the school's management and governance, but it is also desirable from a point of view of general school appearance, safety and the "broken window" theoretical context.*

#### *Preventive maintenance*

Szuba and Young (2003:74) posit that preventive maintenance is the scheduled maintenance of equipment, such as the replacement of air conditioner filters every ten weeks or the semi-annual inspection of water fountains.

Preventive maintenance is crucial in so far as it ensures that equipment is always in good working order and provides safety for learners. An example could be the maintenance of electric systems so as to avoid

and pre-empt unintended injuries that may result from electrocution. The same could be said for playground equipment – where learners spend time expending their energies in a way that is not prescribed, for example, games that could lead to injuries because they are not refereed by adults.

#### *Predictive maintenance*

Szuba and Young (2003:74) describe predictive maintenance as maintenance that forecasts the failure of equipment based on age, user demand and performance measures. This kind of maintenance is rooted in the proper execution of a facilities audit (Gaither, 2003). This according to Gaither (*ibid*) will assist schools to avoid emergencies and reduce damage dramatically. Accordingly, every piece of equipment and related system should be inspected in detail to evaluate its condition and in addition, repair records should be examined to identify recurring problems.

It is clear that maintenance of the school's physical environment can be seen in terms of buildings, grounds, systems and equipment. Maintenance of school buildings and other physical infrastructure involves promoting school and community pride in school facilities through a programme of cleanliness and maintenance which has far greater significance than just pleasing the public. A clean and well-maintained school facility is likely to promote a favourable community attitude and helps develop respect for school property. In addition, a well-kept school contributes to health, happiness and character development of the learners (California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office, undated).

Maintenance of grounds involves, on the other hand, a clean, well-maintained campus that can create an atmosphere in which learners and other staff members as well as other stakeholders and the SGB can take pride in their school. A good maintenance programme and a clean campus have implications for improved public relations and for fiscal management as well (California

Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office, undated). The public may be gratified to know that the School Governing Body has developed policies that preserve school property. This positive public and learner attitude is often demonstrated by financial support and by pride with which the facilities are shown to visitors (California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office, undated).

It can be opined that effecting a programme that fosters these conditions requires an established SGB policy that ensures that the desired systems and equipment leading to a clean, well-maintained campus will be functional.

Maintenance of systems and equipment involves formulation of policies that clarify the standards necessary to design, construct, equip, maintain and operate the physical plant; financing these systems and ensuring that these policies are implemented (California Department of Education's School Safety and Violence Prevention Office, undated). According to Wargo (2004) standards for the appearance and function of the school facilities reflect the School Governing Body's interpretation of the wishes of the taxpaying community regarding the school.

Closely tied to maintenance is the surveillance of the school environment, for both visible threats and potential but often unforeseen threats to safety.

#### **b) Surveillance**

Surveillance entails, in the context of school safety, monitoring or watching the whole school environment closely and is categorised into natural surveillance, access control and territoriality.

- *Natural surveillance*, according to Simpers (2004:2) refers to the placement of physical features to reduce the amount of secluded space, and increase visibility throughout a building and on campus grounds. Kirk and Ward (1998:6) posit that natural surveillance enhances supervision by eliminating architectural barriers, that is,

ensuring that open sight lines exist through the design and placement of buildings, landscaping components, lighting and access control. Other examples of natural surveillance include placement of windows as they relate to doors and people, lighting passages, pavements, entrances and exits.

Carter and Carter (2001:2) added that the objective of natural surveillance is to provide an environment in which one can see and be seen, to eliminate hiding or hard-to-see places and thereby increase the perception of a human presence.

With natural surveillance comes the need for maintenance. Simpser (2004:2) explains that if a school does not maintain its natural surveillance, the surveillance efforts will be useless. To demonstrate her fact, Simpser (2004) poses the following questions: What good is a light fixture if the bulb no longer works? What good is shrubbery along the perimeter of a building if it has grown so tall that it creates a perfect hidden pathway for trespassers?

Kirk and Ward (1998:6) further add formal surveillance in terms of high risk areas which should be designed to accommodate natural surveillance and to facilitate formal supervision where required. Such areas may include the main entrance or campus perimeter, especially where problems with intruders are typical, like toilets corridors, stairways and remote areas like parking areas. These areas may generate a need for more formal surveillance options like surveillance equipment.

Natural surveillance is thus a gateway to access control to a safe school. According to Carter and Carter (2001:2) *access control* refers to a physical guidance of people coming and going from a space. Examples include the judicious placement of signage, entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, lighting and other way-

finding elements, such as the use of colour, to provide orientation and direction.

*Access control* involves a way for learners, educators and visitors to get from one place to another (Simpers, 2004:2). It also controls who is allowed into certain areas. Simpers (2004:2) distinguishes between the following types of access control - signage, fencing, landscaping and lighting.

According to Kennedy (2004:2), access control also means that visitors arriving at the school must go directly to the administration office before doing anything on the school campus.

In summary, the objectives of access control are to keep people on safe routes, enhance emergency response, decrease the sense of being lost, avoid conflicts and prevent trespassing (Carter and Carter, 2001:2). Kirk and Ward (1998:5) outline access control as relating to the:

- \* *campus perimeter*, which seeks to ensure that visitors and guests pass through a particular point or entrance and have a designated protocol of interacting with the school community;
- \* *entrances and exits*, which relate to minimising the number of entrances and exits to the school campus and direct traffic flow, both vehicular and pedestrian, to eliminate confusion and congestion and to provide ease of observation. This includes designing parking areas to limit and control access;
- \* *visitor parking*, which seeks to identify visitor parking with proper signage and control visitor traffic, in a way that it can be easily supervised from the main office by assigned personnel;

- \* *visitor screening*, which relates to clearly worded and placed signage so as to direct visitors to the main office or designated visitor reception areas where they can be screened, using uniform visitor screening procedures, to ensure that they have legitimate business on the school campus;
- \* *territoriality* entails the use of physical elements as described in preceding paragraphs, to create a sense of ownership among learners and educators. According to Carter and Carter (2001:3) territoriality means the use of physical attributes that delineate space and express ownership. Simpser (2004:2) asserts that landscaping, fencing, artwork, signs and even school uniforms are a few examples of how this can be achieved. These elements help create a sense of belonging. Defining the purpose of each area on the school grounds also adds to this sense of ownership, which ultimately breeds in a kind of a school climate that is conducive for teaching and learning.

Carter and Carter (2001:3) points out that the objectives of territoriality are mainly to increase sense of pride and ownership felt by learners, educators and other school personnel and put others on alert that they are coming into territory that is owned and cared for. This gives the message that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated.

The physical environment presents one side of the school environment. The other side, which is equally important, is the school's psychosocial environment.

#### **2.3.2.2 The school's psychosocial environment**

The school's psychosocial environment encompasses the attitudes, feelings and values of learners and staff and is reflected in the physical and psychological safety, positive interpersonal relationships, recognition of individuals' needs and successes, support for and building of self-esteem in



learners and staff and support for learning (Henderson & Rowe, 1998:97). Voices and Choices ([http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/vc-ss/pdf/introdoc\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/vc-ss/pdf/introdoc_e.pdf)) relates the psychosocial environment to the safety and supportiveness of the psychological and social environment that learners experience in their particular setting and include both formal and informal relations with educators, management and peers.

It is clear that the psychosocial environment reflects the social and psychological climate of a school and thus gives expression to the way in which learners and staff experience life at the school (Mentz, 2002:147). To that end, a safe and secure psychosocial environment is one that is free from such negative behaviours as discrimination, enhances self-esteem, fosters co-operative, caring and respectful behaviour, respects individual differences and cultural traditions and fosters relationships and communication among the school management, staff and learners (Voices & Choices, [http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/vc-ss/pdf/introdoc\\_e.pdf](http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/vc-ss/pdf/introdoc_e.pdf)). The WHO (2003:1) adds that such an environment prevents physical punishment, bullying, harassment and violence by developing procedures and policies that do not support physical punishment and that promote non-violent interaction on the playgrounds, in classes and among staff and learners.

It is clear from the foregoing exposition that creating a safe and secure psychosocial environment involves a holistic focus on the school. In this regard, Skevington (2003:3) propounds that this is because a positive psychosocial environment can influence the behaviour of learners, affect the mental health and well-being of young people and improve learners' learning outcomes. Consequently, according to Skevington (2003:4), the psychosocial environment assumes a profile with the following dimensions:

- ***Providing a friendly, rewarding and supportive atmosphere***

The most critical role for schools as alluded to in the preceding paragraphs is to provide a setting conducive to learning and teaching. If learners and staff do not feel safe, education often takes a back seat

(Kennedy, 2004: 61). Research has shown that in recent years many schools have paid greater attention to how they can provide a friendly, rewarding and supportive atmosphere (Kennedy, 2004: 61).

In this regard, Henderson and Howe (1998:100) advocate an aesthetically appealing school environment. They argue that the appearance and condition of a school's facilities and grounds significantly affect the experiences of learners during the school day. For instance, flaking ceilings, graffiti-tainted walls, run-down floors, crumbling sidewalks, debris-strewn playgrounds and leaky toilets can promote a "why bother, no one cares" attitude among learners.

It is for this reason that a positive school climate is crucial in providing a friendly, rewarding and supportive environment. To this end, Henderson and Howe (1998:101) argue that a school's climate also reflects perceptions of fairness and inclusion. This is inclusive of role-modelling by educators as learners' behaviours are related to how they perceive the behaviour of significant adults.

In this regard, May (2003:5) is of an opinion that school safety plans should take a balanced, comprehensive approach to school safety consisting of practical security measures, a positive school climate, and firm, fair, consistent discipline, supporting cooperation and active learning.

Skevington (2003:Annexure 3) advocate the role of the educator as including taking care of the psychological welfare of learners, making them feel valued and sees a supportive environment as one that welcomes new people to the school, that offers effective and sensitive communication and fosters a sense of attachment and belonging to all in the school.

- ***Supporting cooperation and active learning***

According to Skevington (2003:Annexure 3) cooperation is an important feature of child-friendly schools. She asserts that this is achieved by among others, promoting group work and ongoing co-operative contact between learners, reducing stereotyping and improving relations between learners from different social and ethnic backgrounds.

Skevington (*ibid*) emphasises that when learners co-operate in learning, there is greater task involvement, fewer diversions, co-operative learning, and stimulation and this eliminates feelings of alienation, develops learners' and their problem-solving skills. She puts forward such activities as role-playing, school/community projects and team-based research projects as crucial active learning techniques.

It is clear from this exposition that schools' safety plans need to be holistic in order to cater for this kind of climate. Included in such plan could be policies for in-service training and capacity building of educators to be able to create such conditions.

- ***Forbidding physical punishment and violence***

Skevington (2003:Annexure 3) asserts that physical punishment in schools is unnecessary and unacceptable for healthy and sound education. She posits that corporal punishment does not work as it only suppresses undesirable behaviour for only a short time and creates an atmosphere of fear that is counterproductive to learning.

For that reason, Skevington (*ibid*) maintains that schools should strive for an environment with a balance of warmth, positive interest and involvement from adults on the one hand, and the enforcement of firm limits to unacceptable behaviour. This implies the use of non-violent, non-hostile, non-physical sanctions. This can be achieved by applying consistently clear and fair rules.

The South African Schools' Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996) prohibits corporal punishment and makes it categorically clear that nobody is allowed to administer corporal punishment to a learner, and anybody found to have administered it will be guilty and shall be liable to a penalty. It is therefore clear that corporal punishment and any form of violence undermines the schools' psychosocial environment.

- ***Not tolerating bullying and harassment***

Keys (2005:1) posits that the roots of bullying and harassment -- poverty, unemployment, substance abuse, dysfunctional families, and discrimination - create complex problems for society in general and schools in particular. For schools to be successful in their attempts to prevent bullying and harassment they must join with the broader community to create comprehensive prevention programmes in which service providers from various institutions and service agencies work together to address the multiple causes of bullying and harassment, including sexual assault.

Skevington (2003:Annexure 3) asserts that, among others, learners are bullied because they are seen as being weak, having a low self-esteem, are depressed or have a disability. As a result of this, bullying and harassment can make going to school extremely unpleasant and can, if persistent, have a pernicious influence on learners' mental health, especially in relation to depression and suicide.

Skevington (2003:*ibid*) advocates that schools need to discuss the bullying problem openly and produce a clear plan of action for dealing with it. She further suggests that parents must be involved by noticing and reporting unusual learner behaviour, which might be a result of bullying and harassment and schools can have a learner mentor who could be responsible for integrating newcomers and loners.

It is clear that bullying and harassment are detrimental to the psychosocial environment of the school and school need to include measure to eradicate them in the school safety and security plan.

- ***Valuing the development of creative activities***

Skevington (2003:Annexure 3) asserts that one of the key features of a health-promoting and child-friendly school is the availability of places and opportunities for learners to play, socialise and participate in creative and recreational activities and in this regard, rest and relaxation are important to consolidate learning. She adds that facilities and equipment, e.g. for climbing and swinging, provide opportunities for physical activity and that time free from the curriculum is vital to the development of a child's imagination.

It is thus important for the schools to give careful consideration to ensuring that learners have opportunities, facilities, and time to learn crafts, play in drama, music, and so on and it is also important that they are able to do this in situations where they are relatively free from undue pressures to perform under assessed conditions.

The benefit of this, Skevington (2003:*ibid*) asserts is that firstly, by playing games, children discover more about who they are and how they behave in different situations and that some games promote traditional sex roles but where games are free from adult supervision, they are found to bring the benefits of flexible behaviour and the use of few rules and specialized roles. Secondly, through play, children can learn life skills necessary for independence, organisation, negotiation and arbitration because activities outside school time have the additional benefit of enabling staff and learners to get to know each other better. This can be made possible by the use of simple, low-cost and easy ideas, such as using stones, logs, or paint to mark out popular games on the playground, which can be just as much fun and equally effective for this purpose

Clearly, valuing the development of creative activity promotes the school's psychosocial environment. It can be argued that crucial to this is the importance of ensuring that educators are capacitated, especially in the primary school, to create such conditions for learners.

- ***Connecting school and home life***

According to Skevington (2003:Annexure 3), the family and school are two of the most important institutions that influence children. She puts forward that an important function of schooling is to assist families to help their young become emotionally and socially secure and productive members of the community and argues that although teaching is primarily about helping children to learn, it is not possible to ignore the family from which the child comes without risks to effective learning.

Skevington (*ibid*) opines that educators are better able to understand the child and tailor their teaching to the child's needs if they are aware of their background, and with this knowledge, they are less likely to undermine traditions and values that the child learns at home, in a way that might unwittingly lead to contradictions, conflict and unhappiness. Thus where there is no contact between home and school, problems and major changes in the child's life may go unrecognized and unaddressed by the school.

Skevington (*ibid*) emphasises that in less privileged families, strong parental support and a positive school climate can foster the development of high levels of self-confidence and self-esteem. Clearly then, the school's endeavours should be directed at ensuring that there is a connection between learners' families and the school. That way, the school will be instrumental in ensuring the psychosocial well-being of learners.

- ***Promoting equal opportunities and participation***

According to Skevington (2003:Annexure 3) a health-promoting and child-friendly school gives children emotional and social support and helps them acquire the confidence they need to speak freely about the school and their life within it. She opines that children need the opportunity to be informed about the issues that affect them and to actively participate in the decision-making process together with staff and parents.

For that purpose, the school also needs to provide the opportunity for learners to say if they believe that something is wrong or unfair and to influence the timing where change is necessary, without fear of reprisals. They should be provided with the opportunity and facilities to choose their leaders. Skevington (*ibid*) asserts that helping learners to believe in themselves is empowering and encourages them to stand up for their rights and that, while children need to be encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and their community, at the same time they have a right to a period of their lives when they can be physically and environmentally dependent on others and protected from physical, social and emotional harm.

The school should therefore create psychosocial conditions in which developing an awareness of justice and rights can be taught through pointing out injustice and then encouraging children to use reasoning and decision-making to make sense of it, because as they mature, it is possible to give children an increasing voice in the decision-making about rules, rights and discipline in the school. Skevington (*ibid*) thus opines that by making a valued contribution to organising the way the school works, children find their school more supportive, attractive and friendly and participation fosters physical, mental and social well-being within the learning environment because learners who are treated as equals and believe that the chance of success is as accessible to them as to the next person, are not only more likely to reach their intellectual potential but will value their school for its

friendly and supportive environment and be more tolerant of others who are “different”. Therefore schools need to find their own ways to acknowledge and welcome ethnic, religious and cultural diversity, as well as those who have special needs due to disability, poverty or being orphaned.

- ***Identifying positive characteristics of the school environment***

The positive school climate can be identified when the school climate is intolerant of antisocial behaviour such as drug abuse, vandalism, sexual assault, intimidation and discrimination. Calabrese (2000: 83) asserts that identifying positive characteristics of the school environment requires using appropriate actions. Using appropriate actions contributes to the effective implementation of a safe school strategy. Calabrese highlights his point by making the following analogy: Imagine an artist contemplating a block of marble. The block of marble has a potential to transform into a great work. However, the block of marble is only potential. It needs the artist to transform the block of marble into a masterpiece. The artist, using a chisel and other sculpting devices, applies his craft.

Calabrese further explains that the artist's actions, applied accurately, transform the block of marble from a formless object into a meaningful work of art. Similarly, the actions provided in the school transform the safe school plan into reality. Actions are the instrumental means that achieve constructive outcomes. The effective school leader, in conjunction with her team, applies appropriate actions to ensure the success of the strategy of identifying the characteristics of a safe school environment.

The exposition on the essence of school safety highlights the importance of taking school safety as a critical aspect of the school's educative teaching and learning processes. What is of significance is the need for school safety to be seen as a responsibility of school stakeholders. It also signifies that school safety needs to be managed.



## **2.4 MANAGING SCHOOL SAFETY**

### **2.4.1 Orientation**

As asserted elsewhere in this chapter (cf. 2.2), school safety is viewed as a responsibility of the school community and its interaction with the school environment, which comprises both the physical and psychosocial environment. It is also apparent that creating and ensuring school safety and security in terms of the physical and psychosocial environments would require resources which more often than not, would demand high financial resources that most schools would find difficult to secure. Even then, it can be asserted that the availability of costly and state-of-the-art resources would not be a guarantee for school safety.

However, schools can go a long way towards creating safe and secure school environments by paying attention to basic features of school safety as illustrated in the sections on the physical and psychosocial features of school environments. Above all, it is important to consider safety at schools as a function of all actions aimed at creating safe conditions as implied by the people's interaction with their schools' physical and psychosocial environments (cf. 2.2). This implies doing something to ensure school safety. This in essence, alludes to managing school safety.

Managing is generally defined in terms of the so-called management tasks and areas, that is, executing such tasks as planning, organising, leading and controlling in such areas as staff affairs, learner affairs, curriculum and teaching affairs, physical facilities, financial affairs and school community affairs (Van der Westhuizen, 2002:49). Thus managing school safety can be seen as executing all the management tasks in so far as ensuring the safety of the school environment by using all resources available to the school.

In essence, managing school safety relates to the school principal's role in executing all the necessary management tasks to ensure the safety of learners at school. This involves planning, organising, leading and controlling for school safety. Although these tasks are distinguishable, their execution should not be

seen as separate, isolated or temporal and sequentially bound practices. They should be seen as integrated actions which are executed to bring about a holistic school safety management process. Consequently, the principal's role is presented as a holistic process of actions that involves the execution of planning, organising, leading and controlling for school safety.

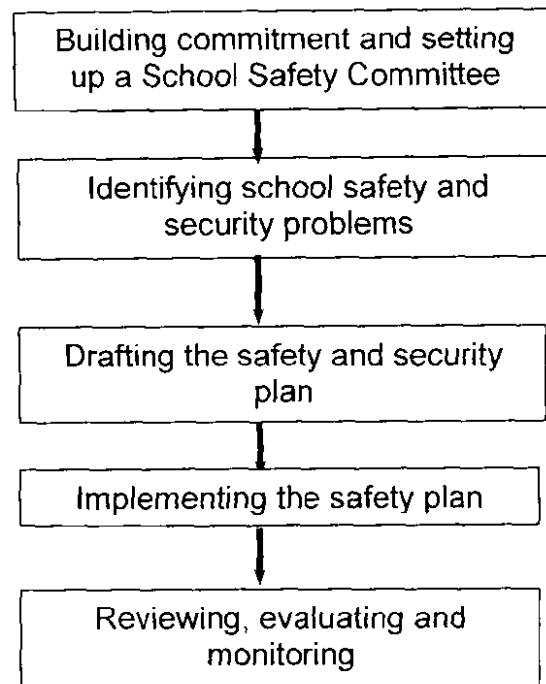
Creating an enabling school environment that allows for best practices aimed at learner safety is thus the principal's role. This role entails in essence, the establishment of the necessary management systems for the creation of safe school conditions. The task of the principal thus entails safe school planning. To understand the role of the school principal in safe school planning, it is important to expound the safe school planning process itself.

#### **2.4.2 Safe school planning**

Safe school planning is described as a systematic process to create and maintain a place where learners can learn and educators can teach in a warm and welcoming environment free of intimidation and fear (Clarksean & Pelton, 2002:32). In this regard, the California Department of Education (1995:2) defines safe school planning as a process where problems are identified and analysed, the desired areas of change are agreed upon, change strategies identified, evaluated and selected, chosen strategies are implemented and the impact of these efforts is analysed.

Safe school planning is generally advocated as involving a number of stages as illustrated in figure 2.3.

**Figure 2.3 The safe school planning process**



As illustrated in figure 2.3, the safe school planning process unfolds in the following manner:

- **Building commitment and set up a School Safety Committee**

This in essence invokes the organising and leading tasks of the school principal. Building commitment means gathering commitment and support from a wide spectrum of stakeholders (*Voices & Choices*, 2003:8). The IPT (1999:3) describes stakeholders as groups concerned with school safety and includes school governing body members, educators and learners, representatives of local government, youth organisations, the community police forum, local business and key stakeholders in the community.

Building commitment, in essence, provides the principal with the opportunity to induce a spirit of flexibility and co-operation with stakeholders so as to improve ownership of school community safety needs and to this end, invoke a vision of what school safety is and how it can be achieved (*Voices & Choices*, 2003:8). Consequently, this stage culminates into the

establishment and formation of the School Safety Committee (SSC) (*Voices & Choices*, 2003, 1999:8).

The SSC comprises representatives of all school stakeholders, from members of the SGB, educators, learners, local government representatives to members of the community police forum, local business and youth organisations, and its function is to monitor school safety needs for the purpose of identifying problems, recommending programmes or policies for school safety, and assisting in crisis management and post-crisis response (California Department of Education, 1999:8). IPT (1999:4) succinctly describes the areas of responsibility of the SSC as:

- identifying the school's safety and security problems;
- liaising with significant people in the community;
- drafting a school safety and security plan;
- overseeing and monitoring implementation of the plan; and
- charting the rise or decline in school-based crime and violence.

It is important to note that the SSC plays a planning and oversight role and reports to the principal and the SGB. This in essence means that the SSC is not charged with disciplining learners, controlling school expenditure or setting policy (IPT, 1999:4). To that end, forming the SSC, overseeing and monitoring its progress, allocating funds, helping to raise additional funds for the SSC projects, providing office, school and wall space for the SSC activities, supporting the SSC and helping to monitor violent and criminal incidents at school, are all responsibilities of the principal and SGB (IPT, 1999:4).

- **Identifying the school's safety and security problems**

This is the first task of the SSC so as to make recommendations to the SGB about which problem should receive priority and essentially involves the schools' safety needs assessment. This stage is usually four-phased, namely (*Voices & Choices*, 2003:9; California Department of Education, 1999:3; IPT, 1999:4; Verdugo, Kuttner, Seidel, Wallace, Sosa, & Faber, 1996):

- *Preparing for the needs assessment*

This phase involves all activities by the SSC that are aimed at ensuring that the needs assessment and problem identification are carried out effectively. Since the whole school safety needs are to be identified, this stage involves decision-making as to the best means of identifying the school's safety needs. Among others, it involves deciding which needs assessment instruments are to be used, for instance, questionnaires, surveys, instruments, *in loco* inspections and observation. Included are such issues as time frames, responsible persons or groups for various activities and reporting mechanisms.

- *Administering the needs assessment instruments*

This phase involves the actual administration of the assessment process through instruments decided upon in the previous phase. The phase includes the evaluation and monitoring of the process as it unfolds so as to track progress, identify deviations and apply corrective action where necessary.

- *Interpreting the school's safety profile*

At this stage information collected is entered into a database for interpretation purposes. Interpretation of data collected involves identifying main categories of safety needs and grouping them into

areas of priority. The outcome of this process culminates into the school safety profile, which will comprise the current school safety status and assists in establishing a school safety vision, so as to enable the drafting of the school safety plan.

- **Drafting the school safety plan**

This phase involves the actual planning of specific activities and programmes that will meet the school's safety and security needs. This will entail planning for short, medium and long-term activities for specific areas of need. The plan

- should be drafted in a simple and easily understandable manner;
- should be documented so as to be passed around, shared and discussed;
- should be easy to implement;
- should be within the budget allocated by the SGB and or community donations;
- and should state areas of responsibility and persons responsible.

The final plan should include monitoring and evaluation strategies. It should also include *time frames*, costs of activities, resources needed and should indicate performance indicators or expected outcomes for each activity.

- **Implementing the plan**

The safety plan will contain areas for high priority implementation. The SSC should determine these priorities and draw action plans to address these. This should entail areas that address the school's immediate safety needs, like the drawing of the school safety policy, assigning of

school safety responsibility to a safety officer, reporting mechanisms, procedures for implementing safety measures, standards setting and auditing of existing structures. It is important to ensure that time frames are adhered to and continuous monitoring takes place.

- **Reviewing and monitoring the plan**

Once implementation of the school safety plan takes place, it is important to pay attention to the progress in the implementation process. Two major tasks are of importance during the implementation monitoring process, namely, each member of the SSC or each member assigned any responsibility must do what he or she is tasked to do. Thus the SSC must meet regularly to ensure that work is completed timeously and to review progress through receiving regular reports. The school's management and principal should play a leading and exemplary role in this regard. The second task is to review progress and take corrective action where necessary. Specific monitoring tools are necessary in this regard.

The strength of the safety planning process is located in the formation of a SSC that involves as broad a spectrum of stakeholders as is possible. However, the involvement of a large spectrum of participants in any project or process is no guarantee for the successful implementation of such an undertaking. The writer opines that in such a situation, based on personal experience as school principal, it is necessary to have a core team to drive the processes. For this reason, the researcher is of the opinion that the SSC should elect a core team, comprising a few people to drive the processes agreed upon by the entire SSC. This is where the principal's management role becomes critical.

Clarksean and Pelton (2002:32) raise an important point in this regard. They emphasise the fact that planning is an action word and a proactive word, which implies progression towards an outcome. This implies that the school principal should be at the forefront of the safety planning activities and should ensure the implementation of such. In doing so, the principals should be in a position to

assess the effectiveness of reaching the school safety planning outcomes. This implies being able to determine that a safe and supportive learning environment is comprehensive, school-wide and is wove into the curriculum and culture of the school (Clarksean & Pelton, 2002:32).

Being the accounting officer, the principal should be the leader of the core team. This is where the principal should exercise his or her leading, guiding and controlling task to ensure that set goals are accomplished and this affords him or her the opportunity to create and sustain a safe school environment on a continuous basis, which ultimately will locate school safety matters in the school's own development and improvement plans.

Continuously addressing school safety implies focusing on the implications of a holistic approach to school safety and addressing the following five areas (Reta Security, undated) :

- *Management*

The principal has to continuously reflect and act on matters pertaining to policies and procedures. While these will have been laid down by the SSC and documented in the school safety policy, the implementation and monitoring thereof have to be a constant feature of the principal's management duties, among others, reflecting on issues to be constantly considered, like access control of facilities and staff roles and responsibilities.

- *Building security*

The principal's role is that of balancing the school safety plan against changes in the school and safety and security systems. For instance, some systems might become obsolete in terms of effect as the school conditions change and or improve or as security products change and improve. This entails an assessment of the effectiveness of safety systems on a continuous basis, comparing findings with documented performance



indicators in the safety plan and applying the necessary corrective measures. Included in this would also be issues pertaining to maintenance modes, that is, be they routine, preventive or predictive as well as the testing of procedures for effectiveness, for example, emergency and drill procedures.

- *Violence prevention and intervention*

This role involves assessing and monitoring the effectiveness of the school's education programmes in terms of curbing psychosocial threats to learners. For instance, as the school grows, an assessment of programmes would dictate a change in the school's programmes to accommodate the growth, be it structural in terms of building expansions or in numbers in terms of learner and staff numbers.

- *Staff training*

School staff forms the frontline of safety-threat prevention. To this end, it is imperative that training should be a constant feature in so far as issues like vigilance and threat-identification as well as emergency and post-emergency procedures. In this regard, in-service training, internet-based courses and action research are some of the measures for training of staff that could be engaged.

- *Crisis management*

Crisis management aims to minimise the amount of loss during an incident of any nature, so that it is reactive in nature. Crisis management takes cognisance of the fact that most school safety programmes address environmental emergencies and most systems are outdated. Therefore, the crisis management plan should continuously test the plans and the crises themselves. In this regard, the principal's role involves constantly testing these plans and actually simulating crises in order to test their effectiveness.

This involves being vigilant and learning from incidents as they occur in other institutions and integrating good lessons learnt into the school's plans.

#### **2.4.3 Implications for managing learner safety**

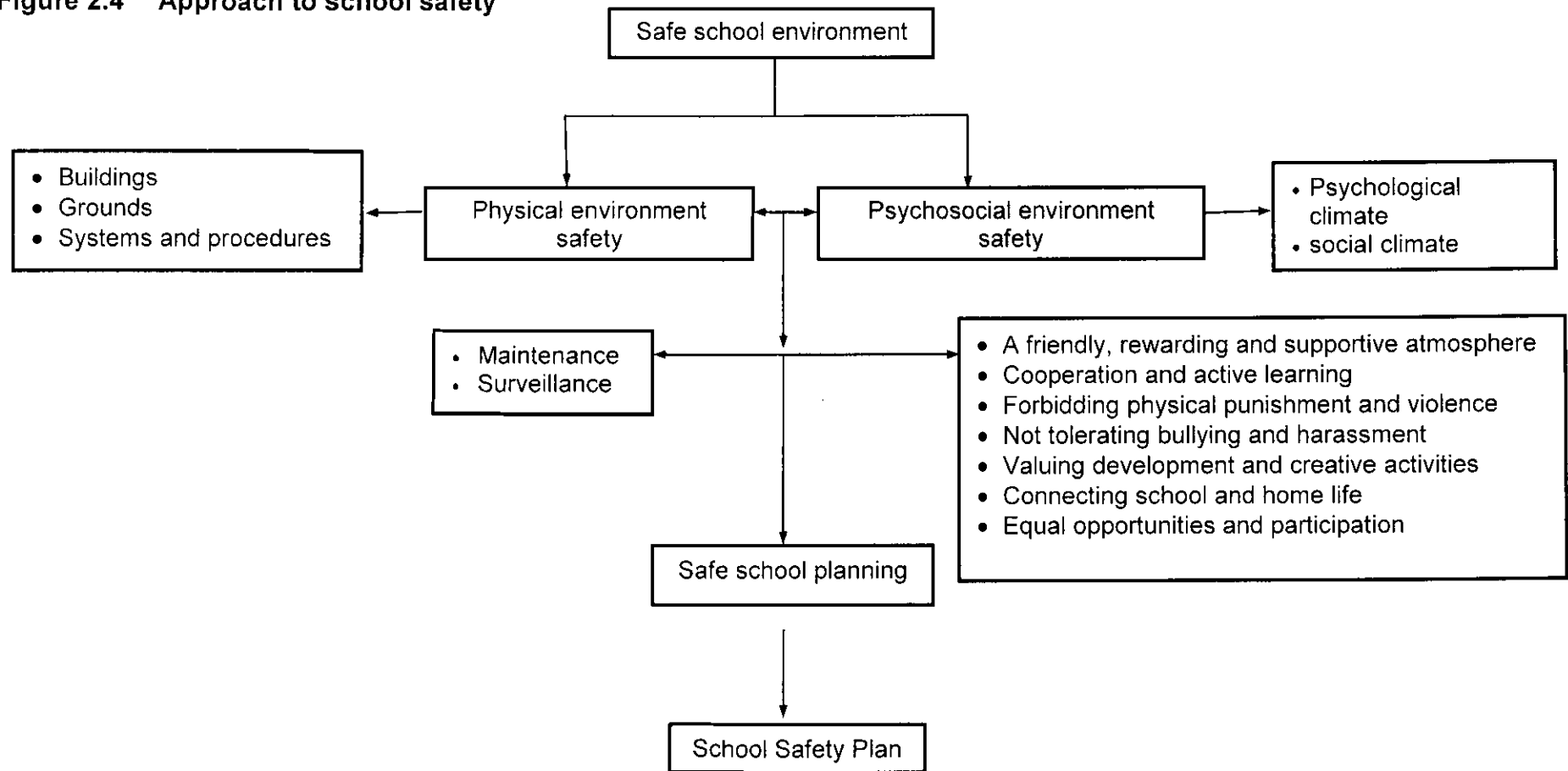
Managing learner safety in the primary school, as revealed in the previous sections of this chapter, entails creating school environmental conditions that promote and sustain learner safety. This implies focusing on the whole school environment. It is important to note the ecological perspective of the school environment, focuses in this regard, on what people do with their environment to make it safe, that is, the interaction of the school community with its environment.

It is from this socio-ecological perspective that managing learner safety is advocated in this study. Figure 2.4 conceptualises this approach to school safety.

As illustrated in figure 2.4, a safe school environment is a function of the interaction between the school's physical environment and its psychosocial environment. The physical environment comprises mainly the school buildings, grounds and safety systems and procedures. The psychosocial environment comprises the school's psychological climate and social climate.

Creating a safe physical environment involves ensuring that buildings, grounds and safety systems are safe and secure. This involves the maintenance and surveillance of the whole school's physical environment. On the other hand, creating a safe and secure psychosocial environment involves creating supportive psychological and social climate through creating a friendly, rewarding and supportive atmosphere, promoting cooperation and active learning, forbidding all forms of physical punishment and violence, not tolerating bullying and harassment, valuing development and creative activities, connecting school and home life and creating equal opportunities and participation.

Figure 2.4 Approach to school safety



Achieving this school environment necessitates a comprehensive and holistic planning process. This should culminate into a holistic school safety plan. The plan should address issues pertinent to the safety of the school's physical environment and the school's psychosocial environment, which should be continuously implemented and evaluated and monitored. Doing so requires paying attention to the management aspects of the plan and its implementation, building security, especially in the light of continuous implementation and changes to the school's developmental conditions, violence prevention and intervention, staff training and crisis management.

Managing learner safety in the primary school implies therefore, a consideration of the foregoing aspects of the school environment. This can be enhanced by considering the unique circumstances and needs of primary school-age learners, which set them apart from other learners. One obvious factor is their physical disposition to danger, that is, they are at an age where their physical development is such that they do not have strength or the physique to protect and defend themselves from danger.

Aherin and Todd (<http://www.ag.uiuc.edu/agsafety/devstage.html>) postulate that primary school learners begin to recognize common danger but do not easily generalize from one situation to another. For example, a fall from a tree may lead to their being somewhat careful in climbing trees in the future but may not cause them to avoid climbing a ladder on the wrong side. Thus these children may continue to act before they think, especially when involved in play and can easily get to dangerous situations without recognizing the danger.

Aherin and Todd (*ibid*) also indicate that primary school children begin to ask to be included in the work done by adults. However, because they have little knowledge of the requirements of a task or their own physical and mental limitations, the risk of injury is very high. This is because they do not recognize dangerous situations fast enough to avoid them, and once in an emergency situation they do not have the problem-solving abilities to avoid injury.

At this age, children develop physically, with many being big enough to take on adult tasks such as mowing the lawn and because they want to be considered grown-up, they often want to take on responsibilities they are not ready to handle. However, they are not cognitively able to process information quickly enough to get out of danger many times.

These children are at a stage where strong peer pressure abounds, especially during the late primary school-age or pre-teen ages and will often show off or dare one another in company of their friends (Aherin & Todd, *ibid*). Furthermore, they tend to have very weak perceptions of risk-taking as they do not believe that anything can happen to them or they do not have a good perception of their own mortality. Thus, they often are not capable of safely handling complex operational activities, and they are very vulnerable, particularly, in high stress or unusual circumstances that could develop when operating farm equipment.

According to Visser and Moleko (1999), learners in the primary school are influenced by psychological factors such as self-esteem, locus of control, need for acceptance, anxiety levels and eagerness to behave like adults, which can be seen as an explanation of why they are particularly vulnerable to injuries and psychological and social adjustment problems.

A consideration of these characteristics indicates the vulnerability of primary school learners and the need for them to experience a school environment that is both physically and psychosocially safe and secure. It is for this reason that managing their safety at the primary school needs to be a holistic approach that focuses on creating a safe school climate.

## **2.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented an exposition of the essence of school safety. The safe school environment was presented from a social-ecological perspective of the school, which focuses on an understanding of people in the context of their social

environment and focused on how people interact with one another and their environment.

A safe school environment was thus identified as both physically and psychosocially safe. This implies creating conditions that foster physical, psychological and social safety. The importance of safe school planning which culminates into a holistic school safety plan is thus a quintessential aspect of a safe school environment.

The following chapter presents the empirical research method of this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 of this research dealt extensively with a literature survey with the essence of school safety as well as its management. The empirical aspect of the essence and the management of school safety, particularly at primary schools are also of paramount importance. The empirical aspect of this research intends to answer the question: What is the safety status of primary school environments? To answer this question, the research investigates the status of schools' physical and psychosocial environments.

#### **3.2 THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The data were collected by means of a quantitative research method which is taken as the most appropriate and practical technique in achieving the objectives of this research. Quantitative research is defined as a formal, objective and systematic process where data is used to obtain information about study phenomena (Stubbs, 2005). According to Vockel and Asher (1995:192), quantitative research involves description and data-collection processes, research designs and statistical procedures and includes among others, questionnaires. To this end, this study makes use of a questionnaire as a quantitative research instrument.

##### **3.2.1 The questionnaire as a research tool**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:257) assert that for many reasons the questionnaire is the most widely used technique for obtaining information from subjects. Among other things, a questionnaire is relatively economical, has the same questions for all subjects and can ensure anonymity. In developing a questionnaire, McMillan and Schumacher (2001:259) allude to the fact that

questionnaires can use statements or questions, but in all cases the subject is responding to something written for specific purposes.

It is noted, however, that questionnaires are limited by certain disadvantages, especially in a survey of this nature, where respondents have to indicate the status of their own school environments (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001:185). According to Best and Kahn (1993:230) and Tuckman (1994:216), questionnaires are limited by, among others, misleading responses as a result of not being able to check the motivation of respondents, socially desirable responses as a result of respondents being unwilling to respond to questions bordering on private or controversial issues, indiscriminate answering of the questionnaire due to little interest in a particular problem and failure to get a true picture of opinions and feelings as a result of the questionnaire not being able to probe deep enough as in interviews.

The questionnaire was, however, preferred for its advantages, especially the anonymity factor, and among other advantages, the relatively low cost of administering it, the ability to cover a large geographic area and the ability to reach a large sample (Delpont, 2002:172).

To all intents and purposes, the questionnaire was used in this study as a data collecting instrument because it would be easy to distribute, thus becoming cost-effective with regard to financial resourcing and time (Charles and Mertler, 2002:159). The questionnaire was also used because it satisfies the assumptions on which questionnaires are based (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:202), viz.:

- that the respondents can read and understand the questions;
- that the respondents are in the position to supply the information to answer the questions, especially in view of the prevailing conditions in the primary schools, and
- lastly, that the possibility of willingness to answer the questions exists.



The success of the questionnaire as a research instrument was assured through thorough and meticulous construction of items.

### **3.2.2 The construction of the questionnaire items**

This study was a survey inquiry in which descriptive statistics were used to analyse data. A 43-item questionnaire was constructed. The items pertain to the perceptions of educators with regard to the safety status of their schools. Of importance were their views regarding the safety of their schools' physical and psychosocial environments.

### **3.2.3 Structure of the questionnaire**

The questionnaire (annexure A) was constructed using standardized questionnaires and inventories on the phenomenon of school safety and security (see California Department of Education, 1999; Garret, 2005). The final questionnaire was subdivided into the following two main sections:

- Section A: General information (questions 1- 7)

Items in this section relate to the biographical information of the respondents. The questions have to do with a respondent's gender; age cohort; teaching experience; position held; number of staff members and the number of learners and the location of schools under investigation. This information is important to the study as it directly influences the perception of the respondents in as far as safety in their school is concerned and because variables like the location of the school, numbers of staff and learners bear relevance to school safety and perceptions thereof (cf. chapter 2).

- Section B: The status of the school's physical and psychosocial environments

This section was designed to reflect the safety status of schools. Educators were required to respond to the questions by choosing the most appropriate responses from the key provided below:

- 3: Not sure; 2: No; 1: Yes

Questions in this section were divided into the two main categories qualifying the safe school environment as identified in the literature review, namely, the physical environment and the psychosocial environment. These categories were further divided into sub-categories to reflect the various factors of the school's physical and psychosocial environmental safety. Questions were then allotted to these factors thus:

- ***Management aspects:***

Questions 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9, 25, 26, 29, 30, 31, 37, 42

- ***Physical environment:***

- *Maintenance*

Questions 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 28, 43

- *Surveillance*

Questions 10, 11, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24

- *Systems and procedures*

Questions 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.5, 3.6, 4, 8, 22, 23, 27

- ***Psychosocial environment:***

Questions: 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41

The questionnaire was subject to a process of administration, which included the pilot survey, finalisation and distribution.

### **3.2.4 Administering the questionnaire**

#### **3.2.4.1 *Reliability and validity***

According to Delport (2002:166), the validity of a measuring instrument is determined by whether the instrument measures what it is supposed to measure and measures it accurately. This can be achieved by ensuring that the instrument has content validity, face validity, criterion validity or construct validity (Delport, 2002:167-168). Reliability on the other hand, is determined by the accuracy or precision of an instrument and the extent to which an instrument yields the same or similar results under comparable conditions (Delport, 2002:168).

To establish the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, the empirical research question on the status of school safety and the literature review were used as the starting point to ensure that the questionnaire content and the constructs used in relation to school safety were appropriate and would ensure dependability and reproducibility and that the questionnaire would measure what it was supposed to measure.

According to Anon. (<http://www.musc.edu/bmt738/Semler/index.htm>), content validity is the extent to which the content of the instrument appears to logically examine and comprehensively include the characteristic it is intended to measure. To this end, the standardised questionnaires and inventories referred to elsewhere in this chapter were adapted to local school environments in terms of terminology and it was ensured that questionnaire items covered the theoretical framework of the school safety phenomenon.

Secondly, the supervisor and his colleagues scrutinized the questionnaire to establish its reliability and validity. Only after their inputs, especially regarding the terminology appropriate for local school environmental conditions was the final draft of the questionnaire pre-tested. The questionnaire then was pre-tested to ascertain reliability. A sample of primary school educators in the Sedibeng West District (n=40) was used for this purpose. The educators were requested to respond honestly and note any questions that are either confusing or and ambiguous and to make comments and suggestions so that the questionnaire could be readjusted before being distributed to the target population (Xaba, 1996:97).

All questionnaire items yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.928980 and an average inter-item correlation of 0.212226. The individual categories of questions measuring the construct "school safety" yielded Cronbach Alpha values indicating high reliability (see table 3.1). It is noted, however, that the category "maintenance" yielded a Cronbach Alpha value of 0.6044357 which indicated medium reliability. This was deemed to be probably due to few questions in this category and indicate a need for further research in this regard. However, the average inter-item correlation value yielded 0.258959 which indicates reliability. Further research in this regard is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

**Table 3.1      Cronbach Alpha values for categories of school safety**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Cronbach Alpha</b>	<b>Average inter-item correlation</b>
Management	0.791910	0.242871
Maintenance	0.604357	0.258959
Surveillance	0.722765	0.225504
Systems and procedures	0.803456	0.262956
Psychosocial environment	0.847476	0.392204

#### **3.2.4.2    *Final questionnaire***

Subsequent to the pilot study and the noting of results thereof, the necessary adjustments were made and the final questionnaire developed (see annexure A). The questionnaire was thereafter distributed to schools by the researcher. A covering letter was enclosed (annexure B) with the aim of orienting the respondents to the questionnaire and assuring them of confidentiality and anonymity (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001:203).

#### **3.2.4.3    *Questionnaire distribution***

A covering letter was enclosed to assure the respondents of confidentiality (annexure B). In line with the guidelines from Leedy and Ormrod (2001:221), a sample of 400 educators was targeted and a total of 400 questionnaires was delivered to the randomly selected educators at schools. The school principals were asked for permission to conduct the survey.

Copies of the instrument were personally distributed by the researcher to the identified sample. It was stated in the letter that educators should not take more than 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire. Educators were requested to complete these questionnaires and hand them back to the contact person as soon as was possible.

### 3.3 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

The target population was identified as all the primary school educators in the Sedibeng East and West Districts. A miniature survey was conducted to obtain the number of primary schools in the two Districts. The information was obtained from the District offices. It was found that there were 98 primary schools in the Sedibeng West district and 56 primary schools in the Sedibeng East district. A snap survey of 20 schools indicated an average of 20 educators per school. This would mean that there are 1120 educators in Sedibeng East and 1960 educators in Sedibeng West which totals 3 080 educators.

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2001:221), for sampling purposes, beyond a certain point (at approximately  $N=5\ 000$ ), the population size is almost irrelevant, and a sample size of 400 will be adequate. For this reason, a random sample of educators ( $n=400$ ) at primary schools was used.

### 3.4 RESPONSE RATE

Questionnaires were distributed to 400 primary school educators in the Sedibeng Districts 7 and 8. Of the questionnaires returned, 322 were usable. Table 3.2 illustrates the return rate of the questionnaires per population category.

**Table 3.2 The return rate of questionnaires**

<b>Population category</b>	<b>Questionnaires distributed</b>	<b>Usable questionnaires returned</b>	<b>% return</b>
Educators	400	322	80.5%

It can be seen from Table 3.2 that the return rate from the educators was 80.5% which, according to Delport (2002:172) is considered an acceptable return rate. This return rate can be attributed in part to the meticulous administrative procedures followed by the researcher.

### **3.5 ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES**

Administrative procedures include getting approval from education authorities to conduct research at schools and following up on outstanding questionnaires.

#### **3.5.1 Approval from Gauteng Department of Education**

Approval to conduct research in schools was requested from the Senior Managers of the two districts as per departmental protocol. The questionnaire was then distributed personally to educators at schools. School principals were requested to be contact persons for distribution and collection of questionnaires at their schools.

#### **3.5.2 Follow-up on questionnaire**

Personal follow-up visits were undertaken to collect outstanding questionnaires. These were mainly in schools where educators were engaged in school activities that required the researcher to allow for delays in collecting the questionnaires.

### **3.6 DATA ANALYSIS**

The statistical consultancy services of the North-West University: Vaal Triangle Campus was approached for assistance in the analysis and interpretation of data collected from questionnaires. Frequency statistics were computed and these were scheduled in tabular and graphic form where necessary.

### **3.7 SUMMARY**

The focus of this chapter was on the research methodology that was used in this research. The next chapter will present the data analysis and its interpretation.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Data analysis and interpretation**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In this chapter the results of the empirical study are outlined and interpreted. The study was conducted through a questionnaire (annexure A) to achieve the following aim:

- to investigate the safety status of primary school environments.

The summary of the data collected is discussed hereunder.

#### **4.2 GENERAL INFORMATION**

Data collected in this regard pertained to the demographic information of the respondents.

##### **4.2.1 Review of respondents**

A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed to schools. Out of this number, 322 (80.5%) respondents returned the questionnaires. This response was satisfactory because it was representative of the target population. It is nonetheless, important to take cognizance of the reasons for the less than 100% return rate. Doubtless, the timing of the distribution of the questionnaire was unfavourable. Firstly, they were distributed just before the school holidays. Secondly, educators were busy compiling data for SGB elections which were due by end of May and the information was to be submitted before the holidays to the district office.



#### 4.2.2 Biographical information

Table 4.1 represents the general information of the respondents (Annexure A questions 1-8).

**Table 4.1 General information**

Question	f	%
<b>1. Gender</b>		
Male	65	20.2
Female	220	68.3
Null response	37	11.5
Total	322	100
<b>2. Age</b>		
20-30	7	2.2
31-40	101	31.4
41-50	137	42.5
51+	63	19.6
Null response	14	4.4
Total	322	100
<b>3. Teaching experience</b>		
0-10	48	14.9
11-20	128	39.8
21-30	112	34.8
31+	20	6.2
Null response	14	4.3
Total	322	100
<b>4. Position held</b>		
Educator	223	69.3
HOD	61	18.9
Deputy	13	4.0
Principal	14	4.4
Null response	11	3.4
Total	322	100
<b>5. Post level</b>		
PI 1	221	68.6
PI 2	58	18.0
PI 3	19	5.9
PI 4	10	3.1
Null response	14	4.4
Total	322	100

6. Number of learners in school		
0-100	9	2.8
101-600	86	26.7
601-1000	128	39.8
1001 <sup>+</sup>	86	26.7
Null response	13	4.0
Total	322	100
7. Number of staff members		
>10-20	106	32.9
21-40	196	60.9
41 <sup>+</sup>	7	2.1
Null response	13	4.0
Total	322	100
8. Location of schools		
Township	256	78.3
Town	48	14.9
Farm/Rural	13	4.0
Null response	9	2.8
Total	322	100

#### 4.2.2.1 *Gender of the respondents*

Almost all respondents (88.5%) responded to this question with 11.5% null responses. Of the respondents 20.2% were male and 68.3% were female. This verifies that there are more females in the primary schools than males. This could have implications for the assignment of safety and security tasks, especially those that are regarded as male competencies. This is in the light of the normally held perceptions of women being more vulnerable and weaker than males. The researcher does not, however, subscribe to this notion, but concedes that such perceptions may very well have an influence on decisions taken regarding safety and security measures at schools.

#### 4.2.2.2 *Age of the respondents*

A substantive number of respondents (95.6 %) answered this question. The responses indicated that the majority (42.5%) of educators in the primary schools are aged between 41 and 50 years and 31.4% are aged between 31 and 40

years. The least number of respondents (2.2%) are aged between 20 and 30 years. Senior educators aged 51 years and above account for 19.6%.

From these responses, it can be seen that most educators in primary schools are aged from 31 years to over 50 years. This gives a sense of assurance that data collected in this research may be useful as these are mostly experienced educators (see 4.2.2.3 below) who will have had extensive life experience and capable of judging the status of the safety and security of their schools.

#### **4.2.2.3 *Number of years' teaching experience***

Quite a number of respondents (95.7%) responded to this question. The majority, 74.6 %, have teaching experience of between 11 and 30 years (compare with ages 4.2.2.1), while 14.9 % have teaching experience of between 0 and 10 years. The most experienced educators (31+) account for 6.2%. There was a 4.3% null response.

#### **4.2.2.4 *Position held***

The majority of respondents (69.3%) who responded to this question occupy teaching posts while 18.9% are Heads of Departments and 4.4% hold principalship posts. The least number of respondents (4%) are deputy principals. The status quo may have an influence on the status of school safety in primary schools due to the fact that the safety of the school may primarily be entrusted to the school management, which accounts for only 8.4%.

#### **4.2.2.5 *Post level***

Most respondents (68.6 %) who answered this question are on post level 1, which means that they are entirely responsible for teaching duties, followed by post level 2 educators (18%), who are mostly Heads of Departments and post level 3 educators, who are deputy principals and post level 4 educators who are principals (3.1%). Null responses accounted for 4.3%. The marginal discrepancy

between frequency counts in this section and the previous one may be accounted for by the null responses as well by the fact that some educators may be acting in management posts and thus indicated their actual post levels.

#### **4.2.2.6 *Number of learners in school***

A sizeable number of respondents (39.8%) work in institutions with enrolments of between 601 and 1 000 learners. In addition to these are respondents (26.7%) who work in the schools with an enrolment of between 101 and 600 learners; 2.8% are in schools with less than 100 learners and 26.7% are in schools with learners above 1000. Null responses accounted for 4.0%. Seeing that the majority of schools have enrolments above 600, this could have an impact on safety and security functions due to, *inter alia*, workloads and the capacity of the schools' maintenance, surveillance, systems and procedures and psychosocial elements (cf. 2.3.2.1).

#### **4.2.2.7 *Number of staff members***

Responses to this question indicated that most schools have between 21 and 40 educators (60.9%), while 32.9% work in schools of between 10 and 20 educators. Few respondents (2.2%) work in schools with more than 41 educators. The number of staff members, as long as they are not trained in security measures and are not equipped to deal with safety issues such as gansterism and bullying on the school premises, means that school safety will always be a challenge.

#### **4.2.2.8 *The location of the schools***

Most responses (78.3%) indicate that most respondents work in schools located in the townships, 14.9% work in schools located in towns while the smallest number of respondents (4.0%) works in rural/farm schools. The low percentage of rural/farm schools means that farm schools are fast becoming non-existent.

The next section presents data on the status of schools' physical and psychosocial environments.

#### **4.3 THE STATUS OF PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

This section deals with the item analysis of data on the status of schools' physical and psychosocial environments. The data is categorised into management aspects, the physical environment, which is subdivided into maintenance aspects, surveillance aspects and systems and procedures. Data on the management aspects are presented first.

##### **4.3.1 *Data on management aspects of school safety***

One of the fundamental aims of this study was to investigate the management of safety in the primary school. This section presents data on management aspects of school safety. Table 4.2 on the next page presents data in this regard.

Question 1 sought to find out from the respondents if there were School Safety Committees (SSCs). Responses to this question indicate that the majority of respondents (72.4%) work in schools that have SSCs. However, some respondents (11.5%) indicated that these are not there and 12.1% indicated being unsure. There were 4.0% null responses to this question.

It can be deduced from this analysis that the majority of our schools comply with policy by having SSCs in place. Schools that do not have SSCs might be schools that depend on the goodwill of the community for the safety of their schools. Respondents (12.1%) who responded that they were not sure whether there was a School Safety Committee in their schools or not, might be ignorant educators. The null response (4.0%) might be from educators who do not have an idea of what a School Safety Committee is.

It is disconcerting that some educators indicated that their schools do not have SSCs or are even not sure of this. This has a direct bearing on the involvement of school stakeholders in safety and security matters of schools (cf. 2.4.1 & 2.4.2). as will be highlighted by the next question. The question to be pondered upon is whether schools have SSCs that involve all stakeholders.

**Table 4.2 Data of the management aspect of school safety**

Items	Questions	Yes	No	Not sure	Null Response
		%	%	%	%
1	Is there a School Safety Committee?	72.4	11.5	12.1	4.0
2	Is there a school safety policy?	67.1	4.0	24.2	4.7
5	Is there an incidents register where all disruptions and safety violations are recorded?	45.0	23.3	29.5	2.2
6	Are violations of the law reported immediately to the police and the department?	74.8	6.5	16.1	2.5
7	Are disruptive incidents analysed to identify trends of common school safety problems?	45.0	12.1	37.6	5.3
9	Are staff trained in detecting weapons?	8.1	58.4	31.1	2.5
25	Are signs concerning visitor policy and trespassing properly displayed at entrances to the school?	28.0	46.9	23.3	1.9
26	Is there an emergency team organized to implement emergency plans?	25.8	44.4	27.3	2.5
29	Is there a communication strategy between the office and staff?	67.4	15.8	12.7	4.0
30	Are staff trained in First Aid and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation?	28.9	39.4	29.5	2.2
31	Did all stakeholders draw up the School Safety Policy?	37.6	21.4	37.6	3.4
37	Is there an education programme in security awareness?	41.3	21.7	34.2	2.8
42	Are learners supervised at playgrounds?	78.6	8.7	10.6	2.2

Question 2 sought to find out if there were school safety policies. School safety policies must be understood within the context of the functioning of the SSC.

A significant number of respondents (67.1%) indicated that there was a school safety policy in place in their schools. This is slightly lower than respondents whose schools have SSCs. About 4.0% of respondents work in schools that do not have a school safety policy. There were 24.2% of respondents who were not sure whether their schools have this document or not. A null response accounted for 4.7%.

It can be said that most schools adhere to policy by ensuring that there is a school safety policy in their schools. The schools that operate without school safety policies can be perceived as being negligent on the questions of school safety. Educators who indicated not being sure if there were school safety policies in their schools raise a serious cause for concern. It implies, among others, that such schools are vulnerable to safety threats. Various reasons could be proffered for this, *inter alia*, lack of capacity to manage school safety, that is, organize, plan, lead and control safety (cf. 2.4.1). It could also be that there is poor stakeholder involvement in school safety management, and thus only a few school stakeholders get involved in this process.

Question 5 sought to find out if there were incident registers where disruptions and safety violations are recorded. This question relates to measures aimed at keeping track of safety threats and actual occurrences threatening school safety. Responses to this question indicate that 45.0% of the respondents work in schools where there are incident registers where all disruptive and safety violations are recorded, 23.3% where there were no incident registers, while 29.5% were not sure. There was a 2.2% null response to this question.

The responses clearly indicate that more than 50% of the respondents are in schools where no incident registers are kept or where they do not know about it in their schools. This could be an indication that school safety is not given the

attention that it deserves in the primary schools. It could also be indicative of poor management systems and the lack of awareness in so far as the importance of such documents is concerned.

Question 6 sought to find out if violations of the law are immediately reported to the police and the department. The majority of the responses (74.8%) indicated that violations of the law are reported immediately to the police and the department. About 6.5% of respondents indicated that they do not report these issues. This might also mean that they do report them, though not immediately. It is worrisome that a significant 16.1% of the respondents indicated being unsure if this happened at their schools. This response may mean that the SMT and the SSC are the only entities that deal with this aspect of school safety, which is an indictment on the attempts to make school safety everybody's business. There was a null response of 2.5% to this question.

On whether there was analysis of disruptive incidents so as to identify future trends of common safety problems (question 7), responses indicated that (45%) of the respondents are in schools where disruptive incidents were analysed to identify trends of safety problems. Respondents (12.1%) indicated that disruptive incidents are not recorded and (37.6%) indicated that they were not sure. These responses could be an indication of the non-involvement of educators in safety management issues. It could be that due to being overloaded with work, educators do not have time to give attention to details of serious issues of safety in their schools.

Question 9 sought to find out if staff were trained in detecting weapons. Less than a tenth (8.1%) of the respondents indicated that staff at their schools were trained in detecting weapons. An overwhelming majority of the responses (58.4%) indicated that there were no educators trained in detecting weapons and 31.1% of the respondents indicated that they were not sure whether there were educators trained in this regard. The responses indicating not sure are a serious cause for concern as they indicate a high and irregular level of ignorance of what



happens at schools. However, the fact that more than half of the educators indicated that there is no training in this regard, is worrisome as it exposes the vulnerability of staff and learners at schools. It actually implies that there is no way that a potential weapon's danger can be detected timeously and that there may be weapons within school premises which cannot be detected until a fatal incident occurs from such weapons. This is compounded by the fact that these are primary schools.

Question 25 relates to whether there is signage concerning visitor policy and trespassing properly displayed at entrances to the school. Less than half (28.0%) of the responses indicated that these signs are properly displayed and the majority of responses (46.9%) indicated that such signs are not properly displayed. About 23.3% of the respondents indicated being unsure. This finding is important as it lends further credence to the vulnerability of schools in that visitors to schools would not know what procedures to follow when visiting schools and those trespassers are not warned of consequences of their trespassing if they do. There was a null response of 1.9% to this question.

Of interest to this question is the response of 23.3% of educators who are not sure whether there are signs properly displayed at the entrances of their schools or not. This response is a clear indication that some educators could be very ignorant of very important things in their schools premises.

Question 26 relates to whether there is an emergency team organized to implement emergency plans. The majority of respondents (44.4%) indicated that there are no emergency teams organised to implement emergency plans at their schools. As opposed to this, just over a quarter (25.8%) of respondents indicated that there are such teams at their schools, while 27.3% of responses indicated that they were not sure. The null responses accounted for 2.5% of respondents.

The low percentage of respondents who indicated their schools as having emergency teams could be from the well-managed and resourced schools where

policies are adhered to. However, almost half of the responses indicated that their schools do not have emergency teams to implement emergency plans, which indicates that most schools do not have proper safety systems in place. This is a serious safety threat in that during emergencies, people can be harmed due to not knowing what to do or not having co-ordinated emergency actions.

On whether there are communication strategies between the office and staff (question 29), 67.4% of respondents reported that they do have communication strategies while 15.8% indicated that they do not have them, while 12.7% indicated that they were not sure. There were 4.0% respondents who did not respond to this question. This is an important management aspect of safety, especially in terms of emergencies. It is encouraging that most schools seem to have communication strategies between staff and the office. However, it is worrisome that not all schools seem to have communication strategies, however small the number.

Question 30 related to whether staff are trained in First Aid and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Only 28.9% of the respondents indicated that there are staff members trained in this regard. A sizeable number (39.4%) indicated that no staff member has been trained and 29.5% were not sure. There was a 2.2% null response rate to this question.

It can be deduced from this analysis that the majority of schools do not have staff members who are trained in First Aid and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. This indicates a gap in capacity building of educators at schools in this regard. Clearly, much has to be done in this regard, otherwise it is inconceivable how educators deal with learner injuries amongst other things, especially if cognisance of the HIV/AIDS effects are considered.

Question 31 sought to find out if all stakeholders were involved in drawing up the school safety policy. Equal numbers of respondents (37.6%) indicated being unsure and that all stakeholders were involved in the drawing of the school safety

policy, while 21.4% indicated that not all stakeholders were involved in the drawing of the school safety policy. There was a 3.4% null response. The fact that a fifth of respondents indicated that their schools' safety policies were not drawn up by all stakeholders indicates the low level of stakeholder involvement at schools as well as a possible drawing up of policies as a matter of responding to departmental requirements. This implies that these policies might not be practical and may not enjoy the ownership of stakeholders. It could also be that there is a lack of understanding of procedures for drawing up a policy by other stakeholders and also the level of literacy i.e. reading and writing could be a contributing factor, which points to poor capacity building of school stakeholders.

Question 37 sought to find out whether there were education programmes in security awareness. The overall response to this question indicates that there are very few schools (41.3) that have education programmes in safety and security awareness. Sadly, 21.7% reported that there were no educational programmes in safety and security awareness in their schools, while 34.2% were not sure whether their schools had education programmes in safety and security. This is a weakness at schools since security awareness would make people at schools be vigilant about safety threatening situations at all times.

Question 42 related to whether learners are supervised at playgrounds. In this regard, 78.6% of respondents indicated that learners are being supervised at playgrounds. Only 8.7% of respondents indicated that learners at their schools are not supervised at the playgrounds, while 10.6% indicated that they were not sure about the supervision of learners at the playgrounds. The null response was 2.2%. It is commendable that the majority of respondents indicated that there was learner-supervision at playgrounds. This is important since it is at playgrounds that most injuries and safety threats are prevalent. It is, however, disconcerting that about a tenth of respondents indicated being unsure to this question. This could be those educators in whose schools there are no formalised supervision procedures.

The findings on the management aspects of school safety reveal some interesting observations. These can be summarised thus:

- Aspects like the School Safety Committee, safety policies, reporting of violations of the law to the police and the department and supervision of learners at playgrounds score high percentage frequencies. This would imply that these aspects are in place at schools. However, in view of other aspects in this category, these aspects can be viewed as to be expected. For instance, SSCs, safety policies and learners supervision are a requirement from the Gauteng Department of Education. Therefore schools would be expected to have them, if only to be able to give account when required to do so. On the issue of the communication strategy between the office and staff, schools are bound to have such a strategy if only to facilitate the flow of information and instructions.
- Aspects that would demonstrate that schools have formal, planned and well-coordinated activities aimed at school safety and security scored low percentage counts. These include, *inter alia*, incident registers to record disruptions and safety violations, training of staff to detect weapons, training in First Aid and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, signage concerning visitor policy and trespassing, emergency teams to implement emergency plans, education programmes on security awareness and involvement of stakeholders in drawing the school safety policy.

It is clear from responses that schools on the whole do not have coordinated safety plans. It is also clear that school safety considerations are not a stakeholder consideration. This implies that safety and security considerations reside in one person or a few people's functional domain(s). Therefore it can be surmised from these findings that management aspects at schools are not up to practical

and functional standards. This does not, however, mean schools are unsafe. It alludes, rather, to lack of coordinated activities.

The next section deals with the status of schools' physical environments.

### 4.3.2 Schools' physical environment aspects

These aspects relate to maintenance, surveillance and systems and procedures.

#### 4.3.2.1 Maintenance

Table 4.3 portrays data on the maintenance of the school environment.

**Table 4.3 Data on maintenance**

Items	Questions	Yes	No	Not sure	Null response
		%	%	%	%
12	Are school buildings clean and well maintained?	79.5	9.3	8.7	2.5
13	Is access to electrical boxes and connections restricted?	73.9	7.5	16.8	1.9
14	Is the perimeter of the school properly fenced?	85.7	5.9	6.5	1.9
15	Do all doors have locks that are in working condition?	68.9	10.9	18.0	2.2
16	Is there a system for waste management?	55.0	15.8	25.5	3.7
28	Are systems for communicating emergencies, e.g. intercom, loud speakers, telephones, siren, etc. in working order?	65.2	27.3	5.3	2.2
43	Is graffiti on the walls removed as soon as possible?	58.1	11.5	26.4	4.0

Question 12 relates to whether school buildings are clean and well maintained. In this regard, the majority (79.5%) of respondents indicated that school buildings

are clean and properly maintained, while 9.3% of the respondents indicated that school buildings are not clean and well maintained. There were 2.5% null responses. The maintenance of school cleanliness can be related to the availability of resources for doing so. It is thus possible that responses indicating that schools were not clean and well maintained, could allude to those schools where resources are not adequate. However, in the light of the fact that most schools are Section 21 and have the maintenance function allocated to them, it is possible that this state of non-cleanliness could be a consequence of poor systems and procedures for cleaning and maintenance. It is also baffling that there were respondents who were not sure on this aspect. It can be deduced that they are alluding to the maintenance aspect. It is acknowledged that in some schools, educators are not involved in the details of school processes and thus they see things happen without their involvement.

Question 13 relates to whether access to electrical boxes and connections is restricted. This is especially important in primary schools as learners there are at ages of exploration and curiosity and could be injured by open electrical boxes and lines. The vast majority of responses (73.9%) indicated that access to electrical connections is restricted, 16.8% indicated being unsure while 7.5% indicated that they were not. It is commendable that most schools have restricted access to this equipment. However, respondents that are unsure of this could be indicative of the apathy with which school safety aspects are taken. This is indeed cause for concern.

Question 14 sought to find out if schools' perimeters are properly fenced. This is important in ensuring that no intruders gain easy access to the school and that there is effective control thereof. The majority of respondents (85.7%) indicated that the schools are properly fenced, while 5.9% of the respondents' schools were not properly fenced and 6.5% were not sure. Null responses accounted for 1.9%. Many reasons can be ascribed to the responses indicating that the school perimeters were not properly fenced, *inter alia*, shortage of resources, poor

planning, lack of safety vision and general apathy. These could also be old schools, especially in the townships where access is easy and vandalism is rife.

Question 15 relates to whether all doors have locks that are in working condition. The majority of the respondents (68.9%) indicated that doors at their schools have locks that are in working condition, while 28.8% indicated that doors were not in good working condition. There was a 2.2% null response to this question.

The negative responses could be an indication of insufficient resources available at the school for the general maintenance of the school. This could also be due to poor planning and could point to schools not having working and effective maintenance plans.

Question 16 related to whether there is a waste management system. In this regard, 55.0% of the respondents indicated that there is a system for waste management in their schools, while 41.3% indicated that there is no system for waste management in their schools. Null response accounted for 3.7% of the responses. It is worrying that just over half of the respondents responded positively to this question. This is indicative of what still needs to be done in terms of school safety. It could be that schools do not see waste management as a safety threat, perhaps because it does not affect peoples' physical beings directly and immediately. This is certainly an area that schools have to take cognisance of.

Question 28 sought to find out if systems for communicating emergencies, e.g. intercom, loud speakers, telephones, siren, etc. are in working order. The majority of respondents (65.2%) indicated that the systems for communicating emergencies at their schools are in working order, while 27.3% indicated that such systems are not in working order and about 5.3% indicated that they were not sure. Null responses to this question accounted for 2.2% of the respondents. Respondents who indicated "no" to this question could be in schools where there is only one telephone, which is situated in the administrative office. This could

relate to most township schools, where resources are limited and vandalism is rife. Some schools could be having only one telephone or none at all. However, poor management and safety planning could be attributed to this. Apathy could be the reason for respondents who indicated being unsure.

Question 43 related to whether graffiti on the walls is removed as soon as possible. Over half of the respondents (58.1%) reported that graffiti on the walls is removed as soon as possible, while 11.5% of respondents indicated that graffiti is not removed from the walls as soon as it is possible and 26.4% indicated being unsure. An interesting finding relates to respondents who indicated being unsure if graffiti was removed as soon as possible. This response indicates apathy from these educators or it could be that they could not be bothered about the appearance of their school buildings, which is a serious cause for concern.

#### 4.3.2.2 *Surveillance*

Table 4.4 portrays data on the surveillance of the school environment.



**Table 4.4 Data on surveillance of the school environment**

Items	Questions	Yes	No	Not sure	Null response
		%	%	%	%
10	Is the main entrance always monitored?	74.2	10.2	13.0	2.5
11	Do shrubs and trees allow good visual surveillance of all areas of the school?	76.7	9.6	10.6	3.1
17	Is there regular surveillance/monitoring of all school areas?	48.1	12.7	37.6	1.6
18	Is the visitors' parking clearly demarcated and marked?	32.3	48.4	17.7	1.6
19	Is the visitors' parking as close to the main office as possible?	64.0	27.0	7.5	1.6
20	Can parking areas be monitored by school staff?	46.6	34.2	16.5	2.8
21	Are entrances and exits clearly demarcated and marked?	42.9	40.1	14.9	2.2
22	Are toilets easily accessible and visible to staff?	90.4	4.3	3.1	2.2
24	Are there procedures for dealing with unauthorized persons on school property?	56.2	12.1	29.5	2.2

On whether their main entrances are always monitored (question 10), the majority of responses (74.2%) indicated that the main entrance is always monitored, while 10.2% disagree and 13.0% of responses indicated that they were not sure. This is commendable although those who responded negatively present a serious cause for concern.

Question 11 related to whether shrubs and trees allow good visual surveillance of all areas of the school. The majority of respondents (76.7%) indicated that indeed shrubs and trees allow good visual surveillance. This means that staff are at all times able to monitor all areas of the school environment. However, 10.6% of the respondents were not sure and 9.6% indicated a negative response to this item. There was a null response of 3.1%. These responses are worrisome in that they imply apathy in the case of the former and a situation that needs to be addressed

in the case of the latter. This is important in so far as ensuring that school safety is a feature of all environmental aspects of the school.

On whether there is regular surveillance/monitoring of all school areas (Question 17), 48.1% of the respondents indicated that there is regular surveillance/monitoring of all areas of their schools, while a sizeable number (37.6%) indicated that they were not sure and 12.7% indicated a negative response. The former response could be attributed to this function being mainly done by the school principal in the school while educators spend most of their time in class. It is, however, clear that in that case, educators do not know if their school environments enjoy regular surveillance and monitoring, which implies that there are basically no surveillance systems at their schools. It is noteworthy that a small, though significant number of respondents indicated a negative response, which puts their schools in a vulnerable position in terms of safety from intruders and injuries to learners who could be truant and frequenting unmonitored areas in the school.

Question 18 sought to find out if the visitors' parking is clearly demarcated and marked. This is important in so far as the visitation policies and procedures as well as the access control system are concerned. The majority of responses (48.5%) indicated that the visitors' parking is not clearly marked and demarcated; 32.3% of the respondents reported that parking for visitors is clearly demarcated and marked, while a further 17.7% of respondents were not sure about the status of visitors' parking. Null responses accounted for 1.6%. Clearly, from these responses, schools need to work on this aspect. This is in line with an earlier finding which indicated that signage regarding visitor policy and trespassing were not properly displayed at entrances to the school (4.3.1). It could also be that there is difficulty for the school to separate visitor from staff parking due to, *inter alia*, lack of space.

Question 19 related to whether the visitors' parking is as close to the main office as possible. The majority of the respondents (64.0%) reported that the visitors

parking is as close to the main office as possible. Null response accounted for 1.6% and 27.1% of the respondents indicated that parking is not as close to the main office as possible, while 7.5% of the respondents were not sure. The closeness of the visitors' parking in this case could be due to the structural design of schools which locates parking next to the administrative office.

Question 20 sought to find out if parking areas can be monitored by school staff. In this regard, 46.6% of the respondents indicated that parking areas can be monitored by school staff; 34.2% of respondents indicated that parking areas cannot be monitored by school staff, while 16.5% of respondents were not sure. A small number of respondents, (2.8%) did not answer this question. This is an indication of the environmental design of schools that locate parking areas next to the administrative office and thus in full view of the row of classrooms that are adjacent to this building. In that way, the parking area can be monitored by staff. However, it is clear that this is not a conscious effort emanating from schools' safety planning processes.

Question 21 related to whether entrances and exits are clearly demarcated and marked. The bulk of responses (42.9%) indicated that entrances and exits are clearly demarcated and marked, while 40.1% indicated a negative response and 14.9% were not sure. Of interest is the fact that almost equal numbers of respondents indicated opposite responses, that is, yes and no. If the "not sure" responses (14.9%) and the "no" responses are taken together, it is clear that this aspect is not optimally catered for. This has implications for the ease with which surveillance and access control are exercised. Clearly, if entrances and exits are not marked, it would be impossible to monitor who goes in or out of the school buildings and premises. This goes equally for vehicular entrances and exits as well as traffic pattern control in the school.

Question 22 sought to find out if toilets were easily accessible and visible to staff. This is in terms of ensuring learners' safety at the toilets and ensuring that toilets are not used for wrong actions. The majority of respondents (90.4%) indicated

that the toilets are accessible and visible to staff. A small number of respondents (4.3%) indicated that their school toilets are not accessible and visible to staff, while 3.1% of respondents were not sure. These responses could indicate schools whose structural design located toilets at a distance from schools' main buildings. This is indeed the case with many old schools in the townships. However, this is an issue that can be addressed through effective safety policies and planning.

Question 24 related to whether there are procedures for dealing with unauthorized persons on school property. A sizeable number of respondents (56.2%) confirmed that there are procedures for dealing with unauthorized persons on school property, while 29.5% of respondents were not sure and 12.1% indicated a negative response. Null responses accounted for 2.2%. While most schools seem to have procedures for dealing with unauthorised persons on school property, it is significant that over a quarter of the respondents were not sure. Once again, this may indicate apathy on their side or it could be that they are not involved in safety planning and management. This would be indicative of the non-existence of school safety planning, since that process would involve all stakeholders and thus they would know what the plans address.

#### **4.3.2.3**    *Systems and procedures*

Table 4.5 depicts data aspects related to safety and security systems and procedures.

**Table 4.5 Data on systems and procedures**

Items	Questions	Yes	No	Not sure	Null response
		%	%	%	%
3	Do learners and staff know what to do in cases of emergencies like:				
3.1	Fire?	49.4	11.5	36.3	2.8
3.2	Intruders/trespassers?	38.2	15.8	42.8	3.1
3.3	Armed robberies?	22.7	19.9	53.1	4.3
3.4	Electric faults and failures?	44.1	16.8	34.4	3.7
3.5	Bullying?	61.8	8.1	27.3	2.8
3.6	Gang fights?	38.2	19.6	39.1	3.1
4	Are emergency drills/exercise held regularly to test the effectiveness of the school emergency plans?	15.8	47.8	33.9	2.5
8	Are there procedures for handling problems regarding weapons at school?	42.9	23.0	32.0	2.2
23	Do visitors have to report to the office?	95.3	1.2	1.9	1.6
27	Is there an individual assigned to be responsible for overall school safety and security procedures?	52.8	20.2	25.2	1.9

Question 3 sought to elicit information on whether staff and learners know what to do in cases of emergencies.

With regard to actions to be taken in cases of fire (question 3.1), 49.4% of respondents reported that they know what to do; while 11.5% did not know what to do and 36.5% were not sure.

With regard to actions to be taken in cases of intruders/trespassers (question 3.2), 15.8% did not know what to do, 38.2% indicated that they know what to do;

while 42.8% of respondents was not sure and 3.1% of respondents did not respond to this question.

With regard to actions to be taken in cases of armed robberies (question 3.3), 22.7% of respondents reported that they know what to do; while 19.9% did not know what to do and 53.1% of respondents were not sure.

With regard to actions to be taken in cases of electrical faults and failures (question 3.4), 44.1% of the respondents indicated that they know what to do; while 16.8% did not know what to do and 34.4% of respondents were not sure.

With regard to actions to be taken in cases of bullying (question 3.5), the majority (61.8%) of respondents reported that they know what to do; while 8.1% did not know what to do and 27.3% of respondents were not sure.

With regard to actions to be taken in cases of gang fights (question 3.6), 38.2% of respondents reported that they know what to do; while 39.1% of respondents was not sure and 19.6% did not know what to do, whilst 3.1% of respondents did not respond to this question.

A notable observation from these findings is the high percentage of respondents who are not sure of these aspects in their schools. This is a clear indication that safety and security issues at schools are addressed as the need arises and are not part of a well-planned, co-ordinated and comprehensive stakeholder-induced and produced effort. This poses serious threats in cases of emergencies as quite clearly, there would likely be confusion. This is a major cause for concern and should be addressed as a matter of priority.

Question 4 related to whether emergency drills/exercise are held regularly to test the effectiveness of the school emergency plans. The majority of the respondents (47.8%) indicated that emergency drills are not held regularly, while 15.8% of respondents indicated that emergency drills are held regularly and 33.9% of respondents were not sure. Taken together, respondents who were not sure and

those who responded in the negative seem to suggest that emergency drills are not conducted at schools. This is a serious weakness in the safety conditions of schools as it clearly implies that when actual emergencies occur, no one would know if their effectiveness can be trusted. This finding is in line with earlier findings regarding school safety aspects that would be detailed in the safety planning manifesto.

On whether there are procedures for handling problems regarding weapons at school (question 8), a sizeable number of respondents (42.9%) indicated that there are procedures for handling problems regarding weapons at their schools, while 23.0% indicated that there are none; and 32.0% indicated that they were not sure whether there are procedures or not in this regard. Respondents who indicated that their schools do not have procedures for dealing with problems regarding weapons and those who were not sure indicate a critical aspect of lack of safety systems and procedures at schools. This is more so in the light of these being primary schools and the vulnerability of primary school learners in events involving the use of weapons. Once again, this indicates that schools deal with these issues as they come. This finding confirms findings in relation to question 9 about the issue of trespassers and intruders in the schools.

Question 23 related to whether visitors have to report to the office. This is an important aspect of access control and surveillance systems and procedures. In this regard, the vast majority of respondents (95.3%) reported that visitors have to report to the office before they could proceed to the classrooms, while only 1.9% of respondents were not sure and 1.2% of the respondents indicated a negative response. Null responses accounted for 1.6% of the respondents. This is a commendable status in primary schools with regard to this aspect.

Question 27 sought to find out if there is an individual assigned to be responsible for overall school safety and security procedures. This is an important aspect of safety planning so as to ensure that safety activities are co-ordinated from a point of responsibility. Responses to this question indicate, from just over half of the

respondents (52.8%), that there is an individual assigned to be responsible for overall school safety and security procedures. However, 25.2% indicated that they were not sure and 20.2% indicated a negative response. Clearly from these responses, it can be seen that 25.2% of respondents do not know the safety status of their systems and procedures and that many schools do not have co-ordinated activities. Once more, it is clear that school safety planning and management is not an all-inclusive process at schools. It could be that school principals by virtue of their positions, are seen as responsible for this function. This, however, detracts from the benefits of stakeholder participation in schools safety.

The findings on the physical environment aspects of schools safety can be surmised thus:

- Maintenance

It seems that generally, schools have relatively well-maintained physical facilities. This could be attributed to the Gauteng Department of Education's drive to provide schools with the necessary resources for this purpose. It could also be that schools generally have been allocated Section 21 functions, which among others, include financial allocation for maintenance. However, a question on whether there are systems for waste management indicates that maintenance at schools is undertaken as a matter of necessity, rather than a planned system of facilities maintenance. This research acknowledges that this category may not have delved into all aspects of school maintenance as alluded to elsewhere in this text (see 3.2.4.1). It thus suffices to point out that a system of school facilities management is worth exploring.

- Surveillance

It seems from the findings in this regard, that school environmental surveillance does need more attention. Regular surveillance of all areas,



signage denoting parking areas for visitors and monitoring thereof, clear marking of entrances and exits and procedures for dealing with unauthorised persons on school property scored relatively low frequency counts. Once more, it is clear that while these aspects are catered for to a certain degree, this is not done in a conscientious, purposeful and outcome-based manner. In other words, this is done as a matter of function, rather than as a matter of safety consciousness and an outcome of a coordinated and planned school safety and security programme.

It can be surmised therefore that surveillance as a safety measure regarding the school's physical environment is not carried out deliberately and as a result of planned activities.

- Systems and procedures

All but one item relating to safety systems and procedures scored low frequency counts. Of main concern is the fact that procedures for emergencies seem not to be known by staff and learners. Drill exercises to test the effectiveness of emergency procedures and procedures for handling problems regarding weapons are scored at 15.8% and 42.9%, which indicates that there are generally poor safety systems and procedures. It can be surmised therefore that schools need to pay attention to formal planning for school safety and ensuring that stakeholders are involved in the process. The fact that most respondents indicated not being sure regarding these items implies that other stakeholders, *inter alia*, learners and parents are less involved in these issues.

The physical environment forms part of the school's social ecology. Its safety and security complements and is complemented by the psychosocial environment. The next section deals with the item analysis of data on the school's

psychosocial environment. Therefore the psychosocial environment completes the school's social ecological environment.

#### 4.3.3 Data on the psychosocial environments of schools

The psychosocial aspect of school environmental safety relates to those aspects that have a bearing on the psychological well-being of the school, in terms of both learners and staff. Table 4.6 depicts data on the psychosocial aspects of the school environment.

**Table 4.6 Data on the psychosocial environments of schools**

Items	Questions	Yes %	No %	Not sure %	Null response %
32	Is corporal punishment completely eliminated from your school?	56.5	12.1	28.3	3.1
33	Are there procedures for handling incidents of verbal abuse?	57.5	12.7	27.0	2.8
34	Are there procedures for handling incidents of physical abuse?	66.8	9.9	21.4	1.9
35	Are there procedures for dealing with bullying?	65.8	10.3	21.7	2.2
36	Is peer mediation for learners used?	35.1	25.5	36.3	3.1
38	Are there trained counsellors or educators available for troubled learners?	36.3	34.8	26.4	2.5
39	Is there an education programme for dealing with substance abuse?	34.8	33.5	29.2	2.5
40	Is there diversity training to encourage an understanding with those of other races, gender, cultures and sexual orientation?	36.6	32.0	29.5	1.9
41	Are there programmes to help prevent sexual violence?	38.5	29.8	28.6	3.1

Question 32 sought to find out whether corporal punishment was eliminated completely from schools. In that regard, 56.5% of the respondents indicated that corporal punishment had been eliminated, while 12.1% indicated that it has not been eliminated and about 28.3% were not sure. This is a serious contributory

factor to poor psychosocial environments of schools and the fact that slightly more than half of the respondents indicated a positive response, is serious cause for concern, especially because corporal punishment is against the law. Respondents who indicated being not sure seem to suggest a feeling of apathy regarding this aspect or a feeling of not being part of their schools. This is an aspect worthy of research so as to determine how attached or involved educators are to their school processes.

On whether there are procedures for handling incidents of physical abuse (question 33), a sizeable number of respondents (57.5%) indicated that there are procedures for handling incidents of verbal abuse, while 12.7% of respondents do not have procedures for handling such incidents and 27.0% were not sure. A noteworthy observation relates to respondents who were not sure whether there are procedures for handling incidents of physical abuse. This indicates the state of non-involvement of educators at schools on matters not directly related to teaching and learning. It could also allude to absence of systems to deal with issues like these. The uncertainty about the procedures for handling incidents of physical abuse should send an alarm to school managers to ensure that there are procedures to deal with virtually all the incidents of unwanted behaviours in the school premises.

On whether there are procedures for dealing with bullying (question 35), the majority of respondents (65.8 %) indicated that there are procedures for dealing with bullying, with 10.3% of respondents not having such procedures and 21.7% of them indicating that they were not sure whether such procedures existed in their schools. Responses to this question show that bullying at schools can be dealt with to a large extent, most respondents indicating that there are procedures for doing so. Schools that do not have procedures for dealing with such incidents could mean that the management of these schools is characterized by *laissez faire* or these schools have not yet experienced problems of bullying. However, this is not probable and in primary schools, care

should be taken that bullying is dealt with in a systematic manner, especially because its effects are damaging and long lasting.

Question 36 sought to find out if peer mediation for learners is used. In this regard, 35.1% of the respondents indicated that it is used in their schools, while 61.8% of respondents are either not sure or do not use peer mediation as an alternative to address some problems. Null responses accounted for 3.1%. From these responses, it is possible that respondents' schools do not see mediation as being appropriate at primary schools. These responses are also indicative of an absence of clear and well-coordinated psychosocial systems and procedures for dealing with this aspect. It is also possible that schools deal with such issues as they occur, which renders their procedures *ad hoc* and reactionary.

With regard to the availability of trained counsellors or educators for troubled learners (question 38), only a small number (36.3%) of respondents reported that they do have such personnel in their schools, while 34.8% of respondents do not have these personnel and 26.4% of respondents were not sure. This issue is contentious because it usually is expected of the department to provide personnel for this purpose. Be that as it may, it is clear that most schools do not have counselling personnel for troubled learners. Not only are these learners troubled, but they also can trouble other learners and staff and may end up displaying negative and anti-social behaviours. This is especially true with the effects of, for instance, the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Question 39 related to whether there is an education programme for dealing with substance abuse in schools. In this regard, 34.8% of the respondents indicated that there is an education programme for dealing with substance abuse in their schools and 33.5% do not have this programme, while 29.2% of respondents are not sure whether there is such a programme. Null responses accounted for 2.5%. These responses indicate that generally, schools do not have programmes for dealing with such issues and thus may be dealing with them on an *ad hoc* basis. Once again, the percentage of respondents indicating not being sure points to

the non-involvement of educators in school processes other than actual classroom teaching and learning.

Question 40 related to whether there is training to encourage an understanding with those of other races, gender, cultures and sexual orientation. Responses to this question indicated that 36.6% of respondents agreed that there is training to encourage an understanding with those of other races, gender, cultures and sexual orientation, 32.0% indicated that there is no training in their schools and 29.2% were unsure. There were 1.9% null responses. These responses indicate an important fact, namely that schools do not have formalised programmes for addressing the psychosocial environmental aspects. This is evident from the low percentage of respondents who indicated a positive response and the high percentage of respondents who indicated being unsure.

With regard to the availability of programmes aimed at helping to prevent incidents of sexual violence (Question 41), 38.5% of the respondents indicated having these programmes, while the combined majority of 58.4% indicated being unsure and not having such programmes. Of note is the 29.8% who indicated a negative response and the 28.6% who indicated being unsure. This is a serious state of affairs since sexual violence has lasting and negative effects on victims. Clearly schools need to pay attention to formalised programmes to address schools' psychosocial environmental safety aspects.

The findings on the psychosocial environmental aspects of schools safety can be summarised thus:

The psychosocial environment of schools needs attention and advocacy to conscientise schools on the importance and the effect of aspects of this environment on learners and staff. It is clear that corporal punishment is still being practiced at schools. It is also clear that procedures for dealing with bullying, substance abuse and sexual violence are not formally part of the schools' safety and educational programmes. Peer mediation and counselling

are essential aspects of the psychosocial aspect of school safety and these seem not to be functionally in place. The same goes for diversity training to deal with biases on the basis of race, gender, culture or sexual orientation.

The affirmative responses to items in this category indicate that schools do handle and deal with issues pertinent to these aspects. However, what seem to be amiss are coordinated systems to deal with them. Clearly, schools should focus on formalising attempts to facilitate advocacy and sensitivity to these issues as well as ensure that there is stakeholder involvement in designing solutions to problems associated with these aspects. This is based on the notion of the social-ecological context and perspective of the school (cf. 2.2).

The item analysis yielded a number of responses denoting “not sure”. While this could be interpreted and possible reasons provided for such responses, this was intriguing and consequently it was decided to conduct statistical tests to determine if the responses on the whole were influenced by the independent variables as represented by gender, age, positions held, teaching levels, experience as educators and the number of learners at schools. The intention was to see if there were any statistically significant differences in responses in terms of these variables. The next section outlines data in this regard.

#### **4.3.4 Data on the differences between independent variables and the dependent variables**

A multivariate test for significance (MANOVA) was conducted using gender, age, positions held, teaching levels, experience as educators and the number of learners at schools as independent variables with school safety categories as dependent variables. The aim was to find out if there were any statistically significant differences between the respondents' responses. This would further determine if these were chance differences or if they were influenced by their demographics.

A multivariate test for significance is conducted when there is more than one dependent variable and is thus a statistical procedure for analysing many variables at the same time (Salkind, 2000:269; McMillan & Scumacher, 2001:384. In this research, the multivariate test is conducted to determine if responses were influenced by respondents' demographic backgrounds. For that reason, independent variables are gender, age, experience, position held, post Level, school enrolments (number of learners), staff complements (number of staff members) and the locations of schools.

Table 4.7 illustrates the MANOVA values between the different independent and dependent variables.

**Table 4.7 The MANOVA test for significance**

Independent Variable	Test	Value	F	Effect df	Error df	p
Gender	Wilks	0.983	0.908	5	277	0.476 <sup>#</sup>
Age		0.938	1.277	15	823.04	0.209 <sup>#</sup>
Experience		0.978	0.436	15	823.04	0.968 <sup>#</sup>
Position held		0.955	0.926	15	831.32	0.533 <sup>#</sup>
Post Level		0.953	0.946	15	823.04	0.511 <sup>#</sup>
No. of Learners		0.891	2.340	15	825.80	0.002 <sup>*</sup>
No. of staff		0.919	2.563	10	600	0.004 <sup>*</sup>
Location of school		0.803	7.035	10	608	0.000 <sup>*</sup>

<sup>#</sup> No significant difference

<sup>\*</sup> Significant difference at  $p < 0.05$

It can be seen from table 4.7 that there were no significant differences at the probability level of  $p < 0.05$  level on all questionnaire items regarding gender, age, experience, position held and post levels of the respondents (cf. Hinton, 1995:120). This implies that findings can be regarded as authentic in terms of the influence of independent variables. Put differently, this means that the respondents' responses were not influenced by their ages, experience as educators, positions held and the post levels they occupy. Therefore, these

independent variables did not have an influence of the responses to the different categories of schools safety.

However, from table 4.6, it can be seen that there were statistically significant differences with regard to the number of learners at schools, number of staff members and location of schools. This means that their responses were influenced by these factors.

Due to these significant statistical differences, a univariate test was conducted on each dependent variable in terms of the independent variables. For this purpose, the ANOVA test was conducted for each dependent variable. A univariate test or the analysis of variance (ANOVA) is according to McMillan and Schumacher (2001:373) conducted in a study where two or more sample means are compared on one independent variable and allows for testing differences between all groups and to make accurate statements than when using a series of separate test for statistical differences, like using the t-test (cf. Salkind, 2000:220).

Table 4.8 illustrates ANOVA values for the number of learners on each independent variable.

**Table 4.8 The univariate values for each dependent variable in relation to the school enrolment**

Source of variation	DF	Dependent Variable	SS	MS	F	p
No. of learners	3	Management	1.052	0.350	2.170	0.915 <sup>#</sup>
		Maintenance	0.261	0.087	0.473	0.701 <sup>#</sup>
		Surveillance	2.072	0.690	3.535	0.051 <sup>*</sup>
		Systems and procedures	1.627	0.542	3.605	0.013 <sup>*</sup>
		Psychosocial environment	4.721	1.573	6.371	0.000 <sup>*</sup>



It can be seen from table 4.8 that there were no significant differences with regard to management, maintenance and surveillance *vis-a-vis* respondents from schools with different learner numbers (enrolments). It can be concluded in this regard, that respondents were not influenced by the sizes of their schools in relation to management, maintenance and surveillance aspects of school safety.

However, table 4.8 indicates that there were significant differences with regard to systems and procedures and the psychosocial environments in relation to the school sizes where respondents are educators. A *post hoc* test was thus conducted to determine which groups of respondents in terms of their school sizes had these differences. A Tukey HSD (Honestly Significant Difference) was conducted for this purpose. A Tukey HSD test is conducted in order to compare each pair of conditions to see if the difference is significant (Hinton, 1995:131).

The HSD test revealed significant differences in surveillance, systems and procedures and psychosocial environments (Tables 4.9, 4.10 & 4.11).

**Table 4.9 Tukey HSD test on variable – surveillance**

No. of Learners	0-100	0-600	0-1000	1000 <sup>+</sup>
0-100				
0-600	0.521			
0-1000	0.999	<b>0.008*</b>		
1000 <sup>+</sup>	0.968	0.158	0.810	

With regard to surveillance, significant differences were found between respondents from schools with enrolments of 0 - 600 and 0-1000. This can be related to the ease or difficulty of surveillance in a big school (0-1000 learners) and a relatively small school (0-600 learners).

There were significant differences regarding systems and procedures relating to respondents from schools with 1000+ and 0-1000 learners (table 4.10).

**Table 4.10 Tukey HSD test on variable – systems and procedures**

No. of Learners	0-100	0-600	0-1000	1000 <sup>+</sup>
0-100				
0-600	0.751			
0-1000	0.989	0.305		
1000 <sup>+</sup>	0.406	0.577	<b>0.009*</b>	

The same reasons can be accepted for enacting safety systems and procedures in schools with less than 1000 learners and schools with more than 1000 learners.

Significant differences were also found with regard to psychosocial environments relating to respondents from schools with enrolments of between 0-600 and 0-1000 (table 4.11).

**Table 4.11 Tukey HSD test on variable – psychosocial environments**

No. of Learners	0-100	0-600	0-1000	1000 <sup>+</sup>
0-100				
0-600	0.315			
0-1000	0.999	<b>0.000*</b>		
1000 <sup>+</sup>	0.645	0.596	0.031	

Clearly school enrolments can be attributed to this, implying that ensuring that the schools psychosocial environment is positive would be perceived differently between a small school with enrolments of about 600 and a large school with enrolments of more than 1000.

Table 4.12 illustrates ANOVA values for the number of staff members on each independent variable.

**Table 4.12 The univariate values for each dependent variable in relation to independent variable – Number of staff members**

Source of variation	DF	Dependent Variable	SS	MS	F	p
No. of staff members	2	Management	0.356	0.178	1.087	0.338 <sup>#</sup>
		Maintenance	0.497	0.248	1.357	0.258 <sup>#</sup>
		Surveillance	2.937	1.468	7.575	0.000 <sup>*</sup>
		Systems and procedures	0.986	0.493	0.313	0.731 <sup>#</sup>
		Psychosocial environment	2.073	1.036	4.050	0.018 <sup>#</sup>

It can be seen from table 4.12 that there were no significant differences with regard to management, maintenance, systems and procedures and psychosocial environments *vis-a-vis* respondents from schools with different numbers of staff members. It can be concluded in this regard, that respondents were not influenced by the staff complement in relation to management, maintenance, systems and procedures and psychosocial environments.

However, significant differences were found with regard to surveillance. A *post hoc* test was conducted using the A Tukey HSD to determine which groups of respondents in terms of their staff complements exhibited these differences. Tables 4.13 - 4.17 illustrate data in this regard.

**Table 4.13 Tukey HSD test on variable – management**

Staff members	10-20	21-40	41 <sup>+</sup>
10-20			
21-40	0.538		
41 <sup>+</sup>	0.443	0.639	

There were, according to data from table 4.13, no significant differences with regard to staff complements and the independent variable – management. This implies that there is no relationship between respondents' schools' staff complements and this variable.

Table 4.14 illustrates data regarding staff complements and the variable maintenance.

**Table 4.14 Tukey HSD test on variable – maintenance**

Staff members	10-20	21-40	41 <sup>+</sup>
10-20			
21-40	0.514		
41 <sup>+</sup>	0.329	0.515	

Data from table 4.14 indicates no significant differences with regard to staff complements and the variable – maintenance. The same conclusions as with the foregoing variable can be drawn for this variable.

Table 4.15 illustrates data on the staff complements in relation to the variable surveillance.

**Table 4.15 Tukey HSD test on variable – surveillance**

Staff members	10-20	21-40	41 <sup>+</sup>
10-20			
21-40	<b>0.000</b>		
41 <sup>+</sup>	0.120	0.680	

There was a significant difference between respondents in schools with 21- 40 staff members and those with 10 - 20 staff members. This could be attributed to varying perceptions regarding the size of staff and the variable – surveillance. It would be perceived more onerous for effective surveillance in schools with 20 educators and those with more than 20 - 40 educators to be precise.

Table 4.16 illustrates data regarding staff complements and the variable – systems and procedures.

**Table 4.16 Tukey HSD test on variable – systems and procedures**

Staff members	10-20	21-40	41 <sup>+</sup>
10-20			
21-40	0.903		
41 <sup>+</sup>	0.741	0.813	

According to data from table 4.16, there were no significant differences regarding systems and procedures in relation to respondents' schools' staff complements. There is therefore no relationship between the number of staff members at schools and the variable - systems and procedures.

Table 4.17 illustrates data on staff complements in relation to schools' psychosocial environments.

**Table 4.17 Tukey HSD test on variable – psychosocial environments**

Staff members	10-20	21-40	41 <sup>+</sup>
10-20			
21-40	<b>0.021</b>		
41 <sup>+</sup>	0.284	0.764	

From table 4.17, significant differences were found with respondents whose schools' staff complements are between 21 and 40 and those with staff complements of between 10 and 20. Clearly, psychosocial environmental aspects of schools safety would be perceived differently by respondents with big complements than those with low complements. This could be attributed to similar and equal workloads with fewer staff members in schools with low staff complements as compared to those with large staff complements.

Table 4.18 illustrates ANOVA values for the location of respondents' schools on each independent variable.

**Table 4.18 The univariate values for each dependent variable in relation to independent variable – location of school**

Source of variation	DF	Dependent Variable	SS	MS	F	p
No. of staff members	2	Management	7.198	3.599	25.391	0.000*
		Maintenance	2.146	1.073	6.073	0.002*
		Surveillance	5.616	2.808	15.175	0.000*
		Systems and procedures	3.186	1.593	10.881	0.000*
		Psychosocial environment	11.025	5.512	24.396	0.000*

It can be seen from table 4.18 that there were significant differences with regard to all dependent variables namely, management, maintenance, surveillance, systems and procedures and psychosocial environments *vis-a-vis* respondents from schools in different locations. It can be concluded in this regard that respondents were influenced by the schools' location in relation to all the variables.

Therefore a *post hoc* test was conducted using the Tukey HSD to determine which groups of respondents in terms of their schools' location exhibited these differences. Tables 4.18 - 4.22 illustrate data in this regard.

Table 4.18 illustrates data regarding location of school in relation to the variable – management.

**Table 4.18 Tukey HSD test on variable - management**

Location of school	Township	Town	Farm/Rural
Township			
Town	<b>0.000</b>		
Farm/Rural	0.866	0.004	

From table 4.18, it can be seen that there were significant differences regarding the variable – management, in relation to respondents from town and those from township schools. Clearly, perceptions regarding management aspects of town and township schools' management aspects of school safety would be different, perhaps due to differing management styles and possibly due differing levels of resource availability. This is an aspect warranting further research.

Table 4.19 illustrates data regarding location of school in relation to the variable – maintenance.

**Table 4.19 Tukey HSD test on variable - maintenance**

Location of school	Township	Town	Farm/Rural
Township			
Town	<b>0.001</b>		
Farm/Rural	0.987	0.141	

It can be seen from table 4.19 that there were significant differences regarding maintenance between respondents from town and township schools. This could be attributed to perceptions regarding availability of resources, and from experiential knowledge, town schools are better resourced and better maintained than township schools.

Table 4.20 illustrates data regarding location of school in relation to the variable – surveillance.

**Table 4.20 Tukey HSD test on variable – surveillance**

Location of school	Township	Town	Farm/Rural
Township			
Town	<b>0.000</b>		
Farm/Rural	0.386	<b>0.000</b>	

There were significant differences between respondents from township and town schools and between respondents from farm/rural schools and town schools. These differences can be a result of different school design. Most town schools were designed with safety and security in mind, whereas township schools differ in terms of old designs and new ones. Farm school are the most unsafe in terms of design as they consist of small and sometimes dilapidated buildings in the middle of open veld on farms.

Table 4.21 illustrates data regarding location of school in relation to the variable – systems and procedures.

**Table 4.21 Tukey HSD test on variable – systems and procedures**

Location of school	Township	Town	Farm/Rural
Township			
Town	<b>0.000</b>		
Farm/Rural	0.266	0.650	

In terms of systems and procedures, significant differences were found between respondents from town and township schools. This can also be attributed to the availability of resources. Town schools do have better resources and better systems and procedures. This can be traced to, *inter alia*, the safety and security resourcing they enjoyed from the state during the apartheid years when there were threats of “terrorist” attacks.



Table 4.21 illustrates data regarding location of school in relation to the variable – surveillance.

**Table 4.21 Tukey HSD test on variable – psychosocial environments**

Location of school	Township	Town	Farm/Rural
Township			
Town	<b>0.000</b>		
Farm/Rural	0.864	<b>0.005</b>	

There were significant differences between respondents from town and township schools and between respondents from farm/rural schools and town schools. Clearly these differences can be attributed to different school environments between these groups of schools. Township schools, though relatively resourced are characterised by congestion due to high enrolments, while farm schools simply do not have conducive school environments in terms both buildings and grounds. On the other hand, town schools are not as crowded and enjoy an abundance of resources in terms of buildings and grounds, which provides them with adequate space for a positive psychosocial environment.

It is clear from this analysis of differences in responses that while there are differences in perceptions of school safety and security as evidenced by the data on respondents' differences, schools safety is an issue that needs to be taken up in a serious and purposeful manner in primary schools. This is especially so in the light of continued reports of injuries to learners and staff at schools,

#### **4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY**

This chapter presented the statistical analysis of data and the interpretation thereof. This has led to a conclusion that the status of school safety in primary schools does need to be improved in terms of purposeful, formalised and stakeholder-inclusive approaches and programmes. The most critical aspects of such aspects relates to school safety planning. While it seems there is

awareness of making schools safe, it is also evident that there is no conscious school safety planning. This could mean school safety is catered for as the need arises and this makes it difficult to track useful good practices for future planning. Of course the matter of facilities maintenance suggests a need for more comprehensive research.

The next chapter presents the summary, findings and recommendations of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents a brief summary and reflection on important findings as highlighted by both the literature survey and the empirical study. It will also ensure that the research findings and the recommendations of this study are represented so that school safety can be looked at in a more serious light for its effective and efficient management.

This chapter will also present summaries of aspects highlighted in this research, namely findings regarding the essence of school safety, findings regarding the empirical research which relate to the status of primary schools' physical and psychosocial environments and finally, recommendations based on the research findings will be made.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY**

Chapter 1 outlined the rationale for this study. The problem statement highlighted the importance of managing school safety in the light of various media reports focusing on incidents that show schools to be vulnerable to safety threats, both to learners and staff. This chapter then outlined the research design wherein the research method was explicated.

Chapter 1 thus served as a springboard for this research study. It was explicitly stated that principals as managers of schools contribute by and large to the safety conclusions that prevail in the school. However, it was also emphasized that school safety is, in essence, everybody's business (cf. 1.1).

Chapter 2 focused on the essence of school safety (cf. 2.3). The chapter outlined the theoretical perspective from which the phenomenon of school safety would

be approached. Thus it dealt with the social-ecological perspective of school environments (2.3.1), and identified the physical environment (2.3.1.1) and psychosocial environment (2.3.1.2) as constituting the school environment. This chapter culminated into a discussion on managing school safety (2.4).

Chapter 3 focused on the empirical study. An exposition of the research design comprising the research method, which included the research instrument (3.2), the questionnaire as a research tool (3.2.1), sampling, questionnaire administration in terms of reliability and validity and the pilot survey (3.2.4.1), and data analysis (cf. 3.6) were detailed.

Chapter 4 dealt with data analysis and interpretation wherein data were presented in tabular form.

The next section presents the findings of this research study.

### **5.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **5.3.1 Findings with regard to research Aim 1: the essence of school safety**

The following findings were made with regard to the essence of school safety:

- School safety is a requirement by law as provided for in the Constitution and the Gauteng Schools Act (2.2);
- Schools safety is located within the ecological perspective of the school as a social environment, and therefore school safety is a function of the school community's interaction with the school environment (2.2);
- The school environment comprises the physical environment and the psychosocial environment (2.3);

- The school's physical environment comprises buildings and schools grounds and its safety status is made up of the following elements:
  - *School buildings* - which must be clean and comfortable and devoid of signs of vandalism, damage and graffiti. Schools buildings must be safe and secure and have no safety threats (2.3.2.1i);
  - *Grounds* – which entail shrubs, trees and grass, drainage, fencing, gates, access to transportation and emergency procedures (2.3.2.1ii). School grounds must thus be welcoming and friendly, clean and have regular maintenance to remove all safety threats, School grounds entail surroundings, perimeter fencing, walkways, playgrounds, vehicular routes and parking areas, landscaping, signage and exterior lighting.
  - *Systems and procedures* - which relate to service systems and procedures (2.3.2.1iii). Included in systems and procedures are fire control, drainage and sanitation, electricity, access control, incident registers, emergency systems and procedures and emergency drills.
- Creating a safe and secure school physical environment necessitates:
  - *Maintenance* which relates to the repair, replacement and general upkeep of physical features as found in school buildings, grounds and safety systems (2.3.2.1a). Maintenance should thus allow for emergencies, prevention, routine and prediction maintenance.
  - *Surveillance* which entails monitoring the schools environment closely and is made up of natural surveillance, access control and territoriality (2.3.2.1b).

Natural surveillance refers to the placement of physical features to reduce the amount of secluded spaces and increase visibility throughout the school buildings and campus.

Access control relates to controlling entry into and out of the school and in this regard signage, fencing, landscaping and lighting are crucial. Therefore, access control relates to the campus perimeter, entrances and exits, visitor parking and visitor screening.

Territoriality entails the use of the school's physical elements to create a sense of ownership among learners and educators and increase the sense of pride and give a message that unacceptable behaviour is not tolerated.

- The school's psychosocial environment reflects the social and psychological climate of a school and thus gives expression to the way in which learners and staff experience life at the school (2.3.2.2).

Creating a safe psychosocial school environment involves focus on the school holistically and includes promoting the following dimensions:

- Providing a friendly, rewarding and supportive atmosphere in terms of an aesthetically appealing environment, perceptions of fairness and inclusion, firm, fair and consistent discipline and taking care of learners' psychological welfare, making them feel valued and supported and fostering a sense of attachment and belonging to all in the school.
- Supporting cooperation and active learning by, *inter alia*, promoting group work, reducing stereotyping and improving relations among learners from different social and ethnic backgrounds.

- Forbidding physical punishment and violence by striving for an environment with a balance of warmth, positive interest and involvement from adults and the enforcement of firm limits to unacceptable behaviour. This implies the use of non-violent, non-hostile and non-physical sanctions.
- Not tolerating bullying and harassment by creating comprehensive prevention programmes in which the multiple causes of bullying and harassment are addressed.
- Valuing the development of creative activities by availing places and opportunities for learners to play, socialise and participate in creative and recreational activities.
- Connecting school to home life by ensuring that learners' needs are addressed by being aware of their backgrounds so as not to undermine their values and traditions.
- Promoting equal opportunities and participation by providing learners with emotional and social support and helping them acquire confidence to speak freely about the school and life within it. Learners should thus be given opportunities to express their opinions on various issues at school and encouraged to stand up for their rights. This means creating a psychosocial environment in which an awareness of justice and rights is developed.
- Identifying positive characteristics of school improvement by creating a climate that is intolerant to antisocial behaviour such as drugs abuse, vandalism, sexual assault, intimidation and discrimination.

- Managing safety in the primary school is seen as executing management tasks in ensuring that the school environment is safe by using all available resources (2.4.1).
- This involves safe planning, which is a systematic process aimed at creating and maintaining a place where teaching and learning can take place in a warm and welcoming environment free of safety threats (2.4.2).
- Safe school planning entails (2.4.2):
  - Building commitment and setting up safety coordinating structures like the School Safety Committee;
  - Identifying school safety and security problems and needs;
  - Drafting the safety and security plan;
  - Implementing the plan;
  - Reviewing, evaluating and monitoring the implementation;
  - And most importantly, the study discovered that the schools depend largely on the goodwill of the community for the safety of the school environments.

### 5.3.2 Findings with regard to research Aim 2 (Empirical research): the status of safety in the primary schools

The following findings were found on the current status of safety in primary schools:

#### 5.3.2.1 *Management aspects of school safety* (see 4.3.1)

Findings in this regard indicate poor coordination of management of safety aspects. It appears that this function resides in one person or a few people, and



possibly the members of the School Management Team. This is evidenced by most respondents indicating being unsure in response to items in this category.

Among others, respondents indicated that there is no analysis of disruptive incidents, staff are not trained in detecting weapons, First Aid and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, there are no emergency teams organised to deal with implementing emergency plans, the school safety policies are not an outcome of stakeholder involvement and there are no education programmes in security awareness. It can be concluded that while primary schools sampled are not entirely unsafe, there are coordinated safety and security programmes and activities.

#### **5.3.2.2    *Maintenance as an aspect of school safety* (see 4.3.2)**

Generally, it seems that schools are relatively well-maintained. Most responses were affirmative on items in this category. However, it could be deduced that while generally well-maintained, schools did not have coordinated maintenance systems in place. It seems maintenance is done as a matter of course, rather than on a predictive, preventive and routine classification. Low affirmative responses to items relating to waste management systems and the removal of graffiti as soon as is possible confirm this view. It must be conceded, however, that this category could be further explored in terms of facilities maintenance, which is deemed beyond the scope of this research.

#### **5.3.2.3    *Surveillance aspects of school safety* (see 4.3.3)**

It seems from the findings in this regard that school environmental surveillance does need more attention. Regular surveillance of all areas, signage denoting parking areas for visitors and monitoring thereof, clear marking of entrances and exits and procedures for dealing with unauthorised persons on school property scored relatively low frequency counts. Once more, it is clear that while these aspects are catered for to a certain degree, this is not done in a conscientious, purposeful and outcome-based manner. Clearly, there are poor surveillance

systems and these are basically *ad hoc* and are not carried out deliberately and as a result of planned activities.

#### **5.3.2.4 *Systems and procedures* (4.3.2.1iii)**

From findings in this regard, the main concern is the fact that procedures for emergencies seem not to be known by staff and learners. Drill exercises to test the effectiveness of emergency procedures and procedures for handling problems regarding weapons scored low affirmative responses, which indicate that there are generally poor safety systems and procedures. It can be concluded therefore that schools need to pay attention to formally planning for school safety and ensuring that stakeholders are involved in the process.

#### **5.3.2.5 *The psychosocial aspects of school safety* (2.3.2.2)**

The psychosocial environment of schools needs attention and advocacy on the importance and the effect of aspects of this environment on learners and staff. It was found that corporal punishment is still being practiced at schools and that procedures for dealing with bullying, substance abuse and sexual violence are not formally part of the schools' safety and educational programmes. Peer mediation and counselling are essential aspects of the psychosocial aspect of school safety and these seem not to be functionally in place. The same goes for diversity training to deal with biases on the basis of race, gender, culture or sexual orientation. It was clear that systems for dealing with aspects of the psychosocial environment were not in place as part of comprehensive school safety and security planning and implementation strategies.

### **5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS**

School safety in primary schools cannot be taken lightly and can thus not be perceived as just a part of the school's life. The following recommendations are thus made in the light of both the literature review and the empirical research:

### **Recommendation 1**

School safety should be undertaken as an all-inclusive action necessitating the collaboration of all school stakeholders.

#### **Motivation**

It was clear from the responses to the questionnaire that whatever measures are enacted in schools for school safety reside in a few people's functional domains. Significant numbers of respondents tended to be unsure or indicated negative responses to questionnaire items. This clearly indicated that they were uninvolved in the processes culminating to such issues as safety policies and committees. It is argued that they perceive themselves as spectators in the unfolding of planning programmes and mere implementers of such programmes.

### **Recommendation 2**

Schools should embark on proper strategic planning of safety and security, engage all stakeholders and advocate the outcomes of such safety planning so that all involved are well-versed and knowledgeable about the contents of such plans.

#### **Motivation**

It appeared from the responses that safety planning is poorly executed and indeed, does not exist in many schools. Respondents indicated being unsure and gave negative responses to such aspects as emergency planning, its procedures and implementation. This can only relate to poor planning. Good planning would include all aspects of the school environment as a result of a well-executed safety planning exercise.

### **Recommendation 3**

More research is needed on the subject of schools' safety in South African schools so as to produce literature with a South African perspective as against the American perspective.

#### **Motivation**

There was little research literature on the subject and as such, much of the literature used was based on the United States' experiences, and therefore a lot of unique South African experiences and circumstances are not documented. For instance, most township learners walk alone to school, regardless of age, relying on the traditional notion of *ubuntu* and the fact that in terms of that philosophy, every child belongs to the community and is thus protected by the community. However, incidents of children being abducted on the way to and or from schools are reported regularly, and intrusions into schools, with devastating consequences, are beginning to feature prominently in school South African school life.

### **Recommendation 4**

Awareness advocacy for school safety should be embarked upon so that school safety becomes a national concern.

#### **Motivation**

School safety seems to be left to individual schools. This advocacy would assist in putting school safety on the agenda of communities and government. This is because there are things that can be done by school stakeholders at schools, while there are those things they cannot do because they are competencies of other state organs. For instance, dealing with armed intruders is beyond the school staff's competency and can be only done by law enforcement agencies.

Otherwise, there could be a risk of “mob-justice” or even vigilantism in the name of protecting schools.

### **Recommendation 5**

There is a need for a coordinated school safety agency as a part of the department of education’s functions.

### **Motivation**

A central agency for school safety would coordinate all school safety-related issues and to be able to provide the necessary support and monitoring of the safety status of schools. This would afford schools opportunities for networking on safety-related aspects of the school environment. This way, there would be sharing of resources and collaborative monitoring and assessment of safety and security threats. And in this way, schools can share in good practices and harmonise their safety programmes so as to heighten the safety status of all schools. Thus there would be no schools that are safer than others.

## **5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH**

The following could be further research areas:

- The role of the state in school safety.
- The management and maintenance of school facilities.

## **5.6 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

The study was limited by the following:

- In determining the status of school safety in primary schools, the perceptions of learners and parents could have been tested. This would have yielded a stakeholder-informed basis for the study.

- The research instrument was limited by the disadvantages of questionnaires. Consequently, some responses could have been influenced by such disadvantages as fear and/or the willingness to please the researcher. The research method could have included an ethnographic aspect involving observations. This way, triangulation of data could have assisted the study in this regard.
- There are limited literature sources on the subject of schools safety in South Africa. Consequently, the study relied mostly on foreign literature. This however, sets the tone for more research in the subject.

## 5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the summary of the study and presented findings and recommendations.

The study explored the nature of school safety and yielded a theoretical foundation for school safety. This was used as a basis for the empirical research, which revealed the most crucial aspect of safe school planning as a critical aspect of ensuring school safety in primary schools. The study has thus revealed the salient aspects of promoting school safety in primary schools.

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## **ANNEXURE A: QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Research topic:** Managing school safety in the primary school

**Instruction for completing the questionnaire:**

1. This questionnaire is for research purposes only. Please do **not** fill in your name, name of your school or school stamp anywhere on the questionnaire. Your honest response will therefore be of great value to the research and will accordingly be treated **anonymously**. Please note that there are no wrong or right answers.
2. The questionnaire comprises two sections, viz., Section A: General information, and Section B: Questions on the status of the school's physical and psychosocial environments. Please answer all questions.



## Section A

*Please indicate your response to the following items with a cross (X):*

### SECTION A: GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Your gender	Male	Female		
2. Your age	20-30	31-40		
	41-50	51+		
3. Your teaching experience in years	0-10	11-20		
	21-30	31+		
4. Your current position	Educator	HOD		
	Deputy	Principal		
5. Your post level	1	2	3	4
6. Number of learners in school	0-100	0-600		
	0-1000	1001+		
7. Number of staff members	10-20	21-40		
	41+			
8. The location of your school	Township	Town	Farm/Rural	

## SECTION B: The status of the school's physical and psychosocial environments

*Please indicate your response to these items by means of a cross (X) in the appropriate box*

Question	Yes	No	Not sure
1. Is there a school safety committee?			
2. Is there a school safety policy?			
3. Do learners and staff know what to do in cases of emergencies like:			
3.1 Fire?			
3.2 Intruders/trespassers?			
3.3 Armed robberies?			
3.4 Electric faults and failures?			
3.5 Bullying?			
3.6 Gang fights?			
4. Are emergency drills/exercises held regularly to test the effectiveness of the school emergency plans?			
5. Is there an incidents register where all disruptions and safety violations are recorded?			
6. Are violations of the law reported immediately to the police and the department?			
7. Are disruptive incidents analyzed to identify trends of common school safety problems?			
8. Are there procedures for handling problems regarding weapons at school?			
9. Are staff trained in detecting weapons?			
10. Is the main entrance always monitored?			
11. Do shrubs and trees allow good visual surveillance of all areas of the school?			
12. Are school buildings clean and well maintained?			
13. Is access to electrical boxes and connections restricted?			
14. Is the perimeter of the school properly fenced?			
15. Do all doors have locks that are in working condition?			
16. Is there a system for of waste management?			
17. Is there regular surveillance/monitoring of all school areas?			
18. Is the visitors' parking clearly demarcated and marked?			

19. Is the visitors' parking as close to the main office as possible?			
20. Can parking areas be monitored by school staff?			
21. Are entrances and exits clearly demarcated and marked?			
22. Are toilets easily accessible and visible to staff?			
23. Do visitors have to report to the office?			
24. Are there procedures for dealing with unauthorized persons on school property?			
25. Are signs concerning visitor policy and trespassing properly displayed at entrances to the school?			
26. Is there an emergency team organised to implement emergency plans?			
27. Is there an individual assigned to be responsible for overall school safety and security procedures?			
28. Are systems for communicating emergencies, e.g. intercom, loud speakers, telephones, siren, etc in working order?			
29. Is there a communication strategy between the office and staff?			
30. Are staff trained in First Aid and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation?			
31. Did all stakeholders draw the school safety policy?			
32. Is corporal punishment completely eliminated from your school?			
33. Are there procedures for handling incidents of verbal abuse?			
34. Are there procedures for handling incidents of physical abuse?			
35. Are there procedures for dealing with bullying?			
36. Is peer mediation for learners used?			
37. Is there an education programme in safety and security awareness?			
38. Are there trained counselors or educators available for troubled learners?			
39. Is there an education programme for dealing with substance abuse?			
40. Is there diversity training to encourage an understanding with those of other races, gender, cultures and sexual orientation?			
41. Are there programmes to help prevent sexual violence?			
42. Are learners supervised at the playgrounds?			
43. Is graffiti on the walls removed as soon as possible?			

## **ANNEXURE B: COVERING LETTER**

Dear Colleague

Schools and educators are currently faced with enormous challenges in their work of teaching children. One of the major challenges relates to the safety of school, staff and learners. There have been many reports of burglaries at schools, injuries to both educators and learners. This has brought the phenomenon of school safety to the fore.

I am engaged in a study on **managing learner safety at primary schools**. This is for the Master's Degree at the North West University: Vaal Triangle Campus. I therefore request you to assist me in this research project.

Please assist me by completing the accompanying questionnaire. Your genuine and honest responses will be highly appreciated. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers – only honest ones. Therefore, do not spend too much time on a question.

**Please note that your anonymity is guaranteed and you are not required to write your name or name of school anywhere on the questionnaire.** You are further assured that this questionnaire and the information you will provide will be used only for research purposes – no part of this questionnaire will be used by anyone or for any other purpose.

This should take about 15 minutes to complete. Thank you in anticipation for your co-operation.

**Mr. VA Nhlapo**

Contact: 072 3755 881

(016) 592 3521