13 November 2015

Dear Editor

Please find below an account of how I have responded to the reviewer comments:

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author

1. This is indeed a very useful contribution to understanding peace building in school. Have you adequately dealt with how violence is perpetuated through the ignorance of learners' lived world realities of poverty and violent communities and through curriculum engagements that ignores what learners bring with them to school? Also how violence is perpetuated through class, race and dominant cultures and how this create a disconnect among learners and how this contribute to their disengagement with school and engagement with unwanted things?

Recognition of learners’ lived world realities and how schools may perpetuate violence by ignoring these are important and relevant to the focus of the article.

The article does include the following which relates to these issues:

Burton (2008:1) notes that violence makes schools,

a place where children learn fear and distrust, where they develop distorted perceptions of identity, self and worth, and where they acquire negative social capital.

Leoschut (2006:6) likewise warns that,

Children exposed to chronic community violence may begin to feel that they have no place in which they can feel safe.

However, this has been strengthened by inclusion of the following additional paragraph, drawing on the work of Friere, Kelly, Harber & Sakade, and Spaull (the latter within the latest release of the South African Child Gauge 2015):

The notion of justice also allows for critical consideration of how dominant cultures and educational systems determine what is taught, how it is taught and for what purposes. The trilogy of terms, conflict, violence and injustice, is thus used consistently in the project and this article. Theorists like Freire (1970) and Kelly (1986) remind us of the dangers of school systems and curricula which alienate learners and foster authoritarianism because of their ideologies of expert teachers, certainty of knowledge and the one right answer. In response to the question why schools cannot protect young people from violence but rather perpetuate violence, Harber and Sakade (2009:172) note that ‘the overwhelming evidence is that the dominant or hegemonic model [of schooling] globally, with some exceptions, is authoritarian rather than democratic’. Furthermore, in South Africa, there are complex relationships between poverty and education. We are more likely to consider how poverty negatively affects education. However, Spaull (2015:34) also shows how the ‘poor quality of education that learners receive helps drive an intergenerational cycle of poverty where children inherit the social standing of their parents or caregivers, irrespective of their own abilities or effort’. This is an aspect of injustice that is important for educators to consider as it could challenge them more directly in terms of how they may be implicated in cycles of poor education and poverty.

1. On a technical note: check word spacing.

Word spacing has been corrected throughout

Reviewer: 2

Comments to the Author

The revised article has addressed many of the comments made previously. However, there are still several issues which I find problematic

1. The addition of the concepts of peace and peace building is most helpful, but it is quite clear that this is not linked to the understanding of Freire nor to the data. If the concepts are to be included, then they must be meaningfully integrated into the text.

The discussion of key concepts of peace and peace building have now been integrated through links to Freire and the study at hand, via the inclusion of additional paragraph below:

Freirian-inspired education, using critical reflection and dialogical learning to foster greater freedom from oppression, justice and humanization, is also premised on ideas of positive, just and sustainable peace. Freire (1970:18) warned that under oppressive conditions a culture of silence breeds ‘the absence of doubt’ which imprisons the mind such that people fail to see and question their oppression and dispossession. The mapping project explored in this article stimulates critical reflection and dialogical learning which can counter silence and ‘the absence of doubt’ regarding oppression and injustice in schools.

2. I am still not convinced about the volume of context data provided. The justification for the level of contextual detail offered in the revised version applies to several other similar articles and research. However, in my reading of such articles, they did manage to prune the level of background detail without detracting from the focus of the research.

3. I am specifically mentioning the level of contextual information because I think the space saved in reducing detail may afford the author more space to render an analytically richer account of the research.

The following paragraphs have been edited to reduce the contextual information:

The Schools Violence Study reported alarming rates of violent conflict in schools across South Africa. This independent survey (Burton & Leoschut 2013), sampled 5939 pupils, 121 principals and 239 teachers and conveys the scale and spread of such incidents, as well as the trends when compared with results of a previous survey conducted in 2008

Using a variety of methods and mixture of lectures, student-led seminars, videos, case studies, student-led reviews of published articles, and participatory pedagogy which included games and group activities, the course attempted to get students to think deeply and critically about conflict, violence and injustice in schools and society, and to consider what interventions were possible. The course introduces conceptions of conflict as normal and potentially constructive when handled in creative ways.

The following sections have been deleted to reduce the contextual information:

Murithi (2009) draws attention to the paradox of high levels of violence in Africa despite African cultures being repositories of knowledge on promoting peace and harmony in communities. He sees this as a need for such indigenous peace-building and conflict resolution knowledge to be passed on to present and future generations. For Murithi (2009:223),

Peace education should therefore be a central pillar to improving human relations in the family, in schools, at the workplace, within countries and across borders.

Of all different types of provision of peace education, the school system has long been considered an essential component as reflected by Bar-Tal (2002:27) when arguing that the,

educational system fulfills this mission [peace education] for society through the schools, which have the authority, the legitimacy, the means and the conditions to carry it out.

The removal of the Murithi and Bal-Tal citations also assist given that a few additional references have been included in responding to the comment of Reviewer 1.

Furthermore, an additional aspect of analysis has been added using the lens introduced in response to comment by Reviewer 1:

An area of conspicuous silence in both educator and learner maps relates to authoritarian cultures and the lack of democracy in the way the school and curriculum is organised. Such symbolic and structural violence escaped attention, pointing to the need for interventions which sensitise learners and educators to such matters.

These comments, I suspect, can easily be dealt with and suggest they be made prior to publication.

I trust that the above satisfactorily addresses the minor revisions requested by both reviewers.

Many thanks