Male teachers' experiences of own aggression

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We describe an exploratory, descriptive, and contextual study on the lived experiences of 17 male teachers' own aggression in the Gert Sibande district in Mpumalanga province. Individual phenomenological interviews were used to collect data from these volunteers for this qualitative research. The data were analysed by means of an open coding systematic process in order to establish the themes and categories that describe male teachers' experiences of own aggression. Results show that the participants in this sample experience their own aggression in a variety of ways. It appears they primarily experience a loss of power and control that gives rise to aggression. Significantly, participants are aware that they need guidelines to enable them to cope with their aggression. Although there are aggression theories that support and provide an understanding of aggressive behaviour, Transformative Learning Theory seems to offer the best way of bringing about transformative change in individual behaviour, as it raises consciousness and an understanding of the self through self-reflection.

A crisis in South African schools

Aggressive behaviour in South African schools has become an increasing concern as "people of all ages, cultures, and both genders" resort to aggressive behaviour in order to express their emotions and frustrations (Breet, Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 2010:511). According to a report providing an overview of school-based violence in South Africa, there are serious concerns about the high rate of violence and aggression in primary and secondary schools, and even in broader society. Violence and aggression are not limited to learners at schools but also manifest in teachers (South African Council of Educators (SACE), 2011:1).

Reports appear regularly on male teachers who resort to and display aggressive behaviour in South African schools. Some examples are: Toerien (2002) refers to an incident in which a male teacher raped a 13-year-old primary school learner. Rademeyer (2003) describes an incident where a male teacher grabbed learners by the neck and then pushed one of them down the stairs. Smith (2004) comments on a case where a male teacher threatened to drown a learner in a fish pond at the school. This teacher then repeatedly pushed the learner's face into the ground. A police officer rescued the learner from the teacher's attack. Raubenheimer (2005) describes a case of a male

teacher indecently assaulting a learner at a school. This incident became public know-ledge after the learner attempted to commit suicide. In a further case, a secondary school learner was assaulted by two male teachers at his school. The male teachers repeatedly slapped the learner's face and hit him with their fists (Keppler, 2006). Omega (2012) presents footage on a violent attack by a male teacher at a secondary school. The teacher grabbed the learner by the hair, kicked and punched her, and eventually threw her to the ground. A group of learners in the class tried to separate the teacher and the learner while they were struggling on the floor in the classroom.

Male teachers who are aggressive typically use verbal, sexual, or physical assault. This last ranges from rough physical contact to shootings and stabbings (Botha, 2006; Naicker, 2009; Poggenpoel & Myburgh, 2007). These acts of aggression and violence which are rife in schools not only impact on the teaching-learning environment, but also negatively affect teachers' mental health or sense of wellbeing and their attitudes to learners (Bester & Du Plessis, 2010; Du Plessis, 2008; Muthukrishna, 2011). Steyn and Roux (2009) underline the seriousness of the situation in their comment that South African schools have turned into dangerous places for all stakeholders. It is important to note that male aggression and violence are also a major challenge in South African society (Richardson & Hammock, 2007).

The literature reveals that males are far more likely than females to behave ag-gressively (Berkowitz, 1993; Fiske, 2010; Graham & Wells, 2001; Sergeant, Dickins, Davies & Griffiths, 2006). It also reveals that males are more likely to use physical aggression, while verbal and relational or social aggression is more common among females (Fiske, 2010; Kokko & Pulkkinen, 2005; Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford & Weaver, 2008).

There were two reasons for focusing on aggression in male teachers in this study: there have been many reports on aggressive incidents by male teachers in schools and the literature reveals that males are more inclined to be aggressive than females. For this reason the empirical and theoretical research undertaken focused on the question: *How do male teachers experience their own aggression?*

Aggression: antisocial behaviour

Aggression is antisocial behaviour that is intended to harm or hurt another person or is directed towards people or objects (Berkowitz, 1993; Fiske, 2010; Kassin, Fein & Markus, 2008; Kourkoutas, 2012; Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1993). Fiske (2010:329) posits that the phenomenon of aggression has three dimensions and it "varies on how active-passive, direct-indirect, and physical-verbal it is." The lite-rature distinguishes between different forms of aggression such as instrumental and hostile aggression (Berkowitz, 1993; Fiske, 2010; Kassin et al., 2008). *Instrumental aggression* is when harm is inflicted as a means of obtaining a desired goal. In other words, *instrumental aggression* can be viewed as a predetermined and controlled ac-tion. *Hostile aggression* has a deliberate intent which seeks harm as its primary goal.

The literature refers to proactive aggression and reactive aggression (Berkowitz, 1993; Fiske, 2010; Kassin et.al., 2008). *Proactive aggression* is the use of physical force to dominate or to exert power in order to threaten another individual; and *reactive aggression* is viewed as a response to a perceived threat. All forms of aggression have a negative impact not only on teachers themselves, but also on other individuals in the school environment. This often results in social rejection of the aggressors.

Questions such as what leads to male teachers' aggression and why they behave aggressively will now be explored, with reference to some theories on aggression that account for various forms of aggression. These theories include verbal, physical and emotional forms of aggression in teaching and learning environments, such as schools.

Why feel, think and behave aggressively?

Social Learning Theory notes the impact of environmental factors on peoples' learning of aggressive behaviour. This theory describes the manner in which individuals develop an understanding of how and when to be aggressive (Fiske, 2010). Social Learning Theory also explains how people "learn through the observation of others" and by way of "direct experience of rewards and punishments" (Kassin et al., 2008:391). Aggressive behaviour develops through emulating the aggressive actions or behaviour others model. In the cognitive matching process of first observing and then acting out the aggression results in moral disengagement, the belief that ethical standards, values are not applicable to oneself in social contexts. Moral disengagement thus leads to a disregard of other individuals' human values and reduces criticism of one's own aggressive behaviour, which in turn may exacerbate aggression (Berkowitz, 1993; Fiske, 2010). The premise of this theory is that aggression results from the way individuals construct their social situations within social knowledge domains (Crick, Grotpeter & Bigbee, 2002:1134; Fiske, 2010:389-414; Louw & Louw, 2007:22).

The Cognitive Structural Approach, on the other hand, stems from the notion that individuals mentally note social circumstances for aggression and that normative beliefs form a component of the individuals' aggression scripts. Fiske (2010:407) describes scripts as "habitual programs of behaviour, which can be strengthened by rehearsal (mental repetition), and retrieved if accessible." People receive, process or retain information from social interactions by observing and modelling, and imitating others' behaviour (Berkowitz, 1993; Botha, 2006; Kassin et al., 2008). Through observation and modelling of others, individuals develop aggression scripts, which are aggressive habits acquired over time. These theories indicate that the aggressive behaviour displayed by some male teachers has potentially far-reaching effects. One such effect is that learners who observe this aggressive behaviour may resort to and apply similar aggressive behaviour in similar or other social contexts, such as at home or in their communities. Another is that aggressive behaviour may be seen as the norm in teaching-learning environments by teachers (aggressors) and learners (observers).

In addition, the Cognitive Neo-association Theory connects the negative effect of

unpleasant experiences to the cognitive structural approach of aggression. Unpleasant experiences produced by frustration and provocation can create negative affect "which in turn stimulates associations connected with anger and fear" (Kassin et al., 2008: 411). Thus individuals' prior knowledge of aggression, their structured aggression scripts, has an effect on individuals' attribution of aggressive intent: "[i]mmediate conditions" prompt aggressive behaviour of individuals which is based on memory associations (Fiske, 2010:409). The frustration-aggression hypothesis implies that "frustrations produce aggressive inclinations" (Berkowitz, 1993:31). Aggressive tendencies of individuals can thus be generated by frustrations only to the extent that they are unpleasant, therefore not all aggression is instigated by frustration. Fiske (2010: 415) contests the view that "frustration leads to aggression in some form, and all aggression results from frustration of some kind". The negative effects of frustration arouse different reactions depending on what individuals feel and think. In many cases frustration and irritation are referred to in the literature as possible causes of aggression (Berkowitz, 1993; Botha, 2004; Fiske, 2010).

In the context of this study the concept 'male' refers to the gender role as socially constructed. Richardson and Hammock (2007:418) reiterate that "[g]ender roles are some of the most heavily socialized, and thus powerful roles. Therefore, apparent gender differences in aggressive behaviour may actually reflect the association between gender roles and aggression." Similarly, Bester and Du Plessis (2010:224) see gender-related violence as a "culture specific phenomenon." Nevertheless, male teachers are from different walks of life, and are more than mere mediators of learning, but are there to promote preferred skills, knowledge and values in learners which are feasible in relation to society (Vakalisa, 2010). They generally seek to instil qualities that will enable learners to reach responsible adulthood successfully. It should be noted that male teachers adopt and live out different identity roles in their profession because of the demands of their learners, the parents, the authorities and their communities (Killen, 2008). In contrast to the role of teachers, which is to promote safe learning and trusted environments for teachers and learners, the schools where they work have turned into dangerous places characterised by aggression and violence, as mentioned earlier.

Why are we failing to bring about change in individuals' aggressive behaviour?

In part, aggression theories can provide a conceptual-theoretical framework for the empirical investigation that was done. They explain how individuals develop an understanding of how, when, and why aggression is displayed. These theories provide only an understanding, a sense of justification, of aggressive behaviour. The theories do not adequately address the problem of how to rectify or eradicate aggressive behaviour or to help male teachers cope with aggressive behaviour. Transformative Learning Theory, which provides guidelines in this regard, will therefore be explained later. Phrased differently, transformative learning theory is an approach that will assist male

teachers to critically reflect on their worldview, and to recognise the behavioural changes to be made, so that they can take responsibility for their actions and create safe teaching-and-learning environments conducive to effective teaching.

Empirical investigation: methods and procedures

As was noted earlier, the research design was a qualitative one with an exploratory, descriptive and contextual focus. It was contextually based on the phenomenon of own aggression as experienced by male teachers. Phenomenological research was used in order to identify the essence of male teachers' lived experiences and the meaning they ascribed to their respective life worlds (De Vos, Strydom, Fouché & Delport, 2011).

A purposeful sample was applied to maximise the range of specific information to be obtained from and about the phenomenon (own aggression) as well as the context (Creswell, 2009; Merriam, 2001). The sample size was not decided, but was the result of data saturation. The participants were selected according to the following criteria: male teachers (gender), secondary school teachers in the employment of the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education. Although the sample size was limited to a selective sample of male teachers, the researchers remained in the field until data saturation had occurred. There were thus 17 male teacher participants (Nieuwenhuis, 2007).

Before commencement of the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the ethics committee of the university. As the participants were purposefully selected as voluntary participants, the ethical principles suggested by Boeije (2010) were applied. Informed consent to conduct the research was obtained from the Mpumalanga Department of Basic Education, the relevant School Governing Bodies, school principals, as well as the participants. The ethics of voluntary participation, justice, fairness, and the code of objectivity were applied during the research as ways to respect the dignity of all individuals involved in the research. The participants were not exposed to intentions and motives that were not directly related to the research, its methodology, or aims. Confidentiality was respected and so the identities of participants in tapes of interviews and transcripts were strictly safeguarded.

Data collection was through phenomenological individual interviews with each participant. The interviewer posed one central question, 'Tell me about your aggression', to each participant. Each interview was audio-taped and verbatim transcriptions were made of the tapes. Field notes were compiled to enhance the credibility of the research and also added to the researcher's ability to give a dense, rich description and interpretation of aggression.

To ensure rigour and trustworthiness, the following considerations were taken into account: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, which enhanced the reliability and validity of the research (Creswell, 2009:191): i) *Credibility*: The researchers established good rapport with the participants and remained in the field until the quality of the information obtained from the participants was rich and adequate.

Rigorous member checking was done in order to clarify the interpretations of the participants' experiences and avoid misinterpretation of the data collected. The field journal that was kept promoted reflexivity. ii) *Transferability*: A dense description of the findings was made so that transferability could be used as the criterion for applicability of the data. iii) *Dependability*: The research design and methods were described in detail. Triangulation in the form of field notes, observational notes, and transcripts was used to enhance the dependability of the results. The independent coders and the researchers engaged in discussion so that they could reach consensus on the identified themes and categories. iv) *Confirmability*: To ensure transparency, the data collection, data analyses, and other methodological issues were discussed in detail (Shank, 2006). Reflexive analysis was done in order for the researchers to bracket their own preconceived ideas and assumptions in order not to influence the data collection and analysis processes. In addition, independent coders audited and confirmed the identified themes and categories.

Tesch's (1990) method of data analysis as a systematic process of analysing the textual data was used (Creswell, 2009). An independent coder verified the findings using the prescribed protocol to confirm identified themes and categories. The following discussion highlights the main findings of participants' lived experiences of own aggression.

Findings and discussion

Three themes were identified during the data analysis: (i) male teachers experienced their own aggression in a variety of ways; (ii) they experienced a loss of power and/or control that elicited aggression; and (iii) the participants felt that having guidelines to which they could refer would enable them to cope with their experience of own aggression.

Firstly, participants experienced their own aggression in a variety of ways. They associated their own aggression with positive and negative feelings. They did not perceive themselves as aggressive. "I am not an aggressive person by nature…" "I think…I do not have much aggression…not an aggressive type of personality." They tended to use words of self-praise when describing or referring to themselves. They often referred to themselves as intelligent or having a strong personality, some maintaining that they were perfectionists: "…I am also a very intelligent person…"; "…I have a strong personality, not necessarily an overwhelming one… ." They detached themselves from their own behaviour and described themselves in the third person: "…other people go out, the first thing they can get, they kick…"; "Sometimes you feel, that you are becoming aggressive and you sometimes feel that you can assault a child…". One person was capable of assaulting a child or kicking a wall. Some teachers believed that sport could be a catharsis, a way to vent their aggression: "…even on the rugby field I was never punished for dirty play, for (aggressive play)"; "…one must, I believe use it (aggression) correctly…".

Participants reported that they sometimes needed to be aggressive in order to reach the high goals they had set themselves: "I am competitive in the sense that if I have my eye on a specific goal and I believe that it is attainable and reachable then I will go for it"; "I am driven by achievements, perhaps I now realize that this is an exaggeration." This could give rise to aggressive inclinations. A sense of power was welcomed even if it resulted from frightening and injuring others. Some participants experience was that inciting others, acting out their aggression, and even showing that they were cross or angry had positive effects in the sense that people co-operated better and therefore achieved better results: "A bad-tempered principal who often expresses his aggression may achieve better results." Although not all participants associated their own aggression with negative feelings, they experienced irritation and frustration negatively: "It is actually dangerous to have frustrated people."

Irritability can cause offensive reactions, and lead to feelings of discomfort, helplessness, inadequacy or distress and vulnerability. Irritability is also closely linked to aggression, as is frustration, which can produce aggressive inclinations to degrees that are unpleasant (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993). The data confirmed that these frustrations lead to withdrawal, letting things slide and not feeling part of the education system anymore: "…you are faced with people who are incompetent in certain situations – let things slide"; "…but the last few years I have worked out a couple of strategies so that I can stay out of such things (anger outbursts as a result of feeling incompetent, I feel powerless)."

As a result, some participants developed immense feelings of guilt, because of their inappropriate behaviour and the impact of this behaviour on the people around them: "…I told him (the learner) to... (swear word) out of my class and that worried me immensely afterwards"; "…the moment that you begin to shout, you feel bad and you think that it was unnecessary"; "…saying things impulsively that I might regret later, in the heat of the moment." However, they considered that their aggressive behaviour was justified. They added that they regretted the fact that they had lost self-control. Sometimes they even experienced a loss of dignity: "I feel bad now because I reacted in a certain way, I stand by my point of view, but I did it uncontrollably"; "if I do not win (in a conflict situation) then I lose my dignity and I lose something of myself, of my character."

Some participants resorted to verbal abuse, swearing, shouting and impulsive verbal reactions to situations: "... (swear word) out of my class"; "...if you cannot actually handle a class of forty boys then your aggression levels will rise..."; "...now one has a lot of guilty feelings, okay, but ehh, you should not have uhh, there is no cure for damage already done... ." Guilt and shame are both negative reactions, but shame appears to be much stronger, since it involves negative evaluations of self (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Fiske, 2010).

Participants also experienced themselves as being victims of the educational system in which they were discriminated against: "We probably have the best constitu-

tion, but then you see that even so evil methods (discrimination) are being used";
"…you know unfairness, is unfair treatment a fact of life." When people are feeling
upset they think less well of themselves and tend to see more risks and dangers in the
surrounding world and consequently blame a natural force or an innate object for their
troubles (Berkowitz, 1993; Okun, 2002).

Despondency was also experienced as a result of policies being introduced and
continuously changed, leaving some participants confused and overwhelmed and un-
able to cope with changes. They felt that their freedom of choice had been taken away,
resulting in their passion for education dying and their losing the desire to do a job: "I
could get up every morning with a song in my heart, this I cannot say nowadays";
"…even when people provoked me, I still felt I could control it, I never experienced
inability"; "…I mean I was in education with a passion, education was a calling."

Many participants suppressed these feelings of anger at school and often used
their home life to blow off steam: "…the other place where your sounding board is, I
think your wife…"; "In my relationship with my wife and my children I tried not to
be aggressive, I think I achieved this to a certain degree…I think I may have come
across to them as being aggressive,"; "Luckily I have a wife to whom I can unburden
myself and blow off steam."

Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) made many teachers feel less competent even
though they had had many years of experience in education: "…the OBE is more a
casual type of education, they do mostly what they (the learners) want to,"; "Look at
OBE and the manner in which things are done is completely different to what we are
used to." Participants experienced a lack of support (Department of Basic Education)
and communicative channels: "…you see people who are totally incompetent above
you..."; "…structures from the top down (circuit managers, district mangers up to head
office) are not there to support you."

Secondly, participants believed that a loss of power and/or control elicited ag-
gression. They stated that the loss of power and/or control necessitated aggression in
order to regain the power. They longed for the days when a "principal was still a
principal", where the principal was in charge and had power and control: "I wanted to
be in control of everything, from left to right"; "...I feel powerless although now it is
a case of withdrawal." There were certain guidelines which guided their actions and
gave them a sense of power and control – rigid guidelines – which they followed
accordingly. Now they experienced guidelines "… as wide as the Lord's mercy." They
insisted that power must be in the hands of the teacher, as power placed them in
control. Some teachers had developed a self-defence mechanism because they felt their
integrity or honour to be at stake.

The participants reported that when they were in control they had no need to
become angry or tended not to become angry. Participants in this study expressed their
longing for the pre-1994 educational system, which they viewed as a previous golden
age, in which absolute power and control could – and should – be wielded over

learners: "The child was better educated at that point in time (when an educator was still allowed to administer corporal punishment) and they (the learners) had better manners." The erosion they experienced in their power in the new dispensation made them believe that they had no option but to resort to anger or aggressive behaviour: "…those feelings of aggression were not a problem for me…as you were in control until 1995,"; "I come from two sets, I worked in a system before '94... (and also) in a new dispensation…those feelings of aggression were not a problem for me (before 1994)." As Berkowitz (1993) explains, a feeling of powerlessness makes human beings prone to oppose anything that lessens their greatness, superiority, power or importance.

Thirdly, participants felt that having guidelines for action and behaviour would enable them to cope with their experience of own aggression. Some of them experienced the need to develop and enhance their internal locus of control as they were aware that they were responding reactively in certain situations. One said "…I believe that I am a person. It is all reactive performance – all the aggression is reactive." Aggression is thus experienced as a response to a perceived threat (reactive aggression) and the tendency to perceive hostile intent on the part of others will affect the likelihood or intensity of reactive aggression, but not the likelihood of proactive aggression (Baron & Richardson, 1994; Berkowitz, 1993; Fiske, 2010; Kassin et al., 2008).

The participants had a clear sense that remaining calm was a better option because once they started shouting, they not only lost control of the situation but also something of themselves: "...as civilised people we should be able to say that we do not shout at one another,"; "...if you can manage yourself in the class and you can implement discipline without getting cross and shouting, thereby losing yourself and by winning the children's respect then there will be less aggression,"; "I believe that the moment that you are annoyed and begin to shout then you have lost the situation."

Berkowitz (1993) is convinced that the greater the level of conflict between people, where a person verbally attacks another person, the better the chance that the aggression will be followed by physical assault. As Dobson (1992) points out, nagging and yelling at learners can become a habit, as people often use anger to get action instead of using action to get action. Trying to control learners by screaming or shouting at them is futile. Shouting is an indication of discipline problems on the part of learners and teachers. Most participants in this study acknowledged that to become angry or aggressive was a choice: "…you make the choice to be aggressive,"; "I decided to get cross, I decided to get furious,"; "…one must work at making healthy choices and to ensure that you exercise them."

Participants also experienced a need to acquire skills in an attempt to understand and also to apply the OBE curriculum. They remarked that they had not been trained as OBE teachers, for example, for group work skills: "...look at OBE and the manner in which things are done is completely different to what we are used to..."; "...the OBE

is more a casual type of education, they do mostly what they (learners) want to."
Anxiety and concern about the lack of in-depth training amongst teachers were major
sources of concern to them. They found it quite difficult to do group work since it
resulted in a lot of noise. This "*noisy OBE*" was quite stressful, not only for the
teachers but also for the learners. The older teachers with supposedly more experience
were critical of the attitude of the young teachers coming from the universities: "… for
them (the young teachers) it is more acceptable that the children talk softly and move
around." The older participants could not accept the idea that learners should talk and
move around during group work.

Some participants were despondent and discouraged because of the lack of edu-
cational structures and support they experienced. The Department of Basic Education
officials who were supposed to support them could not do so and therefore the parti-
cipants labelled them as incompetent: "...in one fell swoop our structures above us
were cut away,"; "...you see people who are totally incompetent above you"; "...
structures from the top down (circuit managers, district managers up to head office)
are not there to support you."

Participants furthermore experienced relationships in the educational environment
as unconstructive and unhelpful; they stated that they were not sure how to approach
and/or handle the different stakeholders. They stated the need to set clear rules for their
classes at the beginning of each year after consulting with the learners. They knew that
they could not rectify one incorrect action with another inappropriate action: "…one
wrong thing (by behaving aggressively) joined to another wrong thing (learners and
educators who do not do their work) must rectify (laugh) a minus and a minus equals
a plus (interviewee laughs out loud at himself)." The participants suggested that
differences be sorted out man to man and not by spreading rumours behind one an-
other's backs: "…if someone (a colleague) makes you unhappy, talk it out man to man,
you cannot go and begin a campaign (spread bad rumours) behind his back." They
wanted professional relationships.

The participants also felt that co-operation between colleagues was essential in
order to establish a healthy and happy work environment: "…educators who are not
at school," ; "…what makes me feel aggressive is when I feel people are not doing
their work, such things, this fires me up quickly, I must be honest with you now and
I become completely fired up." The participants reported that the disciplinary systems
that were in place did not work. Learners, on the other hand, who were punished be-
came negative towards the teachers who applied the disciplinary system and some-
times even vandalised teachers' property. In such cases, participants' experience was
that in order to nurture discipline they needed to resort to being "bullies", to give the
learners a fright: "…then I have to resort to being a bully, as a warning to others, in
order to nurture discipline." As a result, some teachers experienced an inability to
enforce discipline, and with this the discipline in the school deteriorated: "…he (the
problem learner) becomes negative towards you (the teacher) and then they start to do

these things (puncture your car tyres, throw stones at your house, or break your windows) … vandalistic inclinations."

Finally, it was evident that frustration and irritation among the participants came in part from not knowing how to verbalise feelings and this seemed to have resulted in aggressive behaviour. The loss of power and control gave rise to feelings of disempowerment that in turn triggered aggression.

Recommendations

What can be done to address male teachers' aggressive behaviour?
It seems that current teacher education and development does not provide teachers with sufficient guidance on how to deal with aggressive behaviour in schools. This section offers some recommendations on how this situation could be improved. This includes an argument for Transformative Learning Theory, an adult-based learning approach, to be used to change male teachers' behaviour.

In the light of the findings in this article, the Department of Basic Education and the school management teams need to find ways of enabling male teachers to change their destructive aggressive behaviour:

- Opportunities and safe spaces for self-reflection need to be created for male teachers to engage in dialogue in a more reflective and critical manner to vent their feelings and thus reduce their anger or tension.
- An awareness and an understanding of power and control, as core social motives, need to be developed.
- Male teachers need to develop social skills and self-control techniques so they can avoid aggressive interactions with others and improve their relationships with their colleagues and learners.
- As a way of contributing to their overall wellbeing, male teachers need to establish and maintain constructive relationships, manage conflict and discipline to develop and strengthen their internal locus of control.
- Male teachers need to take responsibility for their own behaviour so they can assist in the resolution of discipline problems in schools.
- Male teachers need to engage in ongoing professional development making it possible for them to acquire the skills and understanding they require for new curricula.

Implication for practice

Implementing the above recommendations creates, enhances, and fosters safe school environments where teachers and learners can engage effectively in teaching and learning. If male teachers are able to create and maintain positive constructive relationships and use conflict management skills, they will be able to reduce antisocial, aggressive, or violent behaviour. They will also be able to change the way they deal with disciplinary problems at schools. These kinds of changes could also reduce the amount of modelling of aggressive behaviour for learners and reinforcement of the notion that

aggressive behaviour is the norm. This would ultimately create safe schooling spaces for teachers and learners and improve their wellbeing.

Why Transformative Learning Theory?
The findings of the study reveal a need for certain male teachers to be transformed. Critical reflection is an important way for them to gain a better understanding of themselves and others in their teaching-learning environment. The practice of continuous interplay between reflection and action needs to be instilled in male teachers.

The final part of this article provides a more detailed rationale for recommending that Transformative Learning, an adult-based learning approach, be used to encourage a reduction of aggressive behaviour among male teachers. Two questions are posed: *What is the purpose of Transformative Learning?* and *Why should Transformative Learning be used to address and bring about change in the destructive nature of aggressive behaviour?*

The purpose of Transformative Learning is to bring about social change. Transformative Learning endeavours to assist individuals to be able to transform and reframe their worldviews through critical reflection, in an environment supporting critical reflection (Taylor, 1998). Thus understanding the self, critically reflecting on one's belief system and worldview, and recognizing behavioural changes to be made enables people to give meaning to their lives. Gutek (2009:405) argues that "education and schooling cannot be understood outside of the sociological, historical, philosophical, cultural, economical, political and psychological contexts that shape it". Human beings possess an emancipatory interest in social and psychological forms regarding themselves in a critical understanding of society (Blake & Massechelein, 2005). It appears therefore that Critical Theory, which seeks "to raise consciousness and bring about transformative change in society and education" (Gutek, 2009:408), informs Transformative Learning.

Transformative Learning enables individuals to critically reflect on their own assumptions about their own experiences of aggression in the world they live in (Mezirow, 1994). In other words, they have to learn to critically reflect on the frames of reference that inform their knowledge, values and beliefs through which they perceive and interpret their life worlds. Boyd (in Taylor, 1998:18) places the focus on "discernment" where male teachers need to be "receptive", thus having an open mind about what they think and recognize which changes need to be made to their behaviour in the world they live in.

Mezirow's (1994) notion of 'individual transformation' offers a starting point for real social change. Male teachers first need to recognise the behaviour changes that need to be made before they are receptive to real social change (Taylor, 1998). Critical reflection, with a focus on self-reflection and social change, creates an opportunity to become open to the perspectives of others and to be willing to adopt new ways. When male teachers are able to recognize and understand their own aggressive behaviour,

they will be able to focus not only on the possibility of individual transformation but also on the social change required to set them free from the destructive nature of aggressive behaviour. Beard & Wilson (2006:16) describe experience of this kind as "the fact of consciously being the subject of a state or condition; of being consciously affected by an event; a state or condition reviewed subjectively; an event by which one is affected; and, knowledge resulting from actual observation or from what one has undergone." Experience is thus the interactions of male teachers and their environments, in other words, a process between their actions and thoughts.

Overall, to address male teachers' aggressive behaviour necessitates practice and education, in-service and pre-service professional training and development, with deliberate opportunities for the development of teachers' skills. These opportunities should be provided in view of their importance for total school development. Techniques and strategies for self-reflection must also be encouraged in order to be more open and receptive to others' beliefs and worldviews.

A prominent discourse that emerged from this study is power and control; a facet of the research problem that needs further exploration.

Concluding remark

At present, certain male teachers are responsible for a significant amount of the aggression and violence in South African schools. Transformative Learning should become part of in-service and pre-service professional training and development because it suggests promising ways of transforming behaviour.

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