

## **Moral Education in Schools Programme (MESP)**

### **Questionnaire to Teachers and Learners in Grades 8 and 12 Brettonwood High School**

Contextual relevance is important when developing a Character Building Programme. To ensure that the programme material was relevant, teachers and learners at Brettonwood High School were asked to participate in a survey to get their comments and concerns about moral problems at the school. Brettonwood is new to the CRISP project having only come on board in 2000. The decision to pilot the MESP here was partly due to the enthusiasm and support of the principal.

Questionnaire A was given to teachers involved with grades 8 and 12 (See Appendix A) and Questionnaire B was given to learners in grades 8 and 12 (See Appendix B). Seven teachers ( $7/27 = 26\%$ ), forty-eight grade 8 learners ( $48/168 = 29\%$ ) and twelve grade 12 learners ( $12/76 = 15\%$ ) completed the questionnaire.

The low response rate from teachers could be due to the many requests that they have received lately from other organisations (including the University of Natal, Durban) to complete questionnaires and surveys. The principal commented at the initial programme meeting that the teachers had been inundated with requests to participate in research studies and were not willing to participate in other research endeavours. Nevertheless, some teachers did complete the questionnaire giving the programme facilitators information about moral concerns and problems from their perspectives. The low response rate from learners appears to follow the pattern identified by other CRISP related studies (Chatty, 1999; Muthukrishna, N. and Moletsane, R. 1999)<sup>1</sup>.

### **Data Analysis**

#### **Questionnaire A: Teachers' responses**

Questionnaire A was given to teachers involved directly in teaching grades 8 and 12. They were asked to list problems they encountered or experienced in their classrooms in relation to two categories:

1. Among/between learners
2. Between learners and teachers

#### **Problems encountered among learners**

Teachers were asked to list the problems that learners encountered or experienced among themselves. Figure 1 shows the teachers' perceptions of problems encountered among learners. The five main problems listed in order of frequency were:

##### **1. Disrespect**

Six teachers mentioned that learners engaged in name-calling, swearing, teasing and fighting among themselves. They also noted that learners disrupted and

---

interfered with one another, showing a lack of consideration toward fellow learners.

**2. Inappropriate physical contact**

Four teachers noted their concern that learners engaged in inappropriate physical contact during class. This included both intimate and aggressive contact.

**3. Dishonesty**

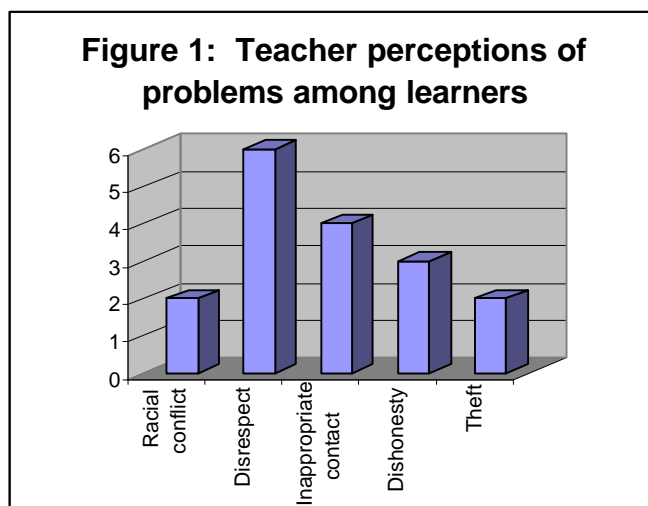
Three teachers mentioned dishonesty as a problem

**4. Racial conflict**

Two teachers mentioned racial conflict. Learners did not interact freely with one another but preferred to remain within racial groupings. One teacher described racial conflict as “subtle but evident”.

**5. Theft**

Two teachers regarded theft as a problem in the classroom.

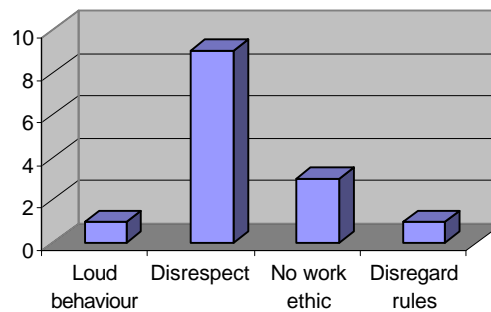


**N=7**

**Problems between learners and teachers**

Figure 2 shows teachers' perceptions of problems between themselves and the learners they teach. Overwhelmingly, teachers noted that the primary problem they encountered was disrespect on the part of the learners. Seven teachers mentioned this problem citing rudeness, arrogance, vulgarity, talking out of turn, cheeky behaviour and a lack of adherence to simple courtesies and manners as problems resulting in disrespectful behaviour. Another problem identified was the absence of a work ethic on the part of learners. Three of the teachers described learners as irresponsible, full of excuses when not doing the required class work and lazy. One teacher noted that grade 8 learners were loud in their behaviour and another that grade 12 learners had a complete disregard for the rules of the school. The teacher elaborated saying that some learners seemed to have an attitude that 'anything goes, the crime is getting caught for wrongdoing'.

**Figure 2: Teacher perceptions of problems between learners and teachers**



**N=7**

### **Teachers' moral concerns**

Teachers' mentioned disrespect and a lack of consideration and tolerance toward others as serious concerns. They noted that some of the learners displayed a lack of integrity (lying and deceit toward others) and had no sense of right and wrong behaviour. The prevailing sentiment seemed to be that 'anything goes' with little or no consideration shown toward self, other learners or teachers. One teacher noted that some learners did not have a sense of morality to which one could appeal and there was, as a result, no 'sense of shame, with the learner being unable to admit to error'.

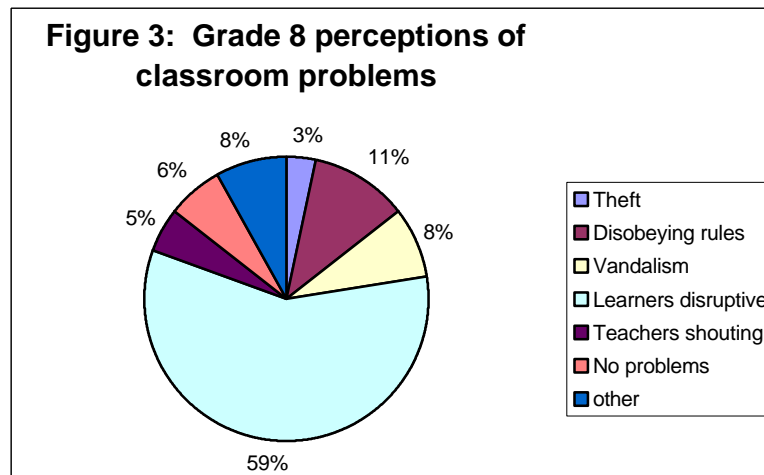
### **Questionnaire B: Grade 8 responses**

#### **Problems in the classroom**

Figure 3 shows that 59% of learners regarded the disruption of lessons by fellow learners as a problem. Learners mentioned the following as examples of disruptive classroom behaviour:

- ⊗ Others talking while the teacher was talking.
- ⊗ High levels of noise that prevented others from concentrating or hearing the teacher.
- ⊗ A lack of respect toward teachers when learners shouted and swore at them.
- ⊗ Learners 'fooling around' while the teacher was talking.

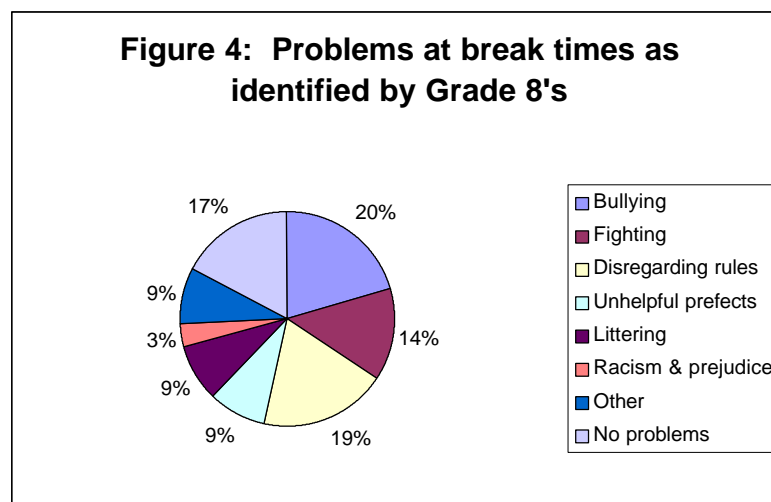
11% of learners saw disobedience toward rules as a problem in the classroom. Learners commented on others eating during class and not listening to requests from teachers as examples of this behaviour. 8% of learners were concerned about vandalism of the school desks and walls. Another 8% mentioned issues such as classrooms being too small, overcrowding, "ugly" colours, too much work expected in too short a time and the fact that some learners did not have textbooks as problems. 6% felt that there were no problems in the classroom. One of these respondents noted that there were no problems and that 'everyone respects one another'. 5% of learners saw teachers' shouting as problematic and as unprofessional behaviour. One of the respondents noted that the shouting was in response to noisy students. 3% of learners felt concerned about theft and complained that they should not have to carry their bags on them all the time as the school should be able to control theft.



**N=48**

#### Problems experienced during break times

Figure 4 illustrates problems identified by Grade 8 learners during break times<sup>2</sup>.



**N=48**

20% of learners were concerned about bullying by older learners. They mentioned that the older learners worried them for money, threatened them, begged them for lunch and pushed them off the stands. 19% of learners mentioned the disregard for school rules as problematic. They referred to learners smoking on the school field and drinking alcohol as the main infringements of school rules. One learner pointed out that other learners carried knives on them to school. 17% did not think that there were any problems and 14% regarded fighting among learners as problematic with one learner commenting that they acted "like animals". Some (9%) regarded prefects as unhelpful, not assisting them and doing nothing to stop older learners from bullying them. Some learners saw prefects as wanting to control everything (learners mentioned being chased

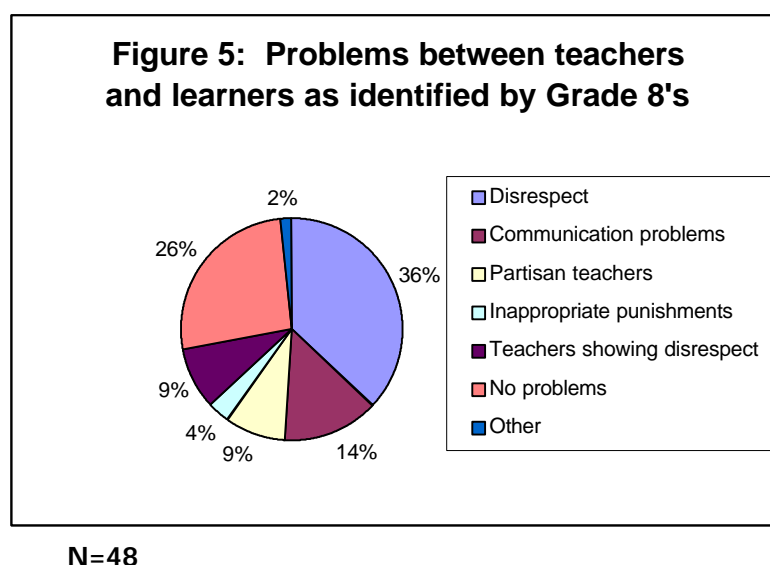
<sup>1</sup> Breaktimes are an important point of focus as this is when learners socialise and when interpersonal conflicts often erupt.

from the shade into the sun). In particular, not allowing grade 8 learners to use the school stands seemed to result in a feeling that prefects were unhelpful. Littering was mentioned as a problem by 9% of learners. Another 9% mentioned issues like the toilets being locked, rough games, break time being too brief and not enough shade as general problems. 3% of learners commented on experiences of racism and during break time.

### Problems experienced between teachers and learners

Figure 5 shows that 36% of the learners identified disrespect as a problem. Disrespect was described as:

- ⊗ Back chatting teachers ("Child always troubling the teacher and always talking back to the teacher").
- ⊗ Not listening to instructions and directives from teachers.
- ⊗ Not being "nice" toward teachers,
- ⊗ Distracting the class.
- ⊗ Making excessive amounts of noise in classrooms.



26% of learners claimed not to see any problems between teachers and learners. Another 14% saw communication problems between learners and teachers as problematic. These learners felt that some of the teachers did not smile readily ("teachers are nice, but some of them don't even smile, so the relationship between teachers and learners is not good") and were not interested in listening to the problems brought by learners. One learner cited an example of a lack of communication – "I have experienced where a teacher orders to go the right direction and I do but she pulls me and I say to her please don't pull me, she says I don't have manours".<sup>3</sup> Teachers showing disrespect toward learners was mentioned by 9% of grade 8 learners. Teachers calling learners' names (idiots), using bad language and not addressing learners in a professional manner, were all cited as examples of disrespect toward learners. Another 9% of learners saw teachers as partisan. To highlight this, one of the learners responded that

<sup>2</sup> It is important that respondents be heard throughout the report. Respondents have therefore been allowed to speak in their own voices, spelling mistakes and all!

“some teachers choose their pets. My form teacher is not like that even though I thought she will favour some like the Indian children because she is Moslem, she is fair but not like all the others”. 4% said that the use of inappropriate punishment resulted in problematic teacher-learner interaction. These learners felt that only those who engaged in wrongdoing should be punished instead of the whole class having to bear the consequences of the few that transgressed what was expected of them in the classroom. 2% felt that some learners were demotivated and this led to problems between themselves and the teachers.

### Grade 8 concerns about problems occurring within the school

Figure 6 shows an overview of concerns and problems identified by Grade 8 learners. What is interesting to note is that only 2% of problems and concerns relate to teachers' behaviour toward learners. The remaining 98% of concerns and problems refer to the learners themselves. In other words, the learners had concerns and problems primarily about themselves and the way in which they conducted themselves within the school context.

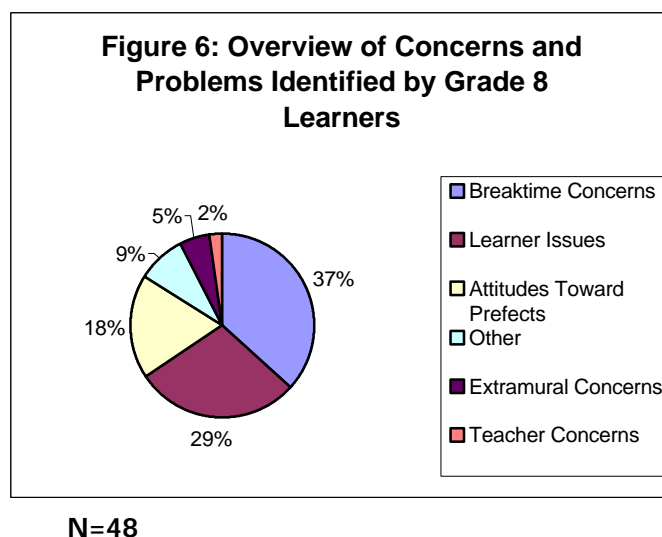


Figure 6 shows that 37% of concerns related to break time. Problems identified by learners included (not listed in order of importance):

- ⊗ Smoking and drugs (dagga being sold).
- ⊗ Begging for lunches.
- ⊗ Bullying by older male learners.
- ⊗ Tuck shop needs more people to help with serving as well as grade lines as some learners are prevented from buying. The woman serving learners shouts at them.
- ⊗ One tap at the school to drink water from.
- ⊗ Toilets are locked at break times and are dirty.
- ⊗ No shade.
- ⊗ Fighting after school behind the change rooms and learners being hit to force them to move off the stands.
- ⊗ Littering
- ⊗ Gambling

29% of concerns related to issues between learners and their behaviour towards one another. These concerns included:

- ⊗ Inappropriate sexual contact (kissing after school in public, when learners walked past they were made to feel as if they were intruding).
- ⊗ Learners did not take responsibility for their actions. They did not attend detention when they were told to, they 'bunked' lessons, talked during class and walked the wrong way on corridors.
- ⊗ Theft of fellow learners property (stationary, jewellery, bus tickets, money).
- ⊗ Talking and screaming in the corridors.
- ⊗ Destruction of furniture and walls (desks were broken).
- ⊗ Learners carrying weapons and cellphones.
- ⊗ Untidy uniforms.

18% felt concerned about the relationship between learners and prefects. Concerns listed were:

- ⊗ Learners swore at prefects
- ⊗ Prefects abuse their power – "they gave a learner duty if the learner challenged the prefect's wrongdoing".

9% of learners did not mention any concerns or problems occurring at their school. Another 5% mentioned problems relating to extramural activities. They noted that there were no swimming lessons for non-swimmers, that the buses to Ntuzuma and Newtown were inadequate and that there were not enough extra-mural activities at the school. Only 2% of concerns related to problems with teachers. The problems mentioned were that some teachers did not teach during class and that they were not using an expensive textbook that they were required to purchase.

### **Societal problems identified by Grade 8**

Grade 8 learners were asked to name serious problems they saw happening in society. Table 1 gives an overview of the problems they identified.

**Table 1: Societal Problems Identified by Grade 8 Learners**

Concerns	%	Comments
Crime and violence	48	This included violence, rape, sexual and physical abuse toward women and children, murder and robbery. "Crime and hijackings are very bad, I get so scared about this, they take all your things and <u>still</u> kill you - that is serious". "Sexual abuse, it makes me angry to hear about innocent girls been raped, for that South Africa has to bring the death penalty back".
No problems/comments	40	These learners did not think that there were any serious problems within society and had no comments to make. This could be due to their level of cognitive and moral reasoning, as they would only have begun to enter the stage of what Piaget termed formal operational thinking. Other possible reasons for the lack of insight could be as a result of the dominance of the peer group and the egocentricity of this life stage. "I have seen nothing serious" typified the comments made in response to the question asked.
AIDS/HIV	6	"Too many people which have AIDS and HIV".
Drugs	4	"I see drugs being spreaded around our societys. I also see them selling dagga <sup>4</sup> ".
Homeless children	2	"Homeless people street kids."
Lack of compassion		This included jealousy and unkind behaviour toward others, especially those in need. "People must be helpful to fellow human beings in need. Like when crime is committed". "Jealousy and obesity to people".
Flood victims	2	"People dieying because of floods".
Motor vehicle accidents	2	
Racial discrimination	2	
Unemployment	2	"Lack of jobs."
Early sexual activity	2	"Too many teenagers wanting to have sex while they young."

**N=48**

---

<sup>4</sup> Marijuana

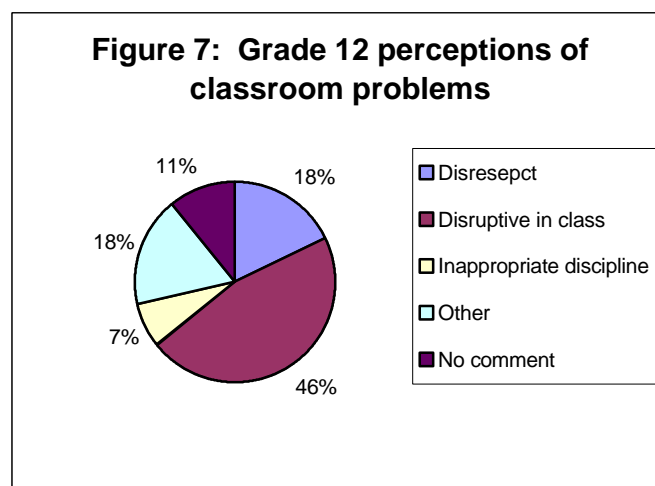


## Grade 12 Responses: Problems in the classroom

Figure 7 shows Grade 12 learners' perceptions of classroom problems.

46% felt that disruption in class was a problem for them. They cited the lack of a work ethic as one of the reasons for the disruption. The noise levels in class were seen as too high with teachers having little control over the class ("pupils misbehave while the teacher is talking and she shouts"). Uncooperative learners were seen to disrupt the learning potential for others.

- ⊗ 18% felt that there was no respect shown toward teachers.
- ⊗ 18% mentioned racism, peer pressure groups and a lack of self-confidence among learners as other problems.
- ⊗ 11% of learners had no comments.
- ⊗ 7% of learners felt that the teachers made use of inappropriate discipline measures to contain and control learners.
- ⊗ One learner commented that "some teachers still has racism. They take the children they like with care whereas if they don't like you they show you that by being horrible to you".
- ⊗ Another learner stated 'that children are making teachers angry and they punish the wrong people'.

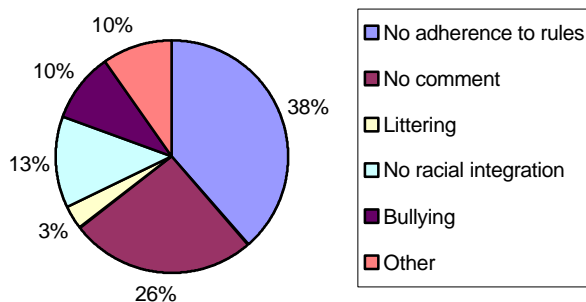


## Problems experienced during break times

Figure 8 shows the problems experienced by Grade 12 learners during break times.

- ⊗ 38% felt concerned that their peers were not adhering to school rules. In particular, the issues of smoking and gambling (in order of priority) were seen as problematic.
- ⊗ 26% of learners had no comments to make.
- ⊗ 13% mentioned a lack of racial integration as problematic. One of the learners who responded remarked that it was "blacks with blacks and whites with whites".
- ⊗ 10% saw bullying as problematic.

**Figure 8: Problems experienced by Grade 12's during break time**



- ⊗ 10% commented on pupils loitering in buildings, a lack of order, being bothered by others and “students behaving chaotically” as examples of problems that they experience during break-time.
- ⊗ 3% were concerned about littering of the school premises.

#### Problems experienced between teachers and learners

**Figure 9: Problems between learners and teachers as identified by Grade 12's**

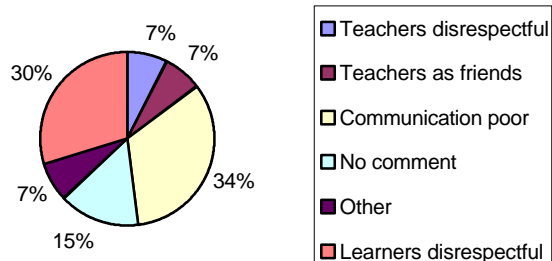


Figure 9 shows Grade 12 perceptions about the problems between learners and teachers:

- ⊗ 34% saw poor communication as a problem. One of the learners commented that “they don’t have a very good understanding of each other. Pupils should take time to listen to teachers and teachers should do the same. There is very little communication or relationships”. These learners did not regard teachers as understanding and empathic and some felt that teachers did not care about their individual problems.
- ⊗ 30% felt that learners behaved in disrespectful ways toward teachers. One of the respondents noted that some learners purposefully tried to make the teacher feel unimportant and unwanted and deliberately try to make the teacher angry. On the whole disrespect was seen as back chatting teachers.

- ⊗ 15% had no comments to make.
- ⊗ 7% regarded teachers as disrespectful. These learners saw the teachers' lack of patience, favouritism and "abuse of power" as disrespectful.
- ⊗ 7% felt concerned about teachers being seen as friends instead of as authority figures. One of the comments was that "the sense of relying on teachers as parents has gone missing. Teachers are their friends now, boyfriends maybe?"
- ⊗ 7% were concerned about racism and teachers not teaching well.

### Grade 12 concerns about problems occurring in the school

Table 2 highlights Grade 12 learners' concerns about problems occurring within the school. Problems are listed in order of frequency.

**Table 2: Grade 12 concerns about problems occurring within the school**

Concerns/Problems	%	Comments
Disrespect	33	"Respect. There is hardly any between learners and teachers". "Pupils do not respect people in authority at times, especially prefects".
Smoking, gambling & drugs	33	
Communication problems	21	"Innocent people are convicted with the violators who cause all the problems".
Bullying	21	"Well I've see lot of bullies in the school especially the children in higher grade like grade 9,10,11. They think there are old enough. So they bully the grade 8 children".
Racism	17	"Different race groups refusing to work out their differences". "There is a general air of tension between the different racial groups. There is seldom any actual violence between, but there is always the feeling that it will happen".
Standards lowering	8	"Standard of educating is dropping". "Teachers feel that they will still get paid when they don't teach us and we fail".
Careless attitude	8	"Teachers and pupils don't seem to care"
Contact between sexes	8	"Pupils who touch each other and kiss during school that is unacceptable as far as I know" "We are not allowed to positively interact between sexes"
No problems	8	"Not really, cause the teachers are very strict if you do something wrong you get suspended or they call your parents in immediately".
Lack of self-confidence	4	"Lack of self confidence amongst learners especially matrices".
Littering	4	
Weapons at school	4	
Theft	4	
Children living on their own	4	"Children live on their own without parents".
No morals	4	"Learners do not know the difference between right and wrong".

**N=12**

## Societal problems identified by Grade 12 learners

Table 3 below highlights the societal problems identified by Grade 12 learners. Problems are listed in order of frequency.

**Table 3: Societal Problems Identified by Grade 12 Learners**

Problem	%	Comments
Crime and violence	58	<p>"People should develop a sense of security, but in SA it is impossible".</p> <p>"Violence is increasing and now we live in a dangerous society".</p> <p>"Well, murder is very high here. People kill for no reason. If a person get's a gun he think's that's he can kill anyone who come across him. People with guns insult people with no gun and when you answer him in your own way than he shoot you for no reason".</p> <p>"People getting killed by bein poked and shot".</p> <p>"Violence and the nonchalant attitude towards it".</p> <p>"Society in general seems to be falling apart. Not many people these days wander from their small groups. Because of violence, people seem to be withdrawing more and more".</p>
Child & woman abuse	17	One learner commented that "mothers should stop hurting their children".
Affirmative action	17	<p>"The opposite of apartheid or the same?"</p> <p>"Too many wrong people in positions of power and not doing much to help out the country".</p> <p>"Whatever happened to equal rights (what a joke)".</p> <p>"People choosing over skin instead of skill".</p> <p>"Choose the people for their skills and qualifications and not for their skin colour!!!!"</p>
Alcohol & drugs	17	
Racism	13	
AIDS	13	"Here in SA the society is losing the people especially family members are dying of the virus called AIDS".
Unemployment	4	
Littering	4	<p>"uncleanfulness"</p> <p>"I see people littering on the streets but there bin on the streets in town which means they don't care about they country or city".</p>
No altruism	4	The learner commented that "people don't care about one another anymore, respect has gone, people are self-centered.
Teenage pregnancies	4	
Moral decline	4	"Decline of good morals in human beings in general".

**N = 12**