

Pupil's death highlights need for anger management

Masoka Dube

There is a need to educate pupils on alternative ways of resolving problems to avoid unnecessary deaths and injuries, according to experts.

They were commenting on a recent incident in which a 16-year-old pupil allegedly stabbed a fellow 15-year-old pupil to death outside the gate of Ikatisong Secondary School in Letlhabile, North West.

Sources familiar with the situation say the two were classmates and friends.

North West police spokesperson Sergeant Kelebogile Morake confirmed the incident, saying: "Police are investigating a case of murder following the fatal stabbing of a 15-year-old in

Zone 4, Letlhabile."

On 25 August, Letlhabile police received a complaint from Letlhabile Clinic that a 15-year-old male pupil had been brought to the facility with stab wounds.

"The victim succumbed to his injuries and was declared deceased upon arrival," said Morake.

The arrested pupil was injured during the incident and is receiving medical attention.

He is expected to appear in the Brits Magistrate's Court to face a murder charge.

Yesterday, education expert Hendrick Mekaneta said there was a need to offer lessons on anger management and a way of dealing with problems instead of resorting to violence.

"The lessons have to start at foundation phase. Pupils must

be taught how to manage anger. But of importance is the issue of mental health. Some of the pupils cannot manage their emotions effectively. This needs to be addressed by support teams such as psychologists."

Mekaneta said advocacy groups and other relevant stakeholders need to strengthen school safety and to work on an early intervention strategy, especially when pupils are involved in bullying incidents.

"What is even more important is the need to deploy education psychologists and social workers to assist teachers. But I think government alone will not be able to win the war against criminal conduct in schools.

"Communities also have to play an active role as pupils are members of communities before

they become pupils. Therefore, there is a greater need for a collaborative approach in dealing with acts of crime within and around schools."

Kathija Yassim, a professor at North-West University School for Continuing Education, said it was tragic.

"Two families and an entire school community are left dealing with the consequences. While the facts of the case must be established by the police and the courts, incidents such as this force us to confront the broader issue of violence among young people.

"We need stronger collaboration between schools, families, communities, social services and law enforcement agencies, alongside better access to psychosocial support and

conflict-resolution mechanisms for pupils.

"We must ask whether warning signs are being identified early enough and whether young people have adequate support to manage conflict before it escalates into violence. Our response cannot be limited to searches, punishment and increased security, important as appropriate safety measures may be.

"Schools also need functioning mechanisms for conflict resolution, psychosocial support, early intervention, pupil voice and the development of healthy ways of dealing with anger and disagreement."

She said most importantly, the death of a pupil represents a profound failure of the protective environment collectively owed to the children.

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