



Mr Ben Daza
Committee Coordinator
Standing Committee on Social Development

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The Quaker Peace Centre advocates non-violence and the abolishment of corporal punishment. I believe that corporal punishment is violent and damaging to the dignity of the individual.

Some teachers still use corporal punishment. The continued use of this practice sustains the fallacious belief that it is acceptable to solve problems using violence. South Africa is plagued by violent behaviour; our television screens glamorize violence daily while violent behaviour threatens innocent lives every minute. When we use corporal punishment, we teach the child that it is alright to use violence to solve problems. We cannot afford to continue to contribute to the overwhelming levels of violence endemic to our country.

Some people believe that the removal of corporal punishment has led to the increase of violence in our schools. We argue that several other factors have caused this upsurge in violent behaviour, particularly the removal of trained arts and sports teachers and their associated programmes from most schools. This has resulted in the loss of a safe controlled environment in which learners can experience and learn to deal with, the emotional turmoil associated with dysfunctional backgrounds. Learners no longer have the benefit of arts and sports to give vent to their frustrations and confusions.

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Arts can bring about order from confusion and in sport learners can release pent up energy and experience the benefits of belonging to a team and learning the rules of the game. However what we have now is a situation where all their adrenalin is being channeled into violent, anti-social expressions of anger and conflict.

Positive discipline develops self-disciplined learners capable of non-violent resolution of conflict.

In positive discipline:

- Every action has a consequence; a positive action receives an affirming response, a negative action receives a negative response or consequence or punishment.
- Every right in a school has a responsibility – neglect the responsibility and a privilege is suspended.
- Respect is the yardstick by which all behaviour at the school is measured and this value dictates the way we do things at our school.
- Teachers lead by example, and everybody at the school, including parents, is responsible for the discipline of children.
- Every misdemeanour is followed up and no unacceptable behaviour is tolerated.

We believe that people do better when they feel better about themselves, and that in order for behaviour to improve, it requires guidance and support. Solutions to stop the recurrence of the offending behaviour have to be found. Punishment over a long time becomes ineffective - which is why corporal punishment had to be administered daily.

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Parkhurst Primary school in Mitchell's Plain Cape Town started using positive discipline in 2005 and as a result it has been able to disband its disciplinary committee.

Positive discipline is not a soft approach to discipline but everyone has to take responsibility for the choices that they make about their behaviour.

When everyone at school has respect for the learners and educators, the atmosphere becomes less stressed and people can communicate more easily.

At the moment corporal punishment is still being used in the schools that experience some of the most serious discipline problems. There is an attitude of revenge at these schools and when the learners are confronted they become defiant and violent.

At Parkhurst they have found that the school has a cooperative atmosphere in which all the educators and learners take responsibility. Before positive discipline they had a lot of behaviour problems and the educators were afraid and stressed. The Grade 7 learners were the worst behaved and are now some of the best behaved in the school and there is less conflict in the school as a whole.

The educators work hard to implement the new system; the principal is a strong leader with a lot of insight into her staff and learners. It is always easier just to smack the child but is it effective in the long run and why do we have to keep smacking the same child over and over again?

At Parkhurst now, according to the principal "the children love coming to school; the children come to school because they want to learn."

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Where did this fun come from? The educators use dance, music and creative arts to give the learners an outlet for the appropriate expression of their feelings. Otherwise all the excess energy, frustration and pent up feelings turn to anger and violent outbursts.

It is difficult for a school such as Parkhurst to maintain the self discipline taught at school without the support of parents. As long as parents are legally allowed to use corporal punishment they have no reason to stop. This means that the learners face the contradiction of what is taught at school and what is practised at school. Parents can no longer be allowed to use corporal punishment legally.

The onus is on us to replace the culture of violence in our society with a culture of respect.

We believe that systems of positive discipline, based on the value of respect, should be implemented in all schools across South Africa and that all teachers and parents should receive training in the implementation of positive discipline.

We recommend that:

- Corporal punishment be banned in families and society in general.
- All teachers and parents be offered training in positive discipline as part of the state's social upliftment support programme.
- Arts and sports specialists and their associated programmes are re-introduced to all schools.

Thank you for this opportunity to submit our opinion. We welcome the opportunity to address the committee.

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