

The importance of integrity training for our youth

"The violence in our schools is unacceptable and we need to put a stop to it," says Charissa Bloomberg, celebrity psychologist, integrity specialist and corporate trainer at [Hidden Dimensions](#). The task that lies ahead is monumental, but Bloomberg is confident that before too long, integrity training will be part and parcel of the life-orientation syllabus.



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At the end of the first term of 2017, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (Sadtu) [reported](#) a total of 52 attacks on teachers; nine attacks on teachers by community members; 39 attacks by pupils; and four attacks made by parents. During the same period, the National Professional Teachers' Organisation (Naptosa) recorded even more incidents of violence and abuse: 28 verbal threats; 33 assaults; and nine threats with a weapon made to teachers by pupils and community members. Then, within the first nine months of 2018, the Western Cape Education Department received four [reports](#) of pupil-to-teacher sexual abuse and 26 cases of pupil-to-teacher verbal abuse, while Naptosa reported 28 cases of assault of teachers by pupils. Six cases of parent-to-teacher assault were registered in the same period.

With schools having convened again on 9 January 2019, all eyes have been on the media to see whether the situation would improve this year. Unfortunately, violent incidents and general overcrowding in township schools remain a grave problem, with reports of pupil-on-teacher and even pupil-on-pupil attacks making the news once again. These include a case of two pupils being suspended from Lenasia Secondary School after a video clip of them assaulting a teacher went viral on social media; and a 16-year-old pupil being stabbed to death by a fellow pupil during an argument at Mpheko Primary.

Bloomberg believes it will take a collective effort to make a difference within our education system. "When will steps be taken to ensure that integrity training reaches each and every pupil in South Africa? Poverty isn't an excuse not to do the right thing. I have worked with parents and pupils from Lavender Hill and poverty stricken schools, and heard of brave single moms who work hard every day and yet still manage to teach their children to do the right thing; they didn't even realise they were acting with the utmost of integrity. I have worked with children from impoverished backgrounds who have chosen not to steal or bully or hurt others. Children *do* know the difference between right and wrong, but many of them are crying out for role models to enter their schools and give talks that motivate and inspire them. Integrity training will teach them to self-reflect before making decisions – it's part of emotional intelligence."

Bloomberg's talks and training sessions address how to choose to do the right things and make the right choices (integrity); the consequences of making the wrong ones; and how doing good boosts self-esteem because you know you've benefited others."

A great example is being set for the youth in Gauteng. Here, Premier David Makhura has put in place measures to [institutionalise integrity](#) and promote ethical leadership through a number of integrity management units that enlist civil society as an anti-corruption partner/watchdog. "We remain unshaken in our quest to make Gauteng a corruption-free zone where integrity and ethics reign supreme. We have a duty to strengthen cooperative governance and ensure that all spheres put themselves at the service of the people," says Makhura.

Examples like these could well put our youth on the right path, as long as they are brought to their collective attention. "We need to go into all schools and share these examples; we need to ensure that our youth have role models in government, sport and other leaderships spheres, as well as dreams and goals to work towards, that will guide them into becoming the future leaders our country so desperately needs," enthuses Bloomberg.

She is in talks with government and a number of NGOs already re her Integrity Training in Schools project and invites South Africans of all ages to sign the Integrity Pledge at this link: <https://integrityforum.co.za/pledge/>.

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