

MANAGING LEARNER-DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

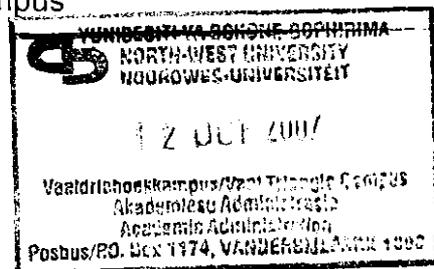
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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that

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is my own work, that all the resources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this thesis was not previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university.

Nthebe B.G.

Author

2006

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my late father, Olehile Nthebe and late son, Thebe Nthebe, my wife Mogomotsi and kids Kitso and Oarabile.

To my parents Solly, Conny and Merriam, siblings and all the Nthebe's family members who stood by me during this test of time.

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SUMMARY

This research intended to explore the phenomenon of managing discipline in secondary schools. An exposition of discipline in the South African schools' context indicated the historical perspective as consisting of the use of corporal punishment in the past, the abolishment of any form of corporal punishment post 1994 through various legislation, including the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the South African Schools Act and the introduction of the so-called alternative to corporal punishment.

The analysis of discipline indicated that within the secondary school context, a distinction can be made between the management of classroom discipline and whole school discipline. Discipline problems in schools included an exposition of both out-of-school and in-school discipline problems, further classed into primary and secondary causes of learner misbehaviour. Managing discipline at schools highlighted the importance of a holistic and inclusive school discipline planning programme culminating into a whole school or school wide discipline programme.

The empirical research found that there indeed were discipline problems in secondary schools as a result of *inter alia*, parental involvement or lack thereof. These include fighting and bullying, school work dereliction, late coming and noisemaking in class, which are manifestations of indiscipline; overcrowding in classrooms, peer group pressure, which creates a situation where learners copy the (mis)behaviour of others so as to belong, ineffective educators' teaching approaches and conduct towards learners, shortage and or lack of facilities for extra curricula activities especially in the light of disparities between, in this case, township and rural schools and lack of learner assistance programmes such as peer mediation and counselling.

The need for a whole-school approach to discipline was confirmed as critical for whole school discipline in secondary schools. This implies addressing all causes of indiscipline as against focusing on *ad hoc* manifestations of these problems.

OPSOMMING

In hierdie navorsingondersoek is die verskynsel van die bestuur van dissipline in sekondere skole ondersoek. 'n ondersoek na dissipline binne Suid-Afrikaanse konteks het aangetoon dat daar voor 1994 van lyfstraf gebruik gemaak is. Met die bekragting van die nuwe Grondwet van die Republiek van Suid-Afrika en die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet is lyfstraf verbied en alternatiewe vorme van dissiplinering voorgestel.

'n Ontleding van dissiplinering het aangekom dat daar binne sekondere skolekonteks onderskei kan word tussen die bestuur van klaskamerdissipline en ook algemene skoordissipline. By dissiplinere probleme op skool word ook onderskei tussen probleme wat buite en binne skoolterrein voorkom en daar word ook tussen primere en sekondere oorsake van wangedrag by leerders onderskei. 'n Ondersoek na die bestuur van skoordissipline beklemtoon die noodsaaklikheid van 'n holistiese en inklusiewe beplanningsprogram vir dissipline wat moet kulmineer in 'n heel-skool of algemene dissiplineringsprogram vir die skool.

Met die empiriese ondersoek is daar bevind dat daar inderdaad dissiplineringsprobleme in sekondere skole bestaan en dat, *inter alia*, ter wyte is aan beide ouerbetrokkenheid en ook aan 'n gebrek aan ouerbetrokkenheid. Die dissiplinere probleme verwys na onder meer afnouery (bullying), skool- en huiswerk-versuim, laatkommery en klaskamergeraas wat manifestasies kan wees van ongedissiplineerdheid, oorbevolkte klaskamers, portuurgroepdruk waar leerders andere se wangedrag volg om deel van 'n groep te wees, oneffektiewe onderrigstrategie van opvoeders, swak hantering van leerders deur opvoeders, die gebrek aan fasiliteite vir buitemuurse aktiwiteite by veral landelike skole en die gebrek aan ondersteuningsprogramme soos mediasie en raadgewing aan leerders.

Die behoefte aan 'n heel-skool benadering tot skoordissipline is bevestig as van kritieke belang vir die bestuur van dissipline in sekondere skole. Dit impliseer dat

alle oorsake van ongedisiplineerheid op 'n holistiese wyse aangespreek moet word en dat daar nie slegs op *ad hoc* manifestasies van wangedrag gefokus moet word nie.

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CHAPTER 1

MANAGING LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since the introduction of democracy in South Africa in 1994 managing discipline in secondary schools has become more difficult for educators. Anecdotes relating to discipline problems include among others, learners not taking their studies seriously. They reportedly come late to school, do not do school their work, behave in unacceptable manners, abuse drugs in the school premises and even reportedly carry knives and guns to school, which they use to threaten and fight both the educators and other learners (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000:35; SADTU, 2003). There is also a serious problem of harassment and use of vulgar words, absenteeism and bunking of classes (SADTU, 2003). Educators largely argue that all these problems are caused by the abolishment of corporal punishment (Morrel, 2001:292). Consequently, there are those who want corporal punishment to be reinstated.

It is true that learning cannot be effective when there is no discipline. It is not possible to teach and learn in an environment that is disorderly, disruptive and unsafe. Many principals and educators are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain discipline in secondary schools in the wake of new education legislations and regulations that regulate discipline and punishment in schools (Morrel, 2001:292). Many principals and educators find themselves unable to cope with large schools and classes, especially where there has been a complete breakdown of the culture of teaching, learning and discipline (Squelch, 2000:8).

It is important to note that South African schools are from a past of forced learner discipline, through the administration of corporal punishment (Morrel, 2001:293). It was held that corporal punishment was necessary to maintain discipline and was, in most instances, reactive, punitive and humiliating rather than corrective and

nurturing (Subbiah, 2004:4). As a result many arguments for and against the use of corporal punishment as a means of instilling learner discipline were advanced and as such resulted in the enactment of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 and other pieces of legislation which effectively abolished the use of corporal punishment at schools (Department of Education, 2000:5).

This calls for an understanding of what discipline is and what it means especially in the context of institutions of learning. It must be understood that discipline does not mean punishment. Discipline should not be punitive and punishment-oriented but should facilitate constructive learning and by extension, should be underpinned by values and attitudes of peace, tolerance, respect, dignity and human rights (Department of Education, 2000:9). Therefore, discipline is an integral part of the teaching and learning process, which is aimed at helping learners become cooperative persons who can acquire self-discipline themselves (Wolfgang & Wolfgang, 1995; Juta, 1999:2B-18).

Moving from the traditional notion of corporal punishment as a way of instilling discipline to the current notion of discipline as an act of facilitating constructive learning poses a challenge for educators at schools. It implies that discipline in the school environment needs to be managed. This study intends to examine the concept of learner discipline in secondary schools and expose how it can be managed. Focus will be placed on managing learner discipline in secondary schools in the Taledi District which is in the Bophirima region in the North West Province. This study will thus attempt to answer the following questions:

- What is the nature of learner discipline?
- How is learner discipline in the Taledi District secondary schools currently managed?

- How can learner discipline in the Taledi District secondary schools be better managed ?

1.2 AIM OF RESEARCH

The aim of this research is to examine how learner discipline can be managed in secondary schools as informed by the literature study and empirical survey. This aim is conceptualised into objectives and will be achieved by:

- investigating the nature of learner discipline;
- Investigating how learner discipline in the Taledi District secondary schools is currently managed; and
- recommending how learner discipline in the Taledi District secondary schools can be better managed?

1.3 RESEARCH METHOD

1.3.1 Literature study

This study was conducted using the theoretical research method involving the literature study from books, magazines, journals and newspapers to explore the nature of learner discipline and also how learner discipline can be managed. The following key words were used:

discipline, corporal punishment, managing discipline, self-discipline, human rights, punishment, school discipline, learner conduct.

1.3.2 Empirical research

The empirical research was conducted to determine how learner discipline is currently managed in secondary schools in the Taledi Area Project Office. A

qualitative approach was used for this investigation. This approach was used because it would enable this research to gain an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from the participants' perspective and would also enable the presentation of findings in a narrative form (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:134). To this end, a research instrument was utilised.

1.3.2.1 **Research instrument**

Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data on how learner discipline is managed in secondary school. A semi-structured interview is conducted with an open orientation which allows for directed two way conversational communication and consists of a set of questions as a starting point to guide the interaction (cf. Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:184; Greef, 2002:303). In this study, an interview schedule (annexure A), with a number of questions was designed from data collected through the literature survey.

1.3.2.2 ***Population and sampling***

The populations for this research comprised secondary school Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in the North West Province's Department of Education. Due to the vast nature of the North West Province and the qualitative nature of this research it was decided to confine it to the Taledi District in the province.

There are 19 secondary schools in the Taledi District of the North West Department of Education. Purposeful sampling was used, meaning that the sample was selected so as to yield as much information-rich data as possible (cf. Merriam, 1998:61). It was intended to include all secondary school TLOs ($n = 19$) in the district, but for sequential sampling purposes, at $n = 12$, the data collected was considered sufficient in so far as the research aim was concerned (see Merriam, 1998:65; Strydom & Delpont, 2002:336). Four principals and seven TLOs formed the final sample.

TLOs are charged with working with Representative Councils of Learner (RCLs) which are legal and legitimate entities in secondary schools in terms of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996b). Due to the fact that TLOs' functional mandate includes among other functions, working with RCLs on issues pertaining to RCLs and the implementation of school codes of conduct, and continuously liaising with school management, the school governing body (SGB) and educators on matters pertaining to learners in secondary schools, it was decided that they would better articulate educators' perceptions of the issues of discipline in secondary schools.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145) asserts that this kind of research selects its data sources intentionally and non-randomly with an intention of selecting those subjects or objects that will yield the most accurate information about the topic under investigation. It was decided, for purposes of this research that TLOs would best serve this purpose. In the case of schools where there were no TLOs or where they were not available, school principals were interviewed. This was preceded by a pilot of the interview schedule.

1.3.2.3 *Pilot study*

The interview schedule was pre-tested with school principals (n=2) and TLOs (n=2) outside the district so as to ensure its validity and reliability in eliciting information for the research. To establish validity and reliability of the interviews, the interview questions were piloted with five school principals and four educators and they were asked to determine if the questions were appropriate. Findings were also taken back to the participants to find out if they agreed with them. In preparing the report, their comments were also taken into consideration.

1.3.3 Feasibility of the study

The study was conducted in the Taledi Area Project office where the target population is accessible to the researcher. There are also adequate literature sources for the study of the concept under investigation. It must, however, be stated that most literature sources on discipline in schools is largely American or British. Many South African sources on the subject were found to be based on foreign content. Furthermore, discipline problems reportedly became worse post 1994, and as such, some sources of information also cover this period.

1.3.4 Procedure

Interviews were conducted in the afternoons after schools hours. A tape recorder was used for data collection during interviews and an agreement was reached with the interviewees regarding the use thereof. The researcher also took notes during interviews.

Data was interpreted using categories identified from the literature review. The tape-recorded information was transcribed for this purpose and a careful analysis conducted to classify information into these categories. This data was then interpreted and presented in a narrative form.

1.3.5 Ethical aspects

The study was conducted after permission had been obtained from the department of education, school principals and TLOs in the schools concerned. The goodwill of participants was sought through assuring them of the value and purpose of the interviews, confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participants' permission was sought for this purpose.

1.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

The study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding discipline in secondary schools. It is hoped that the study results will contribute towards an understanding of practice in the management of discipline in secondary schools in general and in particular, the area under review.

1.5. CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1

The chapter deal with the general orientation to the study outlining the problem statement, research aims and research method.

Chapter 2

The chapter presents a theoretical orientation on the nature of learner discipline in secondary schools and the management thereof.

Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the empirical research design and gives a detailed plan for the research.

Chapter 4

This chapter presents the research results, analysis and interpretation.

Chapter 5

This chapter presents the summary, findings and recommendations.

1.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined this research study process in terms of the problem statement, research aims and research methodology. The next chapter presents the literature study.

CHAPTER 2

THE NATURE OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Good school discipline is one of the most important features of effective schooling. It is a very crucial aspect of teaching and learning. Squelch and Lemmer (1994:40) assert that good discipline maintains order and harmony in a school and provides a climate in which learners can learn free from disruptions and chaos.

According to Blandford (1998:11), discipline and management are central to effective schools. It can therefore be deduced from this assertion that all educators are responsible, as professionals, for managing discipline in schools. This chapter presents the literature review regarding learner discipline and its implications for management.

2.2 BACKGROUND

Many schools have identified lack of discipline as a very serious problem hampering effective teaching and learning. Many reasons advancing this argument have been advocated. Squelch and Lemmer (1994:44) indicate that lack of discipline and misbehaviour are some of the key factors of school life and as such, in many schools discipline is a major problem. In this regard, Public Agenda (2004:1) points out that many learners lose many critical opportunities for learning because of the behaviour of a few persistent troublemakers and educators say that misbehaving learners are quick to point out that they have rights and that their parents can sue the schools.

Hymowitz (2000)¹ points out that today school principals lack the tools needed for dealing even with the unruliest of kids whereas formerly they would expel such kids

¹ Sources without page numbers are derived from unnumbered internet web pages and sources.

permanently or send them to special schools for the hard-to-discipline. It is notable that such schools have vanished and the education laws also do not allow for any permanent expulsion and thus at best, a school can only manage to transfer a learner offender elsewhere in the same district (Hymowitz, 2000). It can be asserted that this certainly is not a solution to the indiscipline problem. It is rather a transference of a problem elsewhere with a hope that the affected learner will somehow be influenced by a different environment to behave properly.

Gwala (1999), an educator believes that indiscipline in schools, amongst other reasons is caused by the social influence of peer pressure wherein many learners coming from well disciplined homes misbehave when they join groups of undisciplined learners. Indeed, from the researcher's own experience, many parents whose children are well-behaved at home are surprised at their children's reported misbehaviour at school, and they often attribute such a change to peer group pressure.

Christie, Petrie and Christie (1999:6) cite the challenge of managing discipline in schools as being intensified by the growing presence of learners with emotional and behavioural disorders displayed through aggressive behavioural responses to social problems. Christie *et al* (1999:6) posit that learner misbehaviour might be caused by, *inter alia*, psychological problems associated with adolescence and difficulties with peer group interactions. These authors cite both family and school as causing most indiscipline problems of learners and point out that factors likely to lead to learners' antisocial and aggressive behaviour include unemployment and poor access to economic resources, high incidences of alcohol abuse, low expectation by parents, little positive parent involvement with the child's school, high levels of family stress and conflict, punitive disciplinary practices including corporal punishment and a high incidence of domestic violence.

School influences on learner indiscipline include educators with punitive attitudes, rules that are loosely enforced and perceived as unfair and unclear, ambiguous

responses to learner misbehaviour and learners' low levels of belief in conventional social rules as well as a lack of resources needed for effective teaching and learning (Christie *et al.*, 1996:6).

The foregoing exposition of possible causes of learner indiscipline indicates clearly the challenge faced by schools regarding learner discipline. It is also clear that these problems are situated in various areas of learners' lives, that is, at home, at school and in the community where they live. It is however, an undeniable fact that poor discipline or lack thereof can be a major influence to effective teaching and learning. In fact, Kant and March (2004:3) opine that school discipline has two main goals namely, ensuring the safety of staff and learners and creating an environment conducive to learning. Therefore effective school discipline strategies seek to encourage responsible behaviour and to provide all learners with a satisfying school experience as well as to discourage misconduct.

It is for this reason that an understanding of the essential nature of school discipline needs to be advocated. To achieve this, this study begins with an exposition of discipline in South African schools.

2.3 DISCIPLINE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The exercise of discipline in South African schools can best be understood in the context of the pre- and post-democracy eras. The pre-democracy era was characterised by the application of corporal punishment as a way of enforcing discipline in schools.

2.3.1 Corporal punishment

The following paragraph appearing in Department of Education (2000:5) on alternatives to corporal punishment depicts the exercise of discipline in South African schools before democracy:

The Christian National Education was designed to support the apartheid system by schooling children to become passive citizens who would accept authority unquestioningly. Teachers (educators) were encouraged to use the cane during this era as a way of keeping control and dealing with those who stepped out of line. Beating children to discipline or punish them was simply taken for granted in a society so familiar with violence. During the 1970s, however when resistance to apartheid swelled, student organisations began to demand an end to abuse in the classroom and in the 1980s learners, educators and parents formed Education Without Fear to actively campaign against the whipping of children.

This paragraph clearly captures the status of enforcing discipline in schools before democracy and indicates what led to its abolition. Corporal punishment is defined as any deliberate act that inflicts pain or physical discomfort to punish or contain him/her against a child, which includes but not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, paddling or hitting a child with a hand or with an object; denying or restricting a child's use of the toilet; denying meals, drink, heat and shelter; pushing or pulling a child with force and forcing the child to do exercises (International Human Rights Instruments, 2007:21)and includes hitting the child with an object such as a cane, belt, whip or shoe, kicking, shaking or throwing the child, pinching or pulling their hair, forcing a child to stay in uncomfortable or undignified positions, or to take excessive physical exercise, and burning or scaring the child (Soneson, 2005a:6).

Considering the definition of corporal punishment and its obvious effects on learners, the question arises as to why it is still practiced in schools. There are indications that corporal punishment still features prominently as a way of enforcing discipline in schools. Consequently, many children in South Africa suffer corporal punishment and other forms of humiliating and degrading punishment in the home, schools and in different institutions. The following media articles attest to the use of corporal punishment in schools:

"15 years old boy was beaten 11 times with a broomstick until his hand broke" (*City Press*, 2006:8).

"... The teacher, Zandile Nkosi, allegedly called in grown men to help beat a confession out of the 11-year-old boy she suspected of stealing her handbag. The pupil was repeatedly dunked head- first into the Crocodile River. Molten plastic was systematically dripped all over his bare body and genitals ..." (SADTU, 2003).

"... Police investigations into the alleged assault of a high school pupil in Durban two weeks ago, allegedly at the hands of his principal, are continuing" (Savides, 2006:6).

These and many others anecdotes attest to the use of corporal punishment in schools as a way of enforcing discipline. Many views regarding the use of corporal punishment are expressed. Among other views the following are often expressed:

"Corporal punishment is a necessary part of upbringing and education. Children learn from smacking or a beating to respect their parents and educators, to distinguish right from wrong, to obey the rules and work hard. Without corporal punishment children will be spoilt and undisciplined" (Soneson, 2005a:22).

"Many parents in our country are raising their children in desperate conditions and educators are under stress from overcrowding and a lack of resources. Forbidding corporal punishment would add to that stress and should wait until these conditions have improved" (Soneson, 2005a:22).

"I was hit as a child and it didn't do me any harm. On the contrary I wouldn't be where I am today if it were not for my parents and educators

physically punishing me" (Epoch-Worldwide & Rädde Barnen, <http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/intro/faqs.html>).

There are many reasons for the continued use of corporal punishment despite the fact that it is legally abolished.

Firstly, most South African educators are themselves products of severe corporal punishment, which is why it is so difficult for them to accept its abolishment as many of them still believe deeply in its effectiveness (Du Bois, 2002:5). In this regard, Du Bois (2002:5) postulates that educators think alternative methods of disciplining are an "add-on" to their duties and not part of daily practice, and that corporal punishment is accepted as part of school life.

Anbarasan (1999) reports that many educators argue that without corporal punishment schools would descend into chaos and that children would become even more unruly by the time they reach high school and that in fact many educators believe that in the long run, corporal punishment means less rather than more violence. Thus many educators contend that corporal punishment is one of the few disciplinary tools available given the large class sizes they have to deal with on a daily basis. It seems therefore that most educators experience a feeling of disempowerment and loss of control in that they cannot use corporal punishment as a means of enforcing discipline.

Secondly, many parents advocate the use of corporal punishment as a way of enforcing discipline. Maguire (2005) indicates that many parents express the notion that "a good beating never hurt anyone," and that some corporal punishment is necessary to instil respect for authority, to maintain discipline and to rear "good" citizens.

Finally, educators at schools seem not to have skills or capacity to use other forms of discipline except corporal punishment. Department of Education (2000:9)

asserts that there are educators who believe that corporal punishment is wrong, but do not always know what to use instead of physical force or the threat of it to maintain discipline and a culture of learning in the classroom. Garson (http://www.southafrica.info/public_services/citizens/education/edufacts.htm) corroborates this by stating that part of the problem is that educators have not been given adequate training on alternatives to corporal punishment and as such, many still believe in "the rod" as the only solution to discipline problems.

As much as there are supportive views for the use of corporal punishment, there are even more views against its use. Goduka (1999:164) expresses her concern on corporal punishment by saying that it contributes to an attitude of violence in the society and asserts that many South African parents and educators have less knowledge about the impact of corporal punishment on children. To this end, Goduka (1999:164) highlights a saying normally used by educators and parents who condone corporal punishment, that "Children should be seen and not heard." They believe that talking back to an adult or person in authority such as an educator is a serious transgression.

The negative effect brought about by the use of corporal punishment does not encourage educators to participate in decision making and positive guidance and it teaches learners that aggressive behaviour and violence are good only if one has more physical power than those who do not have it (Vilakazi in Goduka, 1999). This implies that corporal punishment has nothing to do with learners' sense of dignity and respect, thus its long-term effects are obedient, law-abiding and unquestioning citizens.

Some views expressed against the use of corporal punishment include the following (Center for Effective Discipline, 2006):

"It perpetuates a cycle of child abuse. It teaches children to hit someone smaller and a weaker when angry."

"Corporal punishment is used more often on poor children, minorities' children with disabilities and boys."

"Schools that use corporal punishment often have poorer academic achievements, more vandalism, truancy, learner violence and higher drop out rates."

"Corporal punishment is often not used as a last resort. It is often the first resort for minor misbehaviour."

Irrespective of what the arguments are regarding corporal punishment, educators and parents should know that The Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act No. 33 (Republic of South Africa, 1997) bans it completely. A person who is found guilty of using corporal punishment could be charged with assault. The Act makes it clear that beating a child as a form of punishment is illegal. In addition, according to Section 12 of the Constitution (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), corporal punishment goes against human rights to freedom and security which implies that people have the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way. Section 10(1-2) of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) specifically abolishes the use of corporal punishment and states:

1. No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
2. Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction, to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.

Squelch (2000:7) cautions that the use of corporal punishment is widely viewed as a form of child abuse and its use is therefore discouraged as a means of

punishment. This means that inflicting physical pain on children is no longer accepted as a form of controlling behaviour and correcting inappropriate behaviour.

Squelch (2000:7) expands on this statement by saying that many principals and educators are finding it increasingly difficult to maintain discipline in schools in the wake of new education legislation and regulations which regulate discipline and punishment in schools and that many educators and principals find themselves unable to cope with large schools and classes especially where there has been a complete break down of the culture of learning and discipline. Moreover, many educators have not been exposed to alternative disciplinary strategies. Therefore it is important to understand matters pertaining to discipline at school within the context of the current legislation in order to move to a more humane and constructive approach to discipline at schools.

2.3.2 The current legislative framework

The year 1994 marked the end of the apartheid education system whereby discipline at schools was enforced through physical or corporal punishment. It also marked the beginning of a democratic South Africa wherein the education system changed and corporal punishment as a form of discipline was outlawed. The new Constitution of the Republic of South Africa that recognises human rights and dignity was formulated and adopted in 1996.

After the 1994 elections, South Africa became a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) (Porteus, Vally, & Ruth, 2001:1). This convention pledges to take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negative treatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. In relation to school discipline, this legislation and policy affirms that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and conforms to the spirit of the convention (Porteus *et al.*, 2001:1). The Constitution and the South

African Schools Act are perhaps the most important pieces of legislation that regulate discipline issues at schools.

2.3.2.1 *Constitution of Republic of South Africa*

Squelch (2000:8) describes the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (hereafter referred to as the Constitution) as the supreme law of the country and therefore all law, including education legislation, regulations and school policies may not be in conflict with it.

Chapter Two, Section 10 of the Constitution contains the Bill of Rights which promotes among other rights, the right to human dignity. Human dignity is the innermost and social right to respect with regard to values and dignity, and to which each and every person is entitled, purely because they are human (see Lebech, http://eprints.nuim.ie/archive/00000392/01/Human_Dignity.pdf).

What this implies is the unacceptability of behaviour that is hostile or offensive to a reasonable person and that unreasonably interferes with an individual's work, academic performance or social life and any behaviour that creates an undermining of the integrity or dignity of an individual and that such behaviour can make a reasonable person feel uncomfortable, unsafe, frightened, embarrassed, and may be physical, verbal or non-verbal and would be unwanted by any reasonable person and could not be justified through a personal, family or any social relationship (cf. Department of Education, 2000:9). This is aimed at ensuring that everyone, including learners should be treated with respect and dignity.

According to Soneson (2005b:18) and in line with the Constitution, South Africa has prohibited corporal punishment being applied to children in all aspects of public life. This includes the courts, prisons, children's institutions and schools. This assertion finds expression in the provisions of Section 12c-e of the Constitution which states that:

Everyone has the right to freedom and security which includes the right:

- to be free from all forms of violence from either public or private sources;
- not to be tortured in any way; and
- not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.

The Constitution therefore abolishes any form of corporal punishment or use of discipline measures which undermine human dignity. What is important in this regard is that discipline measures should not be such that they make a person (learner) uncomfortable, unsafe, frightened or embarrassed. This goes for the physical, verbal or non-verbal forms of discipline.

The South African School Act adds more clarity and provides guidelines in this regard.

2.3.2.2 ***South African Schools Act***

The South African schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (SASA) specifically relates to issues pertaining to discipline at schools. According to Department of Education (2000:9), discipline must be maintained in the school and the classroom to ensure that the education of learners proceeds without any disruptive behaviour and as such school authorities are allowed to discipline learners. Furthermore, learners have the responsibility to learn and develop their own full potential and to allow fellow learners, without any hindrance, to reach their full potential. To this end, SASA places the responsibility of ensuring the discipline of learners squarely on the functional competency of the SGB and advocates the establishment of the school code of conduct as a first step in this regard. Section 7 states that:

- Subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school.
- A code of conduct referred to in subsection (1) must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.
- A code of conduct must contain provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings.

From these provisions of the SASA, it is clear that the approach to discipline at school should aim at improving and maintaining the quality of the learning process and not punishment as such.

In this regard, Potgieter, Visser, Van der Bank, Mothata and Squelch (1997:59) outlines the purpose of the code of conduct and therefore discipline at school as aiming to:

- create a well-organized and a good schooling environment so that effective learning and teaching can take place;
- promote self-discipline;
- encourage good behaviour; and
- regulate conduct.

This in essence implies that focus must be on self-discipline, self-motivation and self-respect together with academic and sporting achievements (Department of Education, 2000:20). This also implies that discipline should be approached as a means to encourage the respect of human dignity as enshrined in the Constitution.

The SASA furthermore details procedures for discipline as it pertains to learners at schools and how SGBs should take responsibility in this regard (Sayed & Jansen, 2001:102). Accordingly, Section 9 states:

- (1) Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the governing body of a public school may, after a fair hearing, suspend a learner from attending the school-
 - (a) as a correctional measure for a period not longer than one week; or
 - (b) pending a decision as to whether the learner is to be expelled from the school by the Head of Department.
- (2) Subject to any applicable provincial law, a learner at a public school may be expelled only-
 - (a) by the Head of Department; and
 - (b) if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing.
- (3) The Member of the Executive Council must determine by notice in the Provincial Gazette-
 - (a) the behaviour by a learner at a public school which may constitute serious misconduct;
 - (b) disciplinary proceedings to be followed in such cases;
 - (c) provisions of due process safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings.

(4) A learner or the parent of a learner who has been expelled from a public school may appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the Member of the Executive Council.

(5) If a learner who is subject to compulsory attendance in terms of section 3(1) is expelled from a public school, the Head of Department must make an alternative arrangement for his or her placement at a public school.

The focus of these provisions relates to what is called the due process, which implies that for any disciplinary measure against a learner, such a learner must be given a proper hearing. This also relates to suspension and expulsion of learners which can only be applied when the learners commit serious offences. The implication is that expulsion is permanent and thus ends a learner's right to attend at a particular school. This is the reason why expulsion is only done by the Head of Department.

From the foregoing exposition, it is clear that discipline aims at building a learner and ensuring that effective learning processes do take place at schools. It is also clear that punishment in the form of suspension and expulsion is used only as a very last resort and only in serious cases of misbehaviour. This leaves the question as to how then should discipline be exercised at schools especially regarding such offences as those that frustrate educators and those that make them perceive corporal punishment as an answer as alluded to in previous sections. The Department of Education, in this regard, provided schools and educators with alternatives to corporal punishment.

2.3.2.3 ***Alternatives to corporal punishment***

As pointed out earlier (2.2.1), corporal punishment is viewed differently by different people. It is also clear that its prohibition was a result of, among other issues, views about its abuse and negative consequences on the subjects thereof. It is

also clear that educators largely do not feel comfortable with discipline without the use of corporal punishment. Though outlawed, corporal punishment remains controversial with educators still using it because they see it as “the only thing that works” (Sapa, 2006:8). This feeling is also expressed by many parents. The Department of Education in 2000 launched a manual detailing alternatives to corporal punishment (Department of Education, 2000) as a way of assisting educators to deal with discipline problems at schools.

In the manual, reasons for corporal punishment being ineffective for discipline are provided and state that corporal punishment (Department of Education, 2000:7):

- does not build a culture of human rights, tolerance and respect.
- does not stop bad behaviour of difficult children but Instead these children are punished over and over again for the same offences.
- does not nurture self-discipline in children but Instead it provokes aggression and feelings of revenge and leads to anti-social behaviour.
- does not make children feel responsible for their own actions. They worry about being caught and not about their personal responsibilities, which undermines the growth of self-discipline.
- takes children’s focus away from the wrongdoing committed to the act of beating itself.
- leads some learners to brag about being beaten as something to be proud of or as a badge of bravery or success.
- undermines a caring relationship between learner and educator, which is critical for the development of all learners, particularly those with behavioural difficulties.

- Undermines the self-esteem and confidence of children who have learning or behavioural problems and/or difficult home circumstances and contributes to negative feelings about school.

Porteus *et al* (2001:27) say that some educators who pride themselves on moving away from “corporal punishment” have replaced corporal punishment with methods of humiliation, sarcasm and neglect. To support this issue of humiliation, *City Press* (2006:8) reported a case of one educator who expressed her pride when she came up with an “alternative” to corporal punishment. She forced some learners to strip naked as a form of disciplining them and teenage girls were beaten up and ordered to remove their menstrual pads and model on the school grounds. The girls were being punished because they were ill-disciplined. Clearly this is the worst case of humiliation and undermining of the learners’ human dignity.

The manual then asserts that discipline requires creating a climate based on mutual respect within which learners feel safe and affirmed and thus decreases the need for disciplinary action as it helps develop a learner to practice self-discipline (Department of Education, 2000:12). In essence, this implies as outlined in the manual, creating a positive culture of teaching and learning which involves:

- adopting a whole school approach and making sure that classroom discipline reflects the school’s policies;
- establishing ground rules;
- being serious and consistent about the implementation of the rules;
- knowing learners and focusing on relationship building;
- managing the learning process and the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally;

- providing the opportunity for learners to practice their skills in areas such as conflict management, problem solving, tolerance, anti-racism and gender sensitivity as well as building a co-operative learning environment in which learners understand the dynamics of working together and are able to give and take in a group situation;
- being inclusive;
- giving learners the opportunity to succeed;
- allowing learners to take responsibility;
- giving attention seekers what they want; and
- using professional assistance for learners who display particular difficulties in the classroom such as issues of socialisation, learning barriers, emotional difficulty, distress, aggressive behaviour and bullying.

The manual furthermore outlines disciplinary measures and procedures which include the development of a code of conduct which details actions and procedures to be taken for serious misconduct of learners.

While the afore-detailed alternatives to corporal punishment offer useful guidelines in as far as dealing with discipline issues at schools is concerned, this research argues that these are ready-made and reactionary solutions to discipline issues at schools. They seem to address discipline problems in a form of punishing or assigning some form of reaction. While this is sometimes necessary, it is argued that schools need to deal with discipline problems from a holistic framework that considers the root causes of learner discipline problems.

In this regard, Soneson (2005b:5) opines that the challenge facing South Africa is to increase awareness among educators and parents about the children's basic

rights to be protected from corporal punishment and other forms of dehumanising and degrading punishment. It can be argued that in essence, the challenge for schools is to create conditions where discipline problems are addressed in a way that will minimise the need for any form of punishment. In this sense, the manual for alternatives to corporal punishment correctly propounds developing positive behaviour of learners and the use of staff such as school psychologists and counsellors and instituting democratic discipline that encourages participation and results in good and common decision-making (Department of Education, 2000:15).

To create a school climate that is conducive to positive discipline and applies a whole approach to discipline, an insight into the essence of discipline at schools is necessary.

2.4 THE ESSENCE OF DISCIPLINE AT SCHOOL

The nature of discipline lies in its intention. It should be determined why discipline has to be enforced at schools. A pertinent question relates to whether discipline intends to correct behaviour, to control or to punish. A scrutiny of the secondary school context will assist in this determination.

2.4.1 The secondary school context

Secondary schools in South African currently cater for the educational needs of learners between grades eight and twelve. These are learners whose ages range from thirteen to eighteen years. It is however not uncommon to find learners of ages below thirteen as well as learners with ages above eighteen in such schools. This very age composition lays the ground for an understanding of discipline issues in the secondary school context.

Most learners entering secondary schools are at the adolescent stages of their development. Capel, Leask, and Turner (1995:136) explain adolescence as a period of growth and physical, mental and emotional change and is a crucial stage

where learners experience a multitude of growth and developmental problems and as such would seem to lack a positive attitude towards learning.

Capel *et al.* (1995:136) propound that problems in secondary schools are caused by the fact that many young people want to conform to what they see others doing and or being, which gives rise to peer pressure. As a direct result of this pressure they turn to question or reject family norms. In other words, it seems that many adolescents are trying to “find their feet,” to develop an identity and develop new relationships. From what Capel *et al.* say, one could say that during this adolescent stage, educators need to play a vital role so as not to be in conflict with learners or worsen their behaviour.

The South African secondary school scenario presents some of the most difficult discipline challenges. Naude (2004) reports incidents of learners found with among other prohibited substances, liquor in their bags. In one incident, a learner attacked an educator with a hammer and left her with a broken wrist, injuries to her knees and five stitches on her head (News24, 2001). In fact, schools, and mostly secondary schools have reportedly become war zones (News24, 2006).

These circumstances are frustrating for schools. Educators and parents are equally frustrated by the lack of discipline in schools. Reports of indiscipline at schools seem to indicate a large inclination towards violent acts which mostly occur in and around school campuses (News24, 2006). The debate across school communities as reported largely in the media seems to revolve around the cause of the indiscipline as being the abolishment of corporal punishment as well as the inability or lack of capacity of educators to apply alternative methods of enforcing discipline.

This research argues that enforcing discipline by way of exercising control and or punishment is a short term solution and is mostly *ad hoc*. It is therefore argued that there is a need to address the causes of indiscipline at schools and thus embark on a holistic approach that focuses on the short term discipline challenges as well

as on the long term causes. In order to do this, an insight into what discipline entails is necessary.

2.4.2 What is discipline?

There are many views regarding what discipline is. The Collins English Dictionary (2000) defines discipline as training or conditions imposed for the improvement of physical powers and self-control and systematic training in obedience to regulations and authority; the state of improved behaviour resulting from such training or conditions; punishment or chastisement or a system of rules for behaviour, methods of practice. Charles (2002:7) states that discipline is sometimes inaccurately conceptualised as being what educators do when learners misbehave at school or what educators do to stifle misbehaviour when it occurs and that discipline must rely on elements of fear backed by force to be effective.

As pointed out earlier (2.1), discipline has two main goals namely, to ensure the safety of staff and learners and to create an environment conducive to learning. Gootman (1997:2) posits that discipline requires that learners experience the consequences of their misbehaviour and that its sole aim is to help learners to develop self-control. The MASTER Teacher (2001:4) defines discipline as a process that uses teaching, modelling, and other appropriate strategies to maintain behaviour necessary to ensure a safe, orderly and productive learning environment by changing unacceptable behaviour to acceptable behaviour.

According to Rogers (1998:11), discipline is an educator-directed activity which seeks to lead, guide, direct and manage and confront a student about behaviour that disrupts the aim of learning. It is used as a means to direct learners towards self-control and personal accountability.

The different definitions of discipline seem to present two perspectives namely:

- the view that discipline has to do with control, punishment and obedience; and
- the view that discipline seeks to induce a sense of self-control.

It is important for schools to have a common understanding of what discipline really entails. Fredjones.com (undated) divides discipline at a school into two domains namely:

- classroom discipline management, which relates to managing discipline problems within the classroom where educators can structure the learning environment more or less unaided; and
- school-site discipline management, which relates to managing discipline problems outside the classroom where educators are highly dependent on the collaboration and support of colleagues for success. This includes such issues as noise in the halls, yard supervision, smoking in lavatories and conduct in assemblies.

Clearly from the foregoing exposition, discipline at schools needs to be approached holistically, that is, on a whole school basis. This requires an all-out effort that involves all school stakeholders. This is as stated by Wolhuter (1999) that the socio-political and educational changes of the post 1994 era meant that the traditional methods and strategies used to maintain discipline at schools could no longer be employed in a democratic societal context in which human rights are highly valued. For instance, it should be determined what is best for learners by looking at what disciplinary measures intend to achieve. In this regard, applying disciplinary modes merely to punish, control and solicit obedience by instilling fear would not be enough. As alluded to above, discipline should ensure the safety of staff and learners and, create an environment conducive to learning.

Distinguishing between discipline and punishment sets the stage for this whole-school approach.

2.4.3 Discipline versus punishment

In most instances discipline tends to be confused with punishment. While these two terms are often used interchangeably, they are not the same. Squelch (2002:2) explains discipline as being about positive behaviour management aimed at promoting appropriate behaviour and developing in learners a sense of self-discipline and self-control. In other words, as stated by Rogers (1998:11), discipline is indeed “an educator directed activity whereby he or she seeks to lead, guide, direct, manage or confront a learner about behaviour that disrupts the rights of others.” In the quest to promote self-discipline and self-control, Rogers distinguishes three ways in which discipline can further be explained namely:

- *Preventive discipline*, which is concerned with basic rights, clear rules and consequences.
- *Corrective discipline*, which refers to the educator actions that are carried out to correct disruptive, antisocial or deviant behaviour.
- *Supportive discipline*, which is about ensuring that “correction” is received fairly and re-establishing positive working relationships with disciplined learners. In fact, Gootman (1997:16) asserts in this regard that discipline can actually become part of the learning process rather than a drain on it.

It can therefore be asserted that discipline ensures that learners experience an educative, and a corrective approach in which they learn to exercise self-control, respect others and accept consequences for their actions. Stated otherwise, discipline is about taking care or having a closer look at learners’ behaviour and actions so as to ensure that they are not hazardous to those around them. It also

implies responsibility to ensure that the learning environment is clear of things that could endanger learners and educators at schools.

Contrary to discipline, it can be accepted that punishment focuses only on misbehaviour. Squelch (2000:4) defines punishment as a facet of discipline that involves action taken in response to inappropriate behaviour in order to correct or modify it, and to restore harmonious relations. Therefore punishment is a penalty or corrective measure inflicted on a person who has transgressed at school and is guilty of misconduct.

Punishment takes many forms, some of which are limited by law. Among other forms of punishment, expulsion, suspension, corporal punishment, detention, sending learners home, withdrawal of privileges, time-out and assigning extra-work to offending learners are just a few. What is however clear, is that these forms of punishment are aimed at misbehaviour and are thus instruments of control (Slee, 1995:37).

Goldstein and Close-Conoley (1997:54) explain punishment as a complex strategy with many possible, unwanted and unintended outcomes as its effects of vary from one individual to the next. Punishment by its very nature only suppresses behaviour and as such will not eliminate unwanted behaviours. According to Slee (1995:42), punishment is demoralising as it negates moral responsibility, fosters cynicism and a belief that the only thing to do is to avoid being caught by those who have the authority to punish. In so far as suspension and expulsion are concerned, Slee (1995:51) points out that these are relatively ineffective because learners who are most likely to be punished this way are likely to be those who dislike it and suspension may even, inadvertently become a reward. Such learners may even be elevated into heroes who easily manage to accommodate the worst the school can do.

It is clear that in essence, discipline would be ideal if punishment was to be excluded as the main form of enforcing discipline. In this regard and according to Covaleksie (1994:4), discipline should be seen as a positive achievement which is a result of genuine education and an ability to pursue one's own ends.

Discipline is thus identical to freedom and a necessary part of a democratic character, so that without discipline, freedom is self-defeating and one cannot attain one's goals and therefore, one can fashion neither a good life nor a democratic one. This, it can be asserted, is unlike punishment which has short-term results and causes grudges, hatred and is forceful.

In consideration of the concepts discipline and punishment, it becomes clear that discipline is much more than attaining learner obedience and being able to control learner behaviour, which would basically imply an attempt by an adult to control a learner's behaviour and induce predictable behaviour as desired by those in the position of authority for enforcing discipline. The MASTER Teacher (2001:5) presents a comprehensive definition of this understanding of discipline namely:

Discipline is a process that uses teaching, modelling, and other appropriate strategies to maintain the behaviours necessary to ensure a safe, orderly, and productive learning environment by changing unacceptable behaviour to acceptable behaviour.

The key to this definition is that while seeking to direct learner behaviour, the manner or approach of achieving this rests on teaching or modelling and thus addresses the learner as a whole, including the underlying causes of indiscipline. This implies targeting the ultimate, which is self-discipline.

It is however, important to take cognisance of the fact that discipline is an aspect of school life and will continue to be for as long schools have learners. It thus becomes necessary to scrutinise the types of discipline problems at schools.

2.4.4 Discipline problems in schools

There is a plethora of discipline problems at schools. An analysis of these problems indicates different categories and thus makes it possible to understand them from their causes. This section presents these problems which can be classified into out-of school and in-school discipline problems.

2.4.4.1 *Out-of school discipline problems*

Due to the fact that schools are a mirror image of what happens in their communities, societal events also exert an influence on schools. Cangelosi (1997:63) postulates that the proliferation of weapons, daily news telecasts, television dramas, motion pictures, video games, sports and music lyrics are some of the reflections of society's infatuation with violence. What is critical in this case is that television affords an opportunity to witness a dramatised murder, fight, assault or rape virtually any time of the day and as such children are exposed to such violent acts and these may trigger neurological aggression or can also cause impaired thinking and perception (Cangelosi, 1997:63).

Society and more precise, the community is thus a source of out-of school discipline problems. Amongst other causes, the following are such causes of indiscipline at schools:

- *Violence in society*

Curwin and Mendler (1999) highlight the fact that society resolves problems through shootings, knifings, fist fights, extortion, threats and injury as reflected in media reports and as such, children are constantly exposed to violence and have become insensitive to it. Byron and Rozemeijer (2001) indicates in this regard that children learn by imitating adults, and young people are thus exposed to behaviour that is a role model of brutal behaviour on the parts of adults. It can be asserted on this basis, that

societal fascination with violence translates into violence and indiscipline of learners at schools. This is mainly because such behaviour is perceived as normal since it is portrayed as a reflection of how society lives.

- *Effects of the media*

Television in particular seems to have the most effect on children's behaviour especially regarding violence. Chidley (1996) points out that it has been established that violence on television affects the behaviour of children and reports for instance that by the time they are adolescents, children would have viewed over 15 000 acts of television violence and this has implications for the classroom and school. In this regard, Curwin and Mendler (1999) observe that most children's popular television shows glamorise and glorify anti-protagonists as they behave irresponsibly. Apart from affecting children's behaviour, the writer's own experience is that of learners who spend hours watching television and who take less interest in things such as sports and studying, which are themselves aspects of schooling that are known to instil self-discipline in learners.

- *Lack of secure family environment*

Curwin and Mendler (1999) posit that the largest single influence on children is the quality of their home life and because throughout the last century society has undergone major shifts in values and traditions, with the extended family being replaced by smaller nuclear units, single parenthood, two working-parent families and one-and-two child families being common. Children are also raised in non-traditional ways and many parents have no options for providing a secure family structure.

These aspects of family life affect how parents respond to children's misbehaviour. Holmes and Robbins (cited by Curwin and Mendler, 1999)

report research findings that unfair, inconsistent and harsh discipline by parents predicted later alcohol and depressive disorders in children. It can be concluded that learners growing up in such family circumstances would display various kinds of behavioural problems at school.

- *Limited interaction between parents and children*

Byron and Rozemeijer (2001) posits that the amount of time spent between parents and children has been declining during the past decade and as a result, children spend more time in interaction with other adults at school than with their own parents. This is due to among other reasons, working parents and this results in children and adolescents lacking clear parental guidance on behaviour and discipline. This definitely contributes to discipline problems at schools as the old adage goes, "charity begins at home."

2.4.4.2 *In-school discipline problems*

These are discipline problems that occur within the school environment. Among others, unclear limits, learner boredom, sense of failure and attacks on learner dignity, lack of acceptable outlets for feelings and a sense of powerlessness are generally cited (Curwin & Mendler, 1999). Charles (2002) specifies the following in-school discipline problems:-

- *Problems originating within individual learners* (Charles, 2002:46)

Expediency - this is when learners look for the easy way, so that they find it easier to misbehave than to abide by school expectations.

The urge to transgress - this is when learners do things to see what they can get away with and thus do what they know they should not do.

Temptation - this is when learners encounter objects, situations, behaviours, people or other experiences they find powerfully attractive and adopt, mimic, acquire or associate with them even when doing so leads to misbehaviour.

Inappropriate habits - this is when learners incorporate inappropriate patterns of behaviour acquired in the home or community and display them at school.

Poor behaviour choices - this occurs when learners attempt to meet needs or pursue strong interests and explore new circumstances, which at times are effective and gain them approval, but also gains disapproval when ineffective and result in their behaviour being called misbehaviour.

Avoidance - this is when learners try to avoid people or situations that are unpleasant or threatening, which sometimes happens when learners refuse to participate in lessons or associate with others because they are fearful or do not want to look stupid.

An egocentric personality - this happens because some learners are self-centred and spoilt and they focus on their own desires while disregarding or trampling on the desires and feelings of others.

- *Problems originating from learners' peers and groups* (Charles, 2002:47)

Provocation - this occurs when learners are often incited to misbehave by peers or school mates or certain situations and they react improperly to annoyance, lack of attention, insult, threat and boredom.

Group behaviour - this is when learners often succumb to peer pressure or get caught up in group emotion and at such times tend to behave in ways they would not if they were by themselves.

- *Causes that originate from school environments* (Charles, 2002:47)

Physical discomfort - this happens when learners are made restless by inappropriate physical conditions like inappropriate temperature, poor lighting and uncomfortable seating and work places.

Tedium - this happens when instructional activities require learners to pay attention in matters in which they have little interest.

Meaninglessness - this occurs when learners have to work on topics they do not comprehend or that seem to have no purpose.

Lack of motivation - this happens when learners are not interested in what they are to learn and therefore make little effort.

- *Problems that originate from the school personnel, including educators* (Charles, 2002:48)

Poor modelling - this relates to educators and other school staff who may present poor models of ethical, humane, considerate or helpful behaviour which are then emulated by learners.

Lack of personal attention - this is when learners get little personal attention from educators which makes them feel unimportant and in turn reduces motivation and willingness to comply with expectations.

Disregard for learners' feelings - this occurs when educators teach autocratically, speak sarcastically, order learners around, point out learners' inadequacies and act as though misbehaviour is entirely the learners' fault. Learners in this case lose motivation, hesitate to cooperate and sometimes answer back disrespectfully.

Uninteresting lessons - this implies educators providing lessons that do not interest learners and as a result learners show little desire to learn or involve themselves in the learning activities.

Ineffective guidance and feedback - this happens when educators do not make clear what learners are to do and how they are to do it or if they complete tasks, they get little indication of whether they performed appropriately, what they have done well or poorly and how much progress they have made.

Uninteresting instructional practices – which could also be attributed to educators being unable to teach. Blandford (1998:3) in this regard, indicates that educators are often criticised for their inability to teach and from this statement, one could deduce that it is an educator's inability to control learners or a class that prevents the process of education and learning from happening and thus leads to discipline problems.

Poor communication – this occurs when learners are spoken to in demeaning ways, are stifled or threatened, which reduces their willingness to cooperate.

Coercion, threat and punishment - this happens where learners feel they are being forced or “made” to do things against their will, which makes them to become guarded and look for ways to avoid or subvert the perceived force.

Byron and Rozemeijer (2001) add the following causes of learner discipline problems:

- *Unclear limits*

Unclear limits relate to ensuring that learners know the standards of behaviour expected and what will happen when they are not maintained. A

lack of clear rules and failure to specify consequences for misbehaviour leave learners without ground rules they need to contribute to maintaining a well-functioning classroom and school.

- *Sense of failure and attacks on student dignity*

This is when learners misbehave because they feel they cannot be successful in school because mostly they are having difficulty with one or more parts of the school curriculum or have disabilities that interfere with their learning. These learners see themselves as failing within the school system and want to protect themselves from being hurt and consequently, they act out as a way of protecting themselves and of dealing with what they see as an attack on their dignity.

- *Lack of acceptable outlets for feelings*

This occurs when there is an absence of acceptable ways for learners to express their feelings. This is because learners have many emotion-laden experiences and their feelings may be hurt, they may feel left out, they may feel inadequate to a task or they may feel unwelcome and without an acceptable way of expressing them, which often leads to acting out and misbehaviour.

- *Sense of powerlessness*

This occurs when learners often report feelings that show that they have no "power" or that their wants are not "significant" in school and consequently, rebel frequently as a way of expressing their dissatisfaction over this lack of power and influence on the things that go on in school.

The MASTER Teacher (2003:x) presents discipline problems in schools as emanating from learner needs that are not satisfied and these basically have to do

with learners themselves as people. These, according to The MASTER Teacher (2003:x) can be classified as primary and secondary needs and are explained thus:

- ***Primary causes of learner misbehaviour***

These causes of learner misbehaviour emanate mainly from the following:

- *Attention* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:x), which relates to the fact that most children gain attention in school or at home in normal positive ways. However, some children feel that misbehaving is their best way to get attention and they are the ones who constantly speak out without permission in school, arrive late for class, or make strange noises in class, which forces educators' attention or make noises at the dinner table that force everyone to stop their conversation and pay attention. In this regard, McFarlane (2005) reports that educators supply reasons such as overcrowded classrooms making it difficult for individual attention being paid to learners and lack of teaching and learning resources, infrastructure and educator shortage as contributory factor.
- *Power* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:x), which relates to the need for power where learners with this need argue a lot and refuse to follow rules because they usually feel defeated if they do as they are told and think that they are losing if they do what adults want them to do. These learners are known as the defiant ones, the rule-breakers or the bullies. In essence, they truly feel that lack of power lies behind all their troubles and that more power would be the answer to all their problems.
- *Revenge* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xi), which relates to the fact that some learners find their places by being hated because failure has made them give up trying for attention and power and unfortunately, they find personal satisfaction in being mean, vicious and violent and as such seek

revenge against parents and other children or siblings in any way they can. These are usually the learners who write on desks in school, beat up other children or siblings, threaten younger children and vandalise property.

- *Self-confidence* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xi), which relates to learners who honestly expect failure because they do not feel they have the ability to function in the classroom - but may feel completely adequate outside school or when they are supposed to be doing something connected with school. These learners frustrate educators and parents because they are often capable of handling their schoolwork successfully, but they do not and consequently use inability, real or assumed to escape participation. When they are supposed to be doing their homework they play and look for distractions instead and make excuses like "I couldn't do it" or "I'm dumb," such that no amount of parental encouragement seems to make a difference to them.

- ***Secondary causes of learner misbehaviour***

Secondary causes of misbehaviour emanate from psychological needs that are also learnt. According to The MASTER Teacher (2003:xiii), secondary needs are a strong motivating force and learners will try very hard to meet these needs without misbehaving. However, if they cannot meet these needs in a good way, they will try negative ways or misbehave to meet them. The MASTER Teacher (2003:xiv) presents these needs as follows:

- *Gregariousness* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xiv), which relate to learners' need to associate with a group and is strong in learners who really want to be part of a particular group at school or in the neighbourhood. This need, if unmet, also causes learners to be very upset if they are left out of a party, not chosen for a committee, not asked for input on family activities or if decisions are imposed on them with no explanations.

- *Aggression* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xiv), which relates to learners' need to assert themselves and failing which parents and educators may find themselves being forced into confrontations for no particular reason. It is therefore important to include learners in certain decisions, to involve them in planning activities and give them responsibility for choosing certain courses. Letting a child with strong aggression have some control will go a long way toward channelling this tendency in positive ways. This is because many children feel that they have no say in anything, that no one listens to them or lets them be in charge of anything, which for them, is a terrible and helpless feeling. The aggression need can often be met by just listening to and considering the learners' point of view.
- *Affiliation* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xiv), which relates to developing, maintaining, and strengthening associations with others. Some learners have a very strong need to be close to each other, but often they also have an intense desire to be close to the parent and they need someone in whom they can confide and trust thereby making them feel secure and special, and will do anything to have such an affiliation - with parents and educators, with other children or siblings and in school activities. This is how young people can end up in gangs or with other people they would rather not associate with. Affiliation is thus a normal drive to ward off loneliness and find the "you are a special person" affection.
- *Inquisitiveness* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xiv), which relates to the need to know what is going on and for some learners, is a driving force. Children are generally motivated by the need to know, which enhances positive behaviour and learning. Therefore fulfilling the need to know can promote positive behaviour and will help cut down on misbehaviour.
- *Achievement* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xv), which relates to the fact that all people have a need to succeed and need to be recognized for their

success. Thus a great deal of misbehaviour results because some learners feel they cannot win at school or at home and the only way they can get any recognition is through failure and whenever learners make an effort and they do not get recognition for their effort, they soon realise that they will get the same "reward" for doing nothing - so why bother to try?

- *Power* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xv), which relates to the fact that learners can express the need for power either positively or negatively, and for some children, power is an extremely strong need. Learners who cannot find a power base in the home or school may attempt to find it outside school, in gangs or other negative ways. Therefore a sense of ownership is power and learners feel a sense of ownership when they are involved in shared decision making at home or at school.
- *Status* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xvi), which relates to the fact that everybody wants to be "somebody." For some, this need is a driving force in their lives. Therefore, any dehumanizing effort or action by a parent or educator on a learner is a mistake and can lead to serious misbehaviour. Meeting this need means always making sure that learners know that they are recognised and their special qualities and talents are valued.
- *Autonomy* (The MASTER Teacher, 2003:xvii), which relates to the need to be the boss, to be independent and to have some control over one's own life. Adults can help learners express this need by letting them make choices and set goals and by being sensitive to opportunities to fulfil, whenever the need learners have for autonomy arises.

The role of parental involvement is also cited as a factor in school discipline. This is the basis on which the SASA mandates SGBs to develop codes of conduct for learners, and by virtue of the composition of the SGB in the secondary school, the development of such codes of conduct is an inclusive process that involves even

learners. In this regard, it can be asserted that the problem of discipline in secondary schools is at times aggravated by poor parental involvement especially because parents seem to reduce their commitments as their children get older and start secondary education (cf. Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003:30 & 36).

This should however be understood in the context of barriers to parental involvement in schools. Among other barriers, parents may feel that what they may have to offer is unimportant and unappreciated, may also not believe that they have any knowledge that the school is interested, may fear embarrassment because they may be illiterate or unable to speak English, which could make communication difficult if not impossible and they may also be embarrassed by memories of their own failure at school (LaBahn, 1995).

The writer's own experience attests to the difficulty of parental involvement. For instance parents feel very uncomfortable when called to school to intervene on their children's lack of discipline. They normally try to cut the story short by asking educators to stop calling them and just apply corporal punishment. Parents argue that their parents were never called to school during their time as corporal punishment was used.

It seems that methods of maintaining discipline at schools are not always successful. The misbehaviour of children is common in all schools. Poor discipline management within a school can cause a more general breakdown in order. At times there are uprisings and violence against educators. Problems with schools discipline have also led to a reduction in a number of people wanting to become educators, especially in high schools or schools regarded as being difficult (Blandford, 1998:5).

As much as there are causes for discipline problems in schools, there are also ineffective discipline practices carried out at schools.

2.4.5 Ineffective discipline practices at schools

Many secondary school learners are not stereotypes as perhaps it may be thought. They are always looking for loop-holes in which they can prove that there is no discipline or it is ineffective (if it is there) in a particular school. They start by being late at the beginning of the day and during breaks, stay in the toilets or move around the classrooms and outside. All these behaviours could be attributed to ineffective discipline practices applied at schools. According to Cotton (2001:1), ineffective discipline practices include the following:

- vague or unenforceable rules;
- educators ignoring misconduct. Both learners' behaviour and attitudes are affected when educators ignore violations of school or classroom rules.
- ambiguous or inconsistent educator responses to misbehaviour;
- Corporal punishment, which could also cause ineffectiveness as learners normally feel that they do not have the chance to express their concerns.

2.4.6 Components of effective school discipline

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, school discipline comprises two aspects namely, classroom discipline management and school-site discipline management. The combination of discipline measures applied at classroom level and on the school-site level are complimentary in achieving whole school discipline. This requires school to consider whole school discipline as being crucial to a safe and secure school, which is conducive to effective teaching and learning. Curwin and Mendler (1999) put forward three dimensions of discipline as:

- prevention, which relates to what can be done to prevent problems;

- action, which relates to what can be done when misbehaviour occurs to solve the problem without making it worse; and
- resolution, which relates to what can be done for the “out-of-control” learner.

To this end, Sheri (1998) advocates six essential components of an effective discipline plan namely:

- *Involving all stakeholders in the discipline system planning*

To foster success, the discipline plan must be custom-designed by all parties, namely, parents, learners, school and community members. The plan should reflect a shared expectancy and an obligation to address real school discipline problems in real ways. This is indeed what the SASA advocates. Therefore the school discipline plan should outline the code of conduct that is expected as well as project values that should be exemplified by learners. (cf. White, Algozzine, Audette, Marr & Ellis jr. (2001).

According to Sheri (1998:41), the discipline plan should look at entrenching such measures as:

- learners willing to learn to resolve conflicts in socially acceptable ways and without violence.
- no learner or outsider being permitted to intimidate or disrupt the work of others.

Sheri emphasises that whatever its design, an effective discipline plan should inspire a climate in which all learners take responsibility for their own behaviour, treat each other with kindness and respect and learn the value of productive work and good citizenship.

- *Recognising parents as the first link to prevention*

In this regard, Sheri (1998:42) makes the point that parents who are involved in their children's daily school life have a better understanding of what is acceptable and expected in the school climate.

Therefore the first step is to involve parents in cooperative preschool education programs where parents learn good discipline firsthand from early childhood educators. Strategies to involve parents should be vigorously explored and these could include such practices as (Sheri, 1998:42):

- parent education that builds on parents' strengths and supports parents' efforts to understand what is normal in the development of their school-aged children;
 - a parent library at every school with comprehensive health education materials focused on prevention of intimidation, violence, and alcohol and other drug use;
 - a policy requiring parents to attend school with their children as an alternative to suspension;
 - a commitment from the community to support early childhood intervention, before and after-school care, and crime-prevention programs.
- *Ensuring access to quality professional development for educators and school managers*

According to Sheri (1998:42), all members of the teaching and administrative staff should have access to quality training that addresses learner risk behaviours and promotes prevention and these opportunities should emphasise best practices in prevention, including attention to equity issues and how to access existing support services. Educators should be

given time to engage in conversations about strategies that work, with ample opportunity for peer coaching and refresher courses. This could be a direct answer to educators who feel intimidated by the so-called alternatives to corporal punishment (2.2.2.3).

- *Celebrating learners for their positive contributions to the school community*

Sheri (1998:42) suggests that a strong and viable student recognition programme is essential to effective discipline and thus every opportunity should be taken to reinforce the positive factors that contribute to the learning environment such as acts of student kindness and respect which should then be visible on school bulletin boards, in classroom displays, in school newsletters, at assemblies and at year-end awards. Among other such practices, Sheri asserts that one promising practice that is receiving attention in many schools is to require all learners to document their positive behaviours in a portfolio which may include evidence of what the learner has done to improve the school climate through such indicators as good study habits, positive team spirit and participation in a service learning project or school pride activity.

- *Building on consistency and teamwork*

Sheri (1998:43) reasons that consistency is essential to the school discipline programme and that staff and management teams should be expected to reinforce the same behaviour for all learners and to follow a common discipline policy because an undisciplined adult community cannot expect to transmit fair discipline to its learners. Thus, consistency is most visible when the whole staff commits to the details as well as the design. Accordingly, learners want to know the limits imposed by adults in the school and to be sure they are safe so that when a learner's disruptive act requires intervention, the entire team of educators, support staff and parents or

guardians should spend time clarifying the issues and looking for solutions to recurring problems.

- *Ongoing and sustained monitoring and evaluation*

In this regard, Sheri (1998:43) postulates that strategies for reducing school disruption must be assessed continuously for their impact on the school climate and the measures need to be broad enough to answer such questions as:

- Is there evidence that discipline referrals are reduced when learners are provided support through general counselling and positive peer mentoring?
- When adult intervention is required, are the timing and consequences appropriate?
- Do learners maintain self-control when redirected?
- Do learners demonstrate understanding of the consequences?
- Have focus groups been conducted with at-risk learners to identify root causes of disruptive behaviour from the student perspective?
- Are educators following the school's expectations for learning and respect in every detail?
- Are all staff members held accountable for effective discipline through an evaluation process that holds them responsible for success?
- Are positive student behaviours reinforced appropriately? Have learners been asked for their input on ways to provide meaningful recognition?

- Can learners articulate what is required to be safe and successful at school? Are they displaying the desired behaviours and collecting evidence in student portfolios?
- Are parents and community members engaged in the discipline plan and actively promoting prevention in the school and community?
- Is information on the prevention of disruptive behaviour easily accessible by all members of the school community?
- Are prevention programmes, technical resources and support services used effectively to reduce risky behaviours?
- Are data collected and used continuously to improve the discipline programme and to revise with modifications?
- Is an annual evaluation conducted and reported to the public to identify strengths and root causes of weaknesses in the school discipline plan?

This is indeed the most crucial component of an effective discipline management system in that it seeks to ensure that there is vigilance to what is done, its consequences and that corrective measures are taken.

The foregoing discussion highlights the main thrust in so far as maintaining discipline in schools is concerned. While most literature on school discipline focuses on prevention of misbehaviour and engendering a positive attitude towards behaviour, it also promotes the application of sanctions for extreme cases. Sanctions like suspensions and expulsions, detentions and many other forms of "humane" sanctions are regularly written about.

This research however, advocates addressing discipline problems holistically, and in a way that addresses the whole school environment. While this indeed is a

challenge and can be frustrating to educators and schools that seek to effect immediate solutions, a whole school approach seeks to address the real discipline causes among learners.

2.5 MANAGING DISCIPLINE AT SCHOOL

It is an accepted fact that discipline problems will always exist for as long as there are learners. It is thus important that discipline at school be managed. In this regard, it is important to consider the components of school discipline. To this end, many views exist about what constitutes school discipline. However, there seems to be consensus that school discipline constitutes classroom discipline, school-wide or whole school discipline and individual learner discipline (cf. Cotton, 2001; Putnam, Handler & Luiselli, 2003; Florida Department of Education Office of School Improvement; undated). Managing discipline in the sense of these discipline components requires the creation of school environments that address these three components. While this can be frustrating for schools that seek to engage in “on-the-spot” quick-fix solutions, it must be noted that creating such a climate demands a conscientious effort. A whole school discipline management approach is thus advocated for this purpose.

The whole school approach to school discipline moves from the premise that identifies the causes of misbehaviour and focuses on addressing them and essentially advocates dealing with existing discipline problems while engendering an atmosphere of prevention (cf. Putnam *et al.*, 2003). In this regard, Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (2004:10) advocates a preventive and positive approach to managing existing discipline problems to one that is reactive and aversive, where schools must:

- work for and with all learners, since every child entering school needs behaviour support.

- give priority to empirically validated procedures and systems that have demonstrated effectiveness, efficiency and relevance.
- integrate academic and behavioural success for all students.
- emphasize prevention in establishing and maintaining safe and supportive school climates.
- expand the use of effective practices and systems to district, regional and to state levels.
- increase collaboration among multiple community support systems (education, juvenile justice, community mental health, family, and medical systems).
- build a school environment where team building and problem solving skills are expected, taught and reinforced.

The whole school approach to discipline entails what other writers refer to as a school-wide positive behaviour support, which according to Stormont, Lewis and Beckner (2005), integrates behavioural sciences, practical interventions, social values and a systems perspective. This approach, as pointed out by Center on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (2004:10) advocates a systems approach to whole school discipline, which considers the school as the basic “unit of analysis” or “point of influence or action” and how the collective actions of individuals within the school contribute to how the school is characterised, precisely because the school as an organisation:

- does not behave, individuals within the organization engage in a variety behaviours.

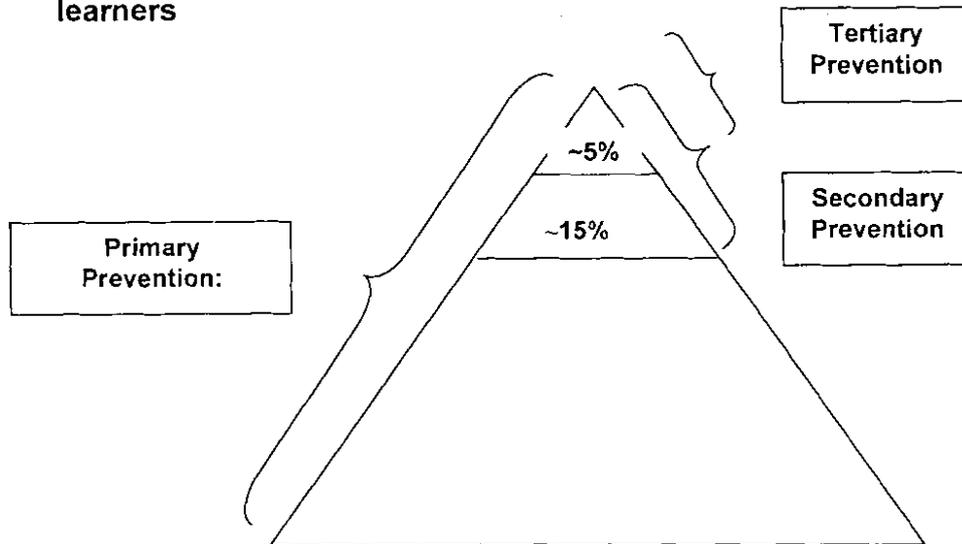
- comprises a group of individuals who behave together to achieve a common goal.
- needs systems to support the collective use of best practices by individuals within the organisation.

Thus, the school-wide positive behaviour support approach gives priority to the establishment of systems that support the adoption and durable implementation of evidence-based practices and procedures and focuses on the interactive and self-checking process of organisational correction and improvement around four key elements namely (Center on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports, 2004:10):

- *Outcomes*: academic and behaviour targets that are endorsed and emphasized by learners, families, and educators.
- *Practices*: interventions and strategies that are evidence based.
- *Data*: information that is used to identify status, need for change, and effects of interventions.
- *Systems*: supports that are needed to enable the accurate and durable implementation of the practices of the approach.

It is clear therefore that a school-wide positive behaviour support approach provides a continuum of support for all learners, which entails primary prevention, secondary prevention and tertiary prevention (see figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1 A continuum of school-wide positive behaviour support for all learners



(Adapted from Centre on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports, 2004:17).

As illustrated in fig 2.1 above, primary prevention focuses on (Centre on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports, 2004:18):

- preventing the development of new cases of problem behaviours by focusing on all students and staff across all settings (school-wide, classroom and non-classroom/non-instructional settings);
- secondary prevention focuses on reducing the number of existing cases of problem behaviours by establishing efficient and rapid responses to problem behaviour; and tertiary
- prevention focuses on reducing the intensity and/or complexity of existing cases of problem behaviours that are resistant to primary and secondary prevention efforts.

This approach therefore focuses on (Centre on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports, 2004:17):

- removing antecedent or preceding factors that prompt, trigger, or occasion problem behaviour in children and undesirable intervention practices.
- adding antecedent or preceding factors that prompt, trigger, or occasion appropriate behaviour and desirable intervention practices.
- removing consequences or following factors that maintain and strengthen occurrences of problem behaviour and undesirable intervention practices.
- adding consequences or following factors that maintain and strengthen occurrences of appropriate behaviours and desirable intervention practices.
- arranging environments so that opportunities are maximized to teach and practice appropriate behaviour and desirable intervention practices.
- teaching social skills and adopting intervention strategies that are more effective, efficient, and relevant than problem behaviours and undesirable intervention practices.
- removing consequences or following factors that inhibit or prevent occurrences of appropriate behaviours and use of desirable intervention practices.

Centre on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports (2004:26) stresses that the effectiveness of the implementation of the school-wide positive behaviour support is related to the extent that a common vision and a set of principles are used to guide decision-making and implementation efforts and that the goals and capacity building elements of this approach are founded on five major constructs or foundational concepts:

- a) *Prevention*, which refers to organizing learning and teaching environments to prevent the:
- 1) development of new problem behaviours.
 - 2) worsening of existing problem behaviours.
 - 3) triggering of problem behaviour.

Prevention is characterized by an emphasis on directly teaching, actively monitoring, and positively reinforcing pro-social or adapted behaviours; and

- b) *Whole school*, which refers to addressing the behaviour support needs of all members (for example, learners, staff, family members, classified staff) and all settings of a school community;
- c) *Evidence-based practices*, which refer to interventions, strategies and techniques that have empirical evidence in terms of their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and durability;
- d) *Teaming*, which refers to working as a cohesive, integrated, and representative collection of individuals who lead the systems change and implementation process; and
- e) *Evaluation*, which refers to the regular and systematic self-assessment of strengths and needs, and the continuous self-improvement action planning process.

Implementing this approach as a discipline management approach requires a school to (Centre on Positive Behavioural Interventions and Supports, 2004:28):

- *Establish a visible, effective, efficient and functional leadership team*

This team should be made of the principal, educators, support staff, parents and learners, which will ensure that whatever resolutions and action courses are taken will enjoy the full support of stakeholders and will also ensure the ease of articulating the vision for the process.

- *Review existing information/data*

This step is a self-assessment of the current school discipline system. Activities involved include analysing, describing and prioritising discipline issues within the context of school-wide discipline needs and should be followed by specifying measurable outcomes that are related directly to discipline issues and context.

- *Select evidence-based practice to achieve specified outcome*

This is after self-assessment and essentially entails action planning based on evidence-based data and decision making regarding priorities for action and should be coupled with providing support for accurate and sustained adoption and implementation of practice.

- *Monitor practice implementation and progress toward outcome*

This is important in so far as it determines whether there is progress towards the desired end, especially because implementing measures to create a school-wide positive behaviour support system of discipline is a long-term process and because of that, sloppy monitoring may result in the failure to achieve the desired discipline outcomes.

- *Modify practice implementation based on analysis of progress data*

This entails applying corrective action whenever necessary. It also means looking at whether measures adopted for action are achieving the intended results and if not, going back to the team for reassessment.

The positive behaviour support approach to school discipline exposed above is essentially a whole school approach to school discipline and seems appropriate to addressing the whole school discipline status. The advantages of this approach are located in its accommodative framework. In other words, it provides opportunities to accommodate existing discipline problems as well as potential problems based on evidence of discipline incidents. This is made possible by the evidence-based self assessment as well as the modification of the implementation practice which is an ongoing process in itself.

2.6 CHAPTER CONCLUSION

The essence of discipline in schools reveals the challenge schools are faced with. It is clear that discipline problems at schools are not only a mere manifestation of unruly learner behaviour but a result of various causes, some of which are situated at school, at home and within learners themselves.

The discussion in this chapter has highlighted the need for a holistic approach to school discipline and has revealed the inadvisability of relying on quick-fix and on the spot solutions to correcting misbehaviour.

It is for this reason that this research advocates an approach to school discipline that is holistic in nature and that addresses the causes of learner discipline. Implementing the whole school discipline approach creates the necessary environment for the school to be able to deal with prevention of misbehaviour at levels of learner intervention processes.

The question that needs to be answered at this stage relates to what discipline problems are experience by schools and how they can be assisted to institute

discipline measures that address the whole school's discipline needs. The next chapter presents the empirical research design in an attempt to address these questions.

CHAPTER 3

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 of this research dealt extensively through a literature survey with the essence of school discipline and an approach to its management. This chapter outlines the empirical research process undertaken in the research.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Undertaking research requires a thorough and a meticulous process. This implies that before actually conducting research, the researcher needs to create parameters within which the research project is to be conducted. This ensures that the research is orderly and follows a direction that will ensure that the process is focussed in terms of the research inquiry. This is accomplished by outlining a clear research design and methodology.

3.2.1 Research design

According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005:85), the research design provides the overall structure for the procedures the research follows, the data collection and analysis – which simply put means planning. This is always done with the central goal of solving the research problem in mind. In this regard, Denzin and Lincoln (2005:32) point out that due to many factors that must be considered in planning the research, *inter alia*, time and costs, it is imperative for researchers to consciously and purposely select and utilise those research methods that would permit better, convenient and successful attainment of specific research aims.

There are two broad approaches commonly used by researchers to collect data. These are the quantitative and qualitative approaches. In this research, a qualitative approach is used to investigate how learner discipline in secondary schools is currently managed.

3.2.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research uses many approaches that are quite different from one another. In this regard, Leedy and Ormrod (2005:133) state that all these approaches have two things in common namely, they focus on phenomena which occur in natural settings and they also involve studying these phenomena in all their complexity. Thus qualitative researchers recognise that phenomena they study have many dimensions and layers. To this end, qualitative research relies on researchers' abilities to interpret and make sense of what they see, which is critical for understanding any social phenomenon which makes up the researchers' instruments in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:133).

Qualitative research, according to Gay and Airasian (2003:13) seeks to probe deeply into the research setting with an intention of obtaining a deep understanding about the way things are as well as how participants perceive them. This provides insights into what people believe and feel about the way things are and as such allows researchers to maintain a physical presence in the research setting and involves texts of written words and the analysis of collected data.

In this research, the researcher used a data collection method that allowed an extensive interaction with the participants in their own natural settings. For this purpose the interview was used as a research tool.

3.2.3 The interview as research tool

Data for this research was collected by means of interviews with TLOs in secondary schools or school principals where TLOs were unavailable. The interview was chosen as the best data collection instrument because, as described by various experts in qualitative research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:146, 184; Greef, 2002:291; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000:260), interviews provide the following opportunities:

- gathering data through direct verbal interaction between individuals;
- gaining in-depth understanding of participants and following up where necessary for clarity purposes;
- fostering mutual respect and sharing of information with the participants;
- establishing rapport with participants and therefore gaining cooperation; and
- conducting the interviews in natural and relaxed settings.

Interviews in this research were the person-to-person type where interviewer and interviewee engaged on the phenomenon of the study in a setting that was relaxed and allowed for free interaction.

3.2.4 Focus of research

The focus of this research was on examining how discipline is managed in secondary schools. The research was conducted in 12 secondary schools with the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) in those schools. They were asked open-ended questions. The main guiding question of the inquiry was:

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding discipline in secondary schools?

Subsequently, an engagement with the following aspects was undertaken:

- discipline problems experienced in secondary schools.
- how (in)discipline affect teaching and learning.
- causes of discipline problems in secondary schools.
- the current discipline practices at schools.
- the principal's role in the discipline practices of the school.
- barriers to effective discipline practices that have not been discussed yet
- how discipline could be enforced in secondary schools..

The research also attempted to determine the extent to which educators' perceptions about discipline in secondary schools are consistent with literature study findings on the status of discipline in secondary schools.

3.2.5 Participants in the research

The population for this research comprised secondary school TLOs in the North West Province's Department of Education. Due to the vast expanse of the Province and the qualitative nature of this research, it was decided to confine it to the Taledi District in the province.

There are 19 secondary schools in the Taledi District of the North West Department of Education. Purposeful sampling was used, meaning that the sample was deliberately selected to yield as much information-rich data as possible (cf. Merriam, 1998:61). It was intended to include all secondary school TLOs ($n = 19$) in the district, so that they would all be the target population. However, at $n = 12$, it was discovered that no new data was forthcoming and patterns of answers were already discernable. At this stage, it was decided on

informational considerations (see Merriam, 1998:65) that sufficient data addressing the research problem and questions had been collected and no new information was necessary. Strydom and Delpont (2002:336) refer to this as sequential sampling, which means that data is gathered until a saturation point is reached.

TLOs are charged with working with Representative Councils of Learners (RCLs) which are legal and legitimate entities in secondary schools in terms of the SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Due to the fact that TLOs' functional mandate includes among other functions, working with RCLs in secondary schools on issues pertaining to learners and the implementation of school codes of conduct, and continuously liaising with school management, the SGB and educators on matters pertaining to learners, it was decided that they would better articulate educators' perceptions about the issues of discipline in secondary schools.

Leedy and Ormrod (2005:145) assert that this kind of research selects its data sources intentionally and non-randomly with an intention of selecting those subjects or objects that will yield the most accurate information about the topic under investigation. It was decided, for purposes of this research that TLOs would best serve this purpose. In the case of schools where there were no TLOs or where they were not available, school principals were interviewed.

To establish validity and reliability of the interviews, the interview questions were piloted with five school principals and four educators and they were asked to determine if the questions were appropriate. Findings were also taken back to the participants to find out if they agreed with them. In preparing the report, their comments were also taken into consideration.

3.2.6 Data collection

The interviews were conducted at schools where TLOs work. Adequate and appropriate space for the interviews was provided by the schools and the interviews were conducted after school hours. Due to the fact that interviews

were conducted in the afternoons, the interview settings were in all cases appropriate and conducive to effective data collection.

Permission was obtained from participants to record the interviews. In all instances, field notes were taken and impressions gained were jotted down after every interview (Greef, 2002:304).

Transcription and analysis was done every evening after each interview. In this way, data saturation and informational consideration became clear from the eighth interview (see Greef, 2002:305).

3.2.7 Data analysis

According to Merriam (1998:178) and De Vos (2002:344), data analysis involves the process of making sense out of data collected by consolidating, reducing and interpreting what participants have said and what the researcher observed. The following process was followed in the data analysis (Leedy and Ormrod, 2005:150; De Vos, 2002:340):

- Data was organised into smaller units in the form of main concepts, sentences and individual words;
- The data was perused several times to get a sense of what it contained as a whole. Notes suggesting categories or interpretation were jotted down;
- General categories were identified and it was at this stage that a general impression of the study phenomenon began to emerge; and
- Data was then summarised and integrated into the text for reporting.

After compiling the report, a discussion with a veteran principal of a school in the neighbouring district was taken on the findings so as to eliminate, *inter alia*, researcher bias. This whole process managed to describe the findings on learner discipline in secondary schools in the district.

3.2.8 Reporting

The findings of the study were then reported in a narrative form with identifiable categories drawn from the interview responses. Quotes were conceptualised and integrated into the report text and names that could violate confidentiality were altered. Because the interviews sought to investigate how discipline is managed at schools, reporting was contextualised in terms of the purpose of study.

3.3 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Firstly, the researcher obtained permission to conduct the research from the district manager by following the prescribed departmental protocol. Permission was also obtained from the school principals as well as participant TLOs. It was ensured that maximum cooperation was obtained by (see Creswell, 1998:37):

- articulating the topic and objectives to the participants beforehand;
- availing transcripts and interpretations to the participants before the actual textual reporting;
- considering participants' wishes for anonymity and confidentiality. Consequently, actual school names and names of participants are not mentioned in the report.

3.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the empirical research design by outlining the design of the research and the research method. The next chapter presents the data analysis and interpretation.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents findings of the empirical study. It reports on the realisation of the ethical considerations and sampling and then presents the findings of empirical study.

4.2 REALISATION OF ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS AND SAMPLING

It was found during the research process that participants were eager to take part in the research. This is basically because of the importance of the study phenomenon and the apparent frustrations experienced by schools generally on the question of learner discipline in secondary schools. Two interviewees actually said:

“It is about time that this question is attended to. We are burdened by many things, and as such we are frustrated by having to contend with discipline problems.”

“Discipline, discipline, discipline. Yeah, a real problem of this century. What can I say ... (maybe) we should be trained to be policemen, lawyers, judges and maybe we should also be trained to be parents, nurses, social workers, traditional leaders, in fact, anything – you name it.”

The eagerness to discuss this issue actually ensured that the interviews took place successfully and yielded genuine responses from the participants. The letter of approval (annexure B) to conduct the research also assisted to gain the goodwill of the participants.

The area consists of secondary schools categorised into junior secondary schools which are made of grades 5-9 and two groups of senior secondary schools, made up of grades 8 – 12 and 10 – 12 respectively (table 4.1). The learner enrolment figures were of particular interest and significance in so far as discipline problems are concerned and this was articulated by the interviewees.

Table 4.1 Categories of secondary schools

| School category | Grades | Enrolment figures | Schools visited |
|------------------|--------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| Junior secondary | 7-9 | 500-600 | 3 |
| Senior secondary | 8-10 | 600-1000 ⁺ | 8 |
| Senior secondary | 10-12 | 500-600 | 1 |

Of the secondary schools in the area, some are in the rural area, some in the township while others are in town. Table 4.2 illustrates the locations of the schools, learner composition and the status of school resources.

Table 4.2 School location, learner composition and status of resources

| School category | Schools visited | Location | Learner composition | Status of resources |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Senior | 4 | Town | 300-600 | Well-resourced |
| Senior | 4 | Township | 1000+ | Not well-resourced |
| Senior | 1 | Rural | 500-600 | Poorly resourced |
| Junior | 3 | Rural | 500-600 | Poorly resourced |

It was important to note these factors since they could be perceived to have an influence on learner discipline. Schools where interviews were conducted (8 schools) had a learner enrolment of between 500 and 600 with four of them

being in town (ex-model C[†]) and four in the rural areas, while four were in the township with enrolments of over 1000 learners.

A particularly significant observation relates to the resources at these schools. It was noted that all town schools were well-resourced, with such educational amenities as computer laboratories, science laboratories and libraries. Their school environments were well resourced with safe and secure perimeter fencing and well-kept sports and school grounds. In contrast, township schools, while having some resources like laboratories and libraries, these were ill-equipped and as such, they had physical environments that were not as well resourced. Rural schools on the other hand, simply did not have resources like town and township schools.

Although the research intended to interview school TLOs, it was found that in 4 schools the TLOs, for one reason or another were unavailable. Consequently principals of those schools agreed and seemed willing to participate, especially after being assured of the research aims and the confidential nature of their participation. The interviews therefore consisted of participants as illustrated in table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Interview participants

| Principals | Gender | TLOs | Gender |
|------------|--------|------|--------|
| 5 | Male | 7 | Female |
| 0 | Female | 0 | Male |

Of the five principals interviewed, four were from town schools and one was from a rural school, while the all the female TLOs (7) were from rural schools (3) and township schools (4).

[†] Ex model C schools were previously enrolled white learner only and later (in the late and early 1990s) enrolled African learners. These are mostly located in town and suburban areas.

4.3 ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF RESULTS

Data was analysed in terms of the interview schedule. It must be said though, that the interviews were unstructured and the open-ended question about interviewees' perceptions regarding discipline in secondary schools were used and they also opened up a discussion which covered some aspects of the subsequent questions. In analysing the responses from the tape recordings and transcripts of field notes, the following report was compiled, taking into account the whole process of data analysis from the recordings. It suffices to state that the guidelines on qualitative data analysis, interpretation and reporting were noted during this process (see Delport & Fouche, 2002:356; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005:150).

4.3.1 Perceptions about discipline in secondary schools

From the participants' responses, it seems that discipline is a real problem in secondary schools. Most participants argued that discipline has become worse than before the 1994 democratic elections in the country. Frustrations were expressed about learners being bullies, being unruly and not doing their school work. The unruliness was expressed as mainly emanating from the boys. Female TLOs indicated that they themselves were afraid of the older boys at their secondary schools. This feeling, they reported, was common among township and rural schools. Not surprisingly, it was found that educators mostly decried the abolishment of corporal punishment and the introduction of the outcome based education approach (OBE) to teaching and learning in which educators felt they were not properly trained. They also indicated that most of the parents were reluctant to support the school towards maintenance of discipline.

Mrs Pelo, a TLO from a Bathong Secondary School, a township school with an enrolment exceeding 1000 learners commented:

“Whenever I have to wake-up in the morning to prepare to go to school, I really feel unsafe. There are these two boys who give me a

headache, they are always making noise, and they can hardly stop talking. When I ask them to get out of the classroom, they refuse and I am afraid of them. I asked their parents to intervene but there is no improvement.”

Mrs Mphoso, a TLO from Puthulla Secondary, a township school expressed frustration over the discipline of learners in secondary schools. She pointed out:

“There is absolutely poor discipline. Learners come late, dodge classes, do not do homework, smoke dagga. Some even use drugs. You should see them when they “perform” (meaning when they misbehave). It seems like they just don’t fear anyone”.

Ms Penelope, a TLO from Sebetsa Secondary School, also a township school expressed educators’ frustration over discipline in secondary schools. She stated:

“You should just listen to educators complaining. These children do not fear anything or anyone for that matter. Some educators have given up. They just ignore them. Discipline is just non-existent. Maybe it was a mistake to ban corporal punishment. These kids seem to enjoy detention. You could almost say they misbehave deliberately so as to go there.”

Mr Block, a principal from, Seipone Secondary School, a rural school actually blamed parents for the indiscipline of their children at schools. He stated:

“Whenever we call parents to intervene, they tell us that these boys are just behaving like this at home. Parents ask us to apply corporal punishment. So discipline is just way terrible.”

Mrs Selepe from the rural Tabeng Secondary School expressed her concern as follows:

"I wish I was a clerk. Our school clerk is enjoying her work because she does not have to interact with these learners on a daily basis. Even if there could be corporal punishment, I cannot apply it as an individual; these boys are so big and look strong. Remember, they are also from the mountain (initiation schools). I don't want to put my life in danger. Let the parents talk to their children. Charity begins at home."

Mr Walters, a principal from Hoërskool Diepenaar, a town school commented that:

"Learners have more rights than they need; and educators are left in a mess. We are now more of social workers than educators."

Mr Point, a principal from Steelpoort High, pointed out that they experienced no major discipline problems except for minor problems, which he attributed to "children being children". He stressed that they involved parents and due to their manageable learner numbers, parents were mostly available. He attributed their low disciplinary problems to a strict adherence to the school's code of conduct.

From the above statement it can be concluded that indeed there are discipline problems at schools. It also seems that this is a problem that applies across the board. Educators from town, township and rural schools express frustrations over discipline problems at schools. TLOs actually expressed the view that educators were really helpless, which has led to some educators resigning or retiring prematurely.

However, two school principals (from town schools) were of the opinion that maintaining learner discipline remained with individual schools in terms of school management and learner-educator relationship. They believed that learners are not as bad as they are made out to be. The two principals, Mr Service from Hope High School and Mr Diens from Stoepel Hoërskool respectively commented:

“I believe that in most cases the problem of discipline is not with the learners but educators. Educators are not trying enough to know how to handle the learners. Educators must be trained. You can have the best system of discipline in the world, but if educators do not know how to use the system, it is not going to help at all. Some educators have a natural and good way of dealing with learners. Educators need to know where to draw the line and really reprimand the kids. Disciplining by shouting at somebody is not really the answer.”

“Secondary school learners are not kids as we think; we have to build a good relationship and understanding with them. Talk to them and listen to their problems and opinions. By so doing, I think we can have disciplined learners.”

These principals also supported the view that parents were not actively involved in the education of their children. They indicated that some of the discipline problems at schools could be handled if parents could also play their part, especially at home.

It is clear from the views expressed above that discipline is a problem educators struggle with in secondary schools. While this is the case, it is expected that schools will have different discipline problems.

4.3.2 Discipline problems experienced in secondary schools

Interviewees were asked about the discipline problems experienced in secondary schools. Problems highlighted were common and some were perceived as being minor, but participants indicated that those minor discipline problems were having a negative impact on learning and teaching. Disruption of classes due to late coming, noise-making, failing to do schoolwork, fighting, bullying, and absenteeism were commonly reported. One TLO, Ms Penelope from Sebetsa Secondary School, a township secondary school indicated that discipline

problems at their school were fighting and bullying amongst boys, late coming and noise making. She opined:

“There is a lot of fighting and bullying in our school. These boys like fighting one another, or a group fighting the other group. They walk in groups and even have group names. Others call themselves “The Untouchables”, “The Heroes”, From time to time police look for some learners during school hours. At times these fights take place after school or during weekends. They just overlap or continue here at school.”

Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary, a rural secondary school indicated that about a quarter of the learners walk to school daily. The school is about 8-10 km from their homes and this causes late coming. She also complained of learners not doing their home work. She further said:

“What is the use of coming to school when you cannot be on time, On top of being late for school and classes they come with uncompleted home work. They drag their feet to school. The school bell has nothing to do with them. It means absolutely nothing. Remember, they can't be punished.”

Mrs Mphoso from Puthulla Secondary School felt that disrespectful learners were a major problem. She opined that not doing homework, bunking classes and making noise were acts of disrespect educators faced mostly. She cited sloppy work and bad manners generally as some of the discipline problems experienced by educators.

Another problem which was highlighted during the interviews was overcrowding. The tables shown above indicate that some schools have many learners. This is because in one big township, only two secondary schools have to admit learners. The resultant problem is that of overcrowding.

Ms Flora from Jabula Secondary, a township school had this to say:

"We are having only two secondary schools in this big township, so overcrowding is a serious problem since we have +1000 learners, because of this overcrowding we have shortages of textbooks and as a solution, two or three learners have to share one textbook. This leads to immense discipline problems. Noise making, fighting, stealing, late coming, you name it, they are all there."

This was also experienced in rural areas where secondary schools have only a few classrooms and are overcrowded. Mrs Matlaka, a TLO from rural Matlapeng Secondary School with an enrolment of 570 learners expressed her views about overcrowding as a discipline problem:

"Overcrowding is a serious problem in this small school. It is really difficult to control these learners. Granted, we have just over 500 learners but only eight (8) classrooms. We have up to 60 learners in one classroom. Who can control such a big class? Can you imagine that some of these overcrowded classrooms are Grades 12? They need individual attention which is really not possible."

In contrast and as confirmation of problems experienced in overcrowded schools and classrooms, Mr Point, a principal from Steelport High, a town school which does not have a TLO, indicated that they do not have major discipline problems since they have a total number of 465 learners in the whole school. It must also be highlighted that there are some classes that have only 14 learners. He said:

"We have only 465 learners, so it makes it easier in terms of enforcing discipline. Educators are able to have good eye contact with all learners in the classrooms. It is even possible to give our learners individual attention."

Mr Steelport, however, admitted that there were the "usual" problems associated with learners' home backgrounds. Among other problems, he cited bullying, though on a small scale. He pointed out that due to manageable learner

numbers, they were able to keep their learners occupied most times and this, he advocated “eliminated a lot of serious discipline problems.”

These responses clearly indicate that discipline problems would exert negative effects on teaching and learning.

4.3.3 How learner indiscipline affects teaching and learning

It was recognised during the interviews that indiscipline affects learning and teaching in a very negative way. It was indicated that educators waste a lot of teaching time reprimanding learners, controlling late-coming and at times curbing unnecessary noise-making, fighting, and bullying. Up to ten minutes in a 35 minute period is possibly wasted talking to learners to keep quite and pay attention before lessons can start. In this regard, Mr Block, a principal from rural Seipone Secondary School stated:

“We really have to take time to make learners keep quite, they are so uncontrollable.”

Mr Block further expressed the difficulty of motivating educators:

“What do you say to educators who constantly complain of learners’ poor discipline? It doesn’t matter how you try to encourage them – some misbehaviour is just intolerable – especially from learners who claim to know their rights. Just recently, one boy told an educator it was his right to sit where he wants – he was not disturbing anyone. He had actually come late and insisted on moving to the back of the class. So, you see, some behaviour is simply intolerable.”

Surprisingly, Mr Walters, from Hoërskool Diepenaar had this to say:

“We have to talk to the learners with regard to keeping quite before you start a lesson. At times you have to scream to get your voice above theirs so that they should keep quite. Indiscipline is a hindrance to teaching and learning.

Ms Mphoso, TLO from Puthulla Secondary indicated that learners who were bullies would forcefully open the door whenever they were asked to remain outside due to late coming. She said:

“The progress is so slow in class because of disturbances from other learners. Every time we have to go back and start the lesson to cater for these latecomers. If we try to maintain discipline by keeping them outside, those who disrespect us will forcefully open the door and get inside. They are not afraid of female educators. Even some male educators complain about this. Sometime they even threaten to assault these learners ... but as you know, it is against the law.”

Ms Flora of Jabula Secondary School from the township highlighted that indeed indiscipline disturbs learning and teaching, and further commented:

“Educators are unable to complete the required learning outcomes due to lack of discipline. Ill-disciplined learners disturb those who want to do their work. Our learners really do not want to behave properly.”

The following responses from other TLOs capture the effects of indiscipline on teaching and learning:

Ms Pelo from Bathong Secondary School:

“It is really disturbing, now and then you are busy, learners will be disturbed by those who are ill-disciplined, and you have to stop the lesson and deal with them. It takes most of our time. It takes time to make them keep quite, they are uncontrollable, they even fight in and outside the class.”

Mrs Selepe from Tabeng Secondary School:

“Some educators tend to think that the problem of discipline is for some educators and in that way it takes a lot of time for other

educators to deal with discipline. I don't think our educators really know what to do in terms of disciplining the learners."

Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary School:

"Educators are unable to complete their work (to cover all the required learning outcomes) due to lack of discipline. Ill-disciplined learners disturb those who do their work."

Clearly poor learner discipline disrupts teaching. One consequence of poor learner discipline was its effect on educators' willingness to go the extra mile in helping learners. Ms Penelope, from Sebetsa Secondary School pointed out that educators mostly were demotivated by learner indiscipline. This received support from Mrs Matlaka from Matlapeng Secondary School who said:

"Educators express hopelessness. They don't mind the usual minor indiscipline problems. It is the major ones – fighting, swearing, disrespect that get to them. Some educators don't care anymore. They leave matters to the principal to sort out."

Mr Diens from Stoepel Hoërskool felt there was a need for regular or permanent counsellors for educators as learner indiscipline affected them and caused unnecessary stress. He regretted that the department did not offer such services for educators.

It became crucial to find out what educators perceive as being the causes of indiscipline among secondary school learners.

4.3.4 Causes of discipline problems in secondary schools

There are different causes of indiscipline in secondary schools. Some of the causes raised were among others, lack of parental involvement in the education of the learners, peer pressure, learners left alone at home, socio-economic status of different families, and unfairness from some educators. It must be indicated

that among the causes of indiscipline, TLOs shared a common voice and differed at some instances.

Among other causes, a common cause was the issue of parents not being actively involved in school discipline.

Some TLOs mentioned the fact that learners behave better when they know that their parents frequent schools and there is a good educator-parent relationship. It was felt that learners in secondary schools do not like their parents to visit their schools, but immediately they notice that their parents do, their (learners) unacceptable behaviours subside. The TLOs indicated that parents should be visible at schools and encourage learners to do their best and behave well.

Mrs Matlaka from rural Matlapeng Secondary School stated:

“We are aware that some learners are left alone at home while their parents are working far. So these learners do as they wish for 28 or 29 days, knowing that their parents will only come at the end of the month. They are at times left with more money than they need and they start getting tempted to try alcoholic drinks and dagga as these substances are easily accessible. Others are left with little or no money at all. This can also contribute to the cause of discipline problems at school as they are hungry and trying to express their anger. We are appealing to parents to look for guardians when they are not around. The guardians must feel free to visit these learners at school.”

Mr Block from Seipone Secondary School in this regard, indicated that parents, especially of learners who misbehave did not respond to invitations to the school. He cited this as the reason why such parents' children continuously misbehave. In his words:

“... this is the reason why learners use drugs, are violent and tend to bully others. They know that their parents will not come to school. In

most instances, such parents do not know about their children's conduct at school. A true partnership with parents would be helpful.”

Mr Point from Steelport High in town indicated that most learners at their school are children of parents who are educators, nurses, police officers and businesspeople. Many of these learners stay with their parents. The parents' level of literacy contributes towards participation and involvement in matters taking place at their children schools. When they are called, they do come. He added:

“Parents who are actively involved in the activities of the school and education of their children have better knowledge of what is happening and expected from them and their children in order for discipline to be maintained.”

Mrs Mphoso from Puthulla Secondary School complained that parents leave them with the burden of building and moulding the characters of their children. She indicated:

“Parents are not helping us to maintain discipline; they in fact, bring their children's problems to school, asking educators to help them with their children who misbehave. This is really a problem and burden for educators who must act in roles for which they are not trained – social workers or psychologists.”

Educators were themselves also cited as a cause of learner discipline problems. Some educators were actually blamed for the worsening discipline situation at various schools. Mrs Selepe from rural Tabeng Secondary School expressed her opinion on this matter:

“As educators, we sometimes do not mind our language when talking to learners. We forget that some of these learners are maturing and very sensitive. There may be some educators who use vulgar and hurtful words, which learners do not like. We sometimes have to deal

with such incidents and the next thing, educators expect to be protected. This worsens the situation in that it makes the learner think that as adults, we gang up against them.”

Ms Penelope from Sebetsa Secondary School, another TLO from a township school explained:

“Indiscipline may be caused by us as educators. Sometimes we take long before attending to our classes and consequently learners obviously get out of school or behave badly.”

Another issue cited as a cause of learner indiscipline was peer pressure. Mr Walters, a principal from Hoërskool Diepenaar came up with the issue of peer pressure as a cause of discipline problems. She said:

“Peer pressure is a problem, learners do not like to be sidelined, and they are doing things so as to feel part of the group. A sense of belonging overpowers their thinking.”

In township and rural schools, TLOs noted that with boys the peer pressure came from those boys who had attended initiation schools and graduated into “manhood.” These boys were often said to isolate themselves into gangs of “men”, did not show respect for educators and despised their peers because they were “above” them. This often led to pressure on the other boys who would also enlist themselves into these schools so as to belong to the “men.” TLOs expressed anger at this because:

“... this is not how the custom of initiation is practiced. Instead, it actually should make them to be respectful and dignified.” - Mrs Pelo from Bathong Secondary School.

“Initiation has been turned into a plaything. We don’t know this. Instead of well behaved people, some of the initiates become bullies.

It just doesn't make sense. Most of them end up leaving school.' –
Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary School.

Overcrowding as alluded to earlier was regarded in many schools as a contributory factor towards indiscipline. There was a feeling that there has never been order where people are overcrowded. Therefore, as long as learners were squeezed in one classroom, there would always be some form of indiscipline. Despite the provision that the maximum learner-educator ratio should be 1:35, in some schools this was extremely impossible because of the lack of classrooms. Taking the total number of learners in a school and the total number of educators, the ratio might balance, that is, 500 learners divided by 16 educators = 31, meaning 1:31. However, due to lack of classrooms, the ratio balances but learners would be about 45 to 50 in some classrooms and this ultimately leads to overcrowding. Ms Flora of Jabula Secondary School indicated that:

"Class-size is really a problem. It is difficult to control and discipline 54 learners compared to a class of 20 to 30 learners."

Mr Block, principal of rural Seipone Secondary School articulated:

"Overcrowding causes a lot of poor discipline. Educators are unable to reach all learners. ... a learner can hide behind other learners and start to misbehave. It is difficult to keep good eye contact with all learners when they are so many in one classroom."

Mr Service, the principal of Hope High School expressed this opinion:

"Overcrowding does contribute a lot towards indiscipline. We cannot really handle big classes to the best of our abilities. I wish to quit teaching due to overcrowding. It is honestly not fair for both educators and learners. It is also not healthy."

Other views expressed included the following:

Mrs Mphoso of Puthulla Secondary School:

“Class- size is really a problem ... in a class of fifty four (54) learners it is difficult to discipline learners as compared to a class of 15-20 or 30 learners.”

Ms Pelo of Bathong Secondary School:

“Class size really makes a difference when coming to discipline. I can handle a class of twenty five much easier than a class of forty. When learners are few in a classroom, we are able to give them individual attention. It is really crucial when coming to learning and teaching. We have bigger classes of forty two.”

Mrs Selepe of Tabeng Secondary School:

“Class size affects discipline to a large-extent. Educators are unable to reach all learners. Again a learner can hide behind other learners and start to misbehave. It is difficult to keep good eye contact with all learners at the same time. It is also not easy to give gifted children work and concentrate on the slow learners since we are also overloaded with a lot of learning areas.”

Ms Penelope of Sebetsa Secondary School:

“A small class is easily manageable compared to a large class whereby learners are hiding behind others and make a lot of noise and misbehave. As educators in small class, we have the possibility of knowing and understanding learners’ weaknesses and strengths.”

Ms Diens, principal of Stoepel Hoërskool:

“Overcrowding is a problem as it is difficult to control many kids. We have few classrooms, so learners are overcrowded. There are slow learners who may need time, but it is difficult to realise or notice them

because of overcrowding. We have at least 45-50 learners in one class.”

Mrs Matlaka of Matlapeng Secondary School:

“We have a limited number of textbooks, so because of overcrowding, learners have to share books. There is not enough space in the classrooms and we can hardly move between the learners.”

Only two schools did not have a problem of overcrowding as the classes mostly had between 15 and 25 learners. These were both town schools (Steelport Secondary and Hoërskool Diepenaar). Comments from these schools were respectively:

“Class size is really not a problem with us here. Our biggest class is made of 25 learners. There is no overcrowding. So overcrowding is really not a problem.”

“While our classes are larger than in the past, they are not too big, at least in terms of official learner-educator ratios. ... the biggest class has 45 learners.”

4.3.5 Current discipline practices in secondary schools

Ever since the abolishment of corporal punishment, educators have been struggling to apply other methods of maintaining discipline. To many educators it seems as if the only remedy to have order and discipline at school is to use corporal punishment. As highlighted in the previous chapter, the South African Schools Act forbids the use of corporal punishment and this implies that parents may not even give principals or educators permission to use corporal punishment. Anyone who ignores this regulation and applies corporal punishment at school, commits a crime and can be charged in a court of law and get punished.

The TLOs expressed the feeling of dissatisfaction from educators generally because they cannot discipline learners without using corporal punishment. They said that the so-called alternatives to corporal punishment were not working. TLOs indicated that they used different methods of disciplining learners which include, cleaning classrooms and school surroundings, talking to learners, and when no improvement is shown, then involve the parents. They indicated that they could not suspend or expel learners because they would have to apply to the Head of Department at Head Office. That process followed a lengthy protocol and in some cases, no response comes forth or a dissatisfactory response is received. The school would be told that the right of the learner to education comes first. The following responses regarding this matter were obtained:

“We normally use detention during break times, those who had misbehaved are not allowed to go out. We cannot detain them in the afternoon because some of them travel to far away places and therefore will miss their transport. While detained, they study and the educator will be there to supervise them.” – Mr Diens from Stoepel Hoërskool.

“We cannot detain them because we will also be punishing ourselves as we have to look after them. We rather give them a lot of work to do at home even though others are still not going to do it. If the learners’ act is beyond the educators’ control, that learner will be taken to the disciplinary hearing whereby parents are invited. We also use counselling or any other methods that can help rectify the mistake.” – Ms Pelo from Bathong Secondary School.

“We call learners and talk to them if it is for the first time. For the second time we detain them after school hours. If the learner continues to misbehave we then involve the parent, a suspension sentence is implemented. We normally suspend them for five school days. – Ms Penelope from Sebetsa Secondary School.

“Detention after school, parents to come to school. We keep a record of those learners. We do verbal warning and written warning. However teachers have to see to it that learners are not left alone.” – Mrs Selepe from Tabeng Secondary School.

“We send learners home so that parents should be aware of the behaviour or late coming of their children. If we do not send them home, parents do not come to school to help us with their children.” – Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary School.

“Detention and some form of manual work is used for serious cases of misbehaviour. We also use some form of peer mediation where learners counsel others. At least we try to find the real cause of misbehaviour.” – Mr Service from Hope High.

“We try to make our curriculum and lessons as challenging as possible. This helps a great deal in keeping learners interested and controllable. And of course, parental involvement is crucial in this school.” – Mr Point from Steelport High School.

“We have a code of conduct for learners. I, as TLO work with the RCL to see to it that learners know the code of conduct. But it does look like it (code of conduct) is just a document, read and known by learners. They simply seem to ignore it.” – Ms Flora from Jabula Secondary School.

From these responses, it becomes clear that schools basically look at punitive measure as a way of enforcing discipline. Even then, some measures taken are illegal. In some schools, attempts are made at using other ways of exercising discipline other than punitive methods.

Amidst this seemingly frustrating state of discipline in secondary schools, the principal's role becomes important. TLOs were asked what the role of the principal was in discipline practices in the schools.

4.3.6 The principal's role in the discipline practices of the school

The principal's role has to do with the day-to-day administration and organisation of teaching and learning. He or she is expected to support and encourage educators to do their best by organising the activities which support teaching and learning. It is through good organisation and administration that teaching and learning can be effective and discipline be maintained.

It must be indicated that although the principal carries all responsibilities of what is happening in the school, he or she needs the support of his management team, educators and to a greater extent that of the SGB. The success and maintenance of discipline and good standards is a joint venture between all stakeholders concerned at school. The principal should be visible in the school for both learners and educators. When asked about the role of the principal concerning discipline practices in the school, TLOs had the following to say:

Ms Flora from Jabula Secondary School:

"The principal is playing a vital role in maintaining discipline, but I have a feeling that he does not get the necessary support from many educators. ... because educators refer each and every little misdemeanour that the learners commit to the principal. The principal thus has to do more with learner problems than administration work."

Mrs Mphoso from Puthulla Secondary School:

"The principal should help. Our principal is in the same situation, we fear some of these learners."

Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary School:

"He takes discipline seriously, but he cannot be in the classrooms all the time."

Mrs Matlaka from Matlapeng Secondary School:

"She is strict about the use of corporal punishment. She tries to support educators, but today's children are just stubborn and they know too much about their so-called rights."

Ms Pelo from Bathong Secondary School:

"They (management) ensured that there is a code of conduct for learners. But, it takes time to implement and educators would rather stomach the indiscipline that to undertake the lengthy procedures required in serious indiscipline cases."

Mr Block from Seipone felt that as principal the responsibility of disciplining learners adds too much to his responsibilities. He opined that educators tended to refer even simple cases of misbehaviour to him, which sometimes irked him. However he stated:

"It is like you are being held responsible for the banning of corporal of punishment, so everything is sent to you. But I understand because educators were used to the quick solution of corporal punishment – which really instilled fear. So, I deal with those cases."

Mr Walters and Mr Point, both from town schools expressed the fact that as principals the overall responsibility of school discipline was theirs, especially with regard to legislative provisions.

"... to make sure that the policy regarding discipline is adhered to at the school. Otherwise the school might be faced with numerous court cases."

Mr Diens from Stoepel Hoërskool expressed the same notion that the principal's role was that of making sure that policy regarding discipline is adhered to. However, he did express a concern that:

“mostly I am called to deal with minor misdemeanours, which maybe because as principal, one is expected to see to the overall well-being of the school.”

The principal, it seems from the TLOs views, has an important role to play where discipline is concerned. Their main role seems to be that of offering support to educators. The principal also plays the role of ensuring that the school policy on discipline is implemented. It is also clear that the principal tends to be burdened with most kinds of disciplinary problems.

TLOs also responded to whether there were any additional barriers to effective discipline practices they could think of.

4.3.7 Any additional barriers to effective discipline practices

Barriers to effective discipline practices include lack of resources to fully engage learners at schools and after school, poor sporting facilities, family backgrounds, socio-economic conditions of learners and their families, poor teaching methods and poor life skills. The following remarks in this regard were made:

Ms Penelope from Sebetsa Secondary School:

“Our library is just a building without books inside. We can hardly refer learners to search for information in the library. Learners need things that can keep them busy. The other thing is that there are no books or other materials dealing with problems related to discipline.”

Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary School:

“The Post Provision Model” needs to be revisited, we have so many learners to teach and a lot of paperwork to do, which includes

* The Post Provisioning Model determine how many educators are assigned per school per learner enrolment

marking the learners' scripts. One educator offers three to four learning areas, that is not fair."

Mr Block (principal) from Seipone Secondary School:

"Teachers at times are forced to leave learners unattended so that they can be busy with marking, and it is at situations like these that learners start to misbehave."

Mrs Selepe from Tabeng Secondary School:

"The shortage of sports facilities in the village contributes to this problem of learner discipline. Secondary school learners are at the stage in their lives when they feel like adults – so in the absence of activities to occupy them fruitfully, well, they misbehave, get into liquor and drugs and manifest the effects at school."

Mrs Mphoso from Puthulla Secondary School:

"Some learners have no parents. They act parent and adult roles to their siblings. In the absence of parents or parental guidance, we see this misbehaviour at school."

Mrs Matlaka from Matlapeng Secondary School:

"Some educators just do not have the heart for caring and loving learners anymore. So, learners act out. Even girls show their hatred for some educators who continuously insult and castigate them, even for minor things like wearing make up. So what? They are young women who must be guided and not criticised all the time."

Ms Flora from Jabula Secondary School:

“Some learners lack the skills to deal with their personal problems – they lack life skills ... conflict management, stress management and others.”

Ms Pelo from Bathong Secondary School:

“Poor support from the parents and the so-called rights that children today enjoy.”

Generally, there was a feeling that educators were not adequately equipped to deal with most discipline problems. For instance, most responses indicated that the so-called alternatives to corporal punishment were a futile exercise. In this regard, Mr Walters from Hoërskool Diepenaar observed:

“You know, educators see alternative forms of discipline as a waste of time. For one, they complain of these as additional to their already heavy workload”

Mr Diens from Stoepel Hoërskool on the other hand indicated:

“Look, educators were not taken through training on the use of alternative disciplinary measures. While we have been practicing most of them, the burden seems to be the legal implication if one commits a mistake. So this has created a situation where educators feel afraid to admonish learners. In fact, I think some of them have lost their self-confidence.”

Mr Point from Steelport High agreed that there were many barriers to effective discipline. However, he pointed out that most barriers to discipline emanated from the social backgrounds of learners. He stated:

“I have seen that in most instances, misbehaving learners do so as an expression of a frustration of some sort. The difficulty is usually that educators do not have the necessary know-how to deal with

these. This frustrates them, especially because there is very little help coming from the authorities.”

Another barrier mentioned related to the adhering to the policy regarding expulsion and suspension of learners for serious cases of misbehaviour. Mr Service from Hope High School for instance pointed out that expelling a learner needed the approval of the Head of Department. He added:

“... meanwhile the offending learners have to remain at school. You can imagine what that does to discipline at the school and to the offended educator or victim’s self esteem.”

From these responses, it is clear that educators do feel helpless and seem to be crying out for help. The kinds of discipline problems and the pressure exerted on them, seem to put them at their wits end. In fact, it seems that educators largely see discipline as adding to the difficulties of teaching, especially as they have to deal with many changes in the system. Thus dealing with discipline seems like an added teaching responsibility. This is evidenced by TLOs responses to the question about how discipline can be enforced in secondary schools.

4.3.8 How discipline could be instilled in secondary schools

Many TLOs were happy to have time to express their ideas about how discipline could be instilled in secondary schools. They indicated that they really needed to be trained about discipline strategies.

They indicated that the only workshops they attended were about teaching learners. They expressed the need for encouragement and motivation and that their decisions should not be considered useless without being informed or advised on what they could have done better.

It was also suggested that total commitment by all educators and learners can help in maintaining and enforcing discipline. They also emphasised that if all

stakeholders could work together, then fruitful schools with responsible learners can be built. Some of the TLOs suggested the following:

Mrs Selepe from Tabeng Secondary School said:

“I think the South African Constitution and South African Schools Act need to be revisited so that some of these clauses could be amended so that they equally suit us all (educator and learner). Rights of learners should not be emphasised over their responsibilities.”

Ms Pelo from Bathong Secondary School expressed the wish:

“... a township secondary school needs to have at least two officials in full uniform everyday for all the school hours. They are trained differently from us, possibly discipline problems such as fighting, smoking of dagga, and carrying of dangerous weapons will subside. We really cannot teach and be bodyguards and securities at the same time.”

Ms Penelope from Sebetsa Secondary School lamented the “good old days” of corporal punishment:

“I wish some form of corporal punishment would be allowed for serious cases of indiscipline. Imagine a learner being abusive to an educator, there is nothing except a good hiding to correct that!”

Mr Point from Steelport High who opined that there were learners whose discipline problems were beyond the school as they mainly were psychosocial indicated the following:

“What we need is a learner assistance programme like you have the Educator Assistance Programme, because seriously, some learners you can see, have major deep-rooted problems they cannot deal with. Educators have to be trained to identify such learners and assist them. This can also help other learners to recognize this and be

sympathetic to such learners, rather than tease and bully them, which ends up with fights and injuries. In fact a team to deal with this situation might just be the answer.”

Another TLO, Ms Botho from Palesa Secondary School opined:

“We must approach discipline as a whole-school issue. Everyone in the school, educators, parents, learners, administrative staff, everybody. Training is needed, implementation also. Most educators are weighed down by trying to solve discipline problems. A whole school approach, yes. Talking about learners, what about peer-counselling for them ...?”

Ms Flora from Jabula Secondary School suggested:

“We need to have training in handling these problems. You see, some of the problems need you to think on your feet. So if you have not been trained properly, it becomes worse in such situations.”

Mrs Mphoso from Puthulla Secondary indicated that educators needed to be revitalised to realise that learners are merely children mostly acting up for a reason. She pointed out:

“Some learners only seek attention. Some have problems dealing with school work. For instance, a learner could be problematic in one subject and be the sweetest in another. So you see, it could be that he struggles with the one subject and enjoys another. Of course, there are cases of serious indiscipline – violence for instance. Those need to be treated differently.”

Mr Service from Hope High pointed out that discipline problems can be grouped into those “we can do something about, and those we can’t do anything about.” He further commented:

“Cases of violent behaviour, drugs and possession of prohibited substances like weapons should be handled by the police. As such, there needs to be law enforcement at schools – schools should be allocated police who should visibly patrol schools. This will act as a deterrent to such learners”

The foregoing exposition reveals a situation approaching crisis proportions regarding issues of secondary school discipline. Indeed this echoes the sentiments often expressed in the media regarding discipline (1.1). There were precise themes that emerged from the interviews and these form the core findings of this research.

4.3.9 Main emergent themes form the research

The interviews with TLOs and school principals in the research areas, that is, the Taledi Area Office revealed the following themes:

- *Parental involvement*

There was clear indication of lack of parental involvement at schools. Responses indicated that generally parental involvement was seen as key to addressing discipline problems at schools. When such problems as bullying due to being from initiation schools as reported and gangsterism, it can be asserted that the role of parental involvement would be crucial.

- *Fighting and bullying*

Fighting and bullying was indicated as one of the major problems. From the researcher's own experience in the area, this is a big threat to school discipline, especially as it often results in injuries, some fatal. This often leads to the formation of gangs and resultant attacks and revenge attacks. It was clear that education were helpless regarding this and

expressed views that the involvement of law enforcement agencies was necessary.

- *School work dereliction, late coming and noisemaking in class*

These problems were reported almost by all interviewees. What seemed clear was a frustration of educators as a result of not being able to use corporal punishment for these demeanours. One got a sense that educators believed that corporal punishment was the only solution for these kinds of conduct. It was found also that creating challenging curriculum and teaching conditions in some instances helped to alleviate these problems.

- *Overcrowding in classrooms*

It was clear from the responses that interviewees saw overcrowding as a definite contributing factor to indiscipline. It not only allows some learners to misbehave, but deprives educators the opportunity to pay individual attention and attend even to those learners whose misbehaviour is a result of seeking attention.

- *Peer group pressure*

It was clear that peer group pressure played a role in learner indiscipline. The formation of gangs, which results in fighting can be attributed to a large extent upon peer group pressure.

- *Educators' teaching approaches and conduct towards learners*

It emerged that some educators instigated learner misbehaviour by insulting and castigating them. It also emerged that some educators did not really handle learner misbehaviour decisively and firmly and instead shouted at learners. It can also be deduced that educators' attitudes towards the abolishment of corporal punishment could also be a factor in the worsening of learner discipline.

Another factor that can be attributed to discipline problems could be related to teaching approaches. As mentioned by one interviewee, an interesting and challenging curriculum and teaching approach keeps learners interested and occupied with work, which leave little room for misbehaviour.

- *Need for a whole-school approach to discipline*

It was indicated that involving all stakeholders in dealing with school discipline problems was necessary. The involvement of parents, learners themselves through *inter alia*, peer mediation, the involvement of law enforcement agencies and even the role of the department in terms of learner assistance programmes all emerged as possible solutions.

- *Shortage and or lack of facilities for extra curricula activities*

These problems were seen as contributing to learners' indiscipline because they did not have much to do by way of occupying themselves, especially in the townships and the rural villages. This was seen as a major cause of problems spilling into schools. For example, the gangs attacks and revenge attacks were seen as emanating from conflicts in the townships and villages where learners stay.

- *Lack of learner assistance programmes such as peer mediation and counselling*

As mentioned above, the need for learner assistance programmes was identified as a possible solution to some of the discipline problems at schools. This was especially with regard to learners' psychosocial problems.

A critical analysis of these emergent themes indicates what requires to be done in order to address the problem of discipline in secondary school, which it must be asserted, must be accepted as an existing problem that needs to be

addressed as a matter of priority. Recommendations of the study in the next chapter reflect what could be done.

4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the empirical research findings. Themes emerging from the interviews were also outlined.

The next chapter presents the summary, conclusions and recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the summary of this study. Focus will be based on important aspects which emerged from the literature study regarding learner discipline in secondary schools. This presentation will be based on findings of the empirical study concerning secondary schools' current management of learner discipline in the Taledi Area Project Office. Finally, recommendations will be presented.

5.2 SUMMARY

The fundamental reason for this study is explained in chapter 1. There is an overwhelming concern from various sectors within the country about the unacceptable disciplinary problems of secondary school learners. Teaching and learning seems to have become a matter of "survival of the fittest" due discipline problems engulfing secondary schools. Therefore chapter 1 outlines the rationale of the study and presents the research methodology. The problem statement, research questions and aims are presented. The research design outlines the research instrument, population and sampling, including details about the research procedure.

Chapter 2 outlines the nature of learner discipline based on the literature study. First, the nature of discipline in South Africa is presented. A historical background outlining the use of corporal punishment in the past is explored (2.3.1). Then the current legislative framework presenting the provisions of the Constitution (2.3.2.1), provisions of the SASA (2.3.2.2) and the alternatives to corporal punishment (2.3.2.3) are presented.

The essence of learner discipline begins with an exposition of the secondary school context (2.4.1). The essence of what discipline is, clearly showed what

discipline entails (2.4.2) and that it tends to be confused with punishment (2.4.3). The chapter then dealt with discipline problems in schools (2.4.4), ineffective discipline practices at schools (2.4.5), components of effective school discipline (2.4.6) and rounds of with a discussion of managing discipline at school (2.5).

Chapter 3 presents the empirical research design. The research design and methodology (3.2) described the qualitative research (3.2.2), the interview as a research instrument (3.2.3), the focus of the research (3.2.4), participant description (3.2.5), data collection, analysis procedures and reporting (3.2.6 – 3.2.8) and the ethical considerations (3.2.8).

Chapter 4 detailed the data analysis and interpretation in terms of realisation of ethical considerations and sampling (4.2) and the research findings in terms of perceptions about discipline in secondary schools (4.3.1), discipline problems experienced in secondary schools (4.3.2), how learner indiscipline affects teaching and learning (4.3.3), causes of discipline problems in secondary schools (4.3.4), current discipline practices in secondary schools (4.3.5), the principal's role in the discipline practices of schools (4.3.6) any additional barriers to effective discipline practices (4.3.7) and how discipline could be instilled in secondary schools. The chapter concludes by exposing the main themes emergent from the empirical research (4.3.9).

Chapter 5 summarises the entire research study in terms of findings from the research (5.3).

5.3 FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

Findings on the research aim revealed the following:

5.3.1 Findings regarding research objective #1: the nature of learner discipline

The essence of discipline lies in its intention. A pertinent question relates to whether discipline intends to correct behaviour, to control or simply to punish

(2.4). In terms of the secondary school context, it is important to consider learners' developmental stages in the enforcement of discipline. These are learners whose ages range from thirteen to eighteen years. It is however not uncommon to find learners of ages below thirteen as well as those whose ages are above eighteen. This very age composition lays the ground for an understanding of discipline issues in the secondary school context (2.4.1). Within this context, it must be understood that enforcing discipline by way of exercising control and or punishment is a short term solution and is mostly *ad hoc*. It is therefore argued that there is a need to address the causes of indiscipline at schools and thus embark on a holistic approach that focuses on the short term discipline challenges as well as on the long term causes (2.4.1).

This then lays the ground for a definition of discipline namely, that discipline is a process that uses teaching, modelling, and other appropriate strategies to maintain the behaviours necessary to ensure a safe, orderly and productive learning environment by changing unacceptable behaviour to acceptable behaviour (2.4.3).

Accordingly, discipline problems can be seen from the context of out-of-school problems and in-school problems (2.4.4). Aspects like violence in society, effects of the media, lack of secure family environment, limited interaction between parents and children are worth looking into and understanding.

In-school problems include problems originating within individual learners, problems originating from learners' peers and groups, problems that originate from the school's environments and problems that originate from the school personnel, including educators. Understanding these problems also implies understanding causes of learner indiscipline as being both primary and secondary (2.4.4).

Components of effective discipline include, Involving all stakeholders in the discipline system planning, recognising parents as the first link to prevention, ensuring access to quality professional development for educators and school

managers, celebrating learners for their positive contributions to the school community, building on consistency and teamwork and ongoing and sustained monitoring and evaluation (2.4.6).

Managing learner discipline (2.5) advocates a systems approach to whole school discipline, which considers the school as the basic “unit of analysis” or “point of influence or action” and how the collective actions of individuals within the school contribute to how the school is characterised precisely because the school is an organisation. This approach entails (2.5):

- Prevention, which refers to organising learning and teaching environments to prevent ill-discipline;
- Whole school, which refers to addressing the behaviour support needs of all members (for example, learners, staff, family members) and all settings of a school community;
- Evidence-based practices, which refers to interventions, strategies, and techniques that have empirical evidence of their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and durability;
- Teaming, which refers to working as a cohesive, integrated, and representative collection of individuals who lead the systems change and implementation process; and
- Evaluation, which refers to the regular and systematic self-assessment of strengths and needs, and the continuous self-improvement action planning process.

Implementing this approach as a discipline management approach requires a school to establish a visible, effective, efficient and functional leadership team, review existing information/data, monitor practice implementation and progress toward outcomes and modify practice implementation based on analysis of progress data.

5.3.2 Findings regarding research objective #2: how learner discipline is currently managed in the Taledi Area Project Office secondary schools.

The following findings were found on the current discipline management in the Taledi Area Office secondary schools:

- Discipline problems in secondary schools in the area are a reality that has to be dealt with.
- Numerous discipline problems are identified and this goes with causes and how these are handled. The themes that emerged from the interviews capture the essence of the findings better namely:
 - Parental involvement – there is generally a lack of parental involvement in the disciplinary problems displayed by learners at schools. Although the research did not extend to cover reasons for this, it is clear that educators and schools would want parental involvement and see it as one amongst the possible solutions to this problem (2.3.4).
 - Fighting and bullying – these seem to be the major common problems at schools. This is in tandem with reported discipline problems at schools (1.2 & 2.3.1).
 - School work dereliction, late coming and noisemaking in class – these are manifestations of indiscipline and confirm literature assertions on what really goes on in secondary schools regarding discipline (2.3.4).
 - Overcrowding in classrooms – this creates difficulties regarding control and discipline of learners (2.2.1).

- Peer group pressure – this creates a situation where learners want to copy the (mis)behaviour of others so as to feel that they belong and are not different (2.1).
- Educators' teaching approaches and conduct towards learners – these can be seen as contributing to learner indiscipline and confirm literature assertions about in-school causes of indiscipline (2.3.4).
- Need for a whole school approach to discipline – this seems like the most viable approach to dealing with discipline problems at secondary schools. This is corroborated by literature on dealing with school discipline problems (2.3)
- Shortage and or lack of facilities for extra curricula activities – these are real problems, especially in the light of disparities between, in this case, township and rural schools (2.3.6).
- Lack of learner assistance programmes such as peer mediation and counselling – these are real causes of overall learner discipline problems. This is in line with literature findings about problems emanating from learners themselves (2.3.4).

Objective 3 is presented in the form of recommendations, which are presented in the next section.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made with regard to learner discipline in secondary schools:

Recommendation 1

Schools must embark on whole school discipline planning processes.

Motivation

Schools seem to deal with discipline problems as the need arises. This does not address the real causes of learner indiscipline, but offers temporary relief either by being punitive or removing the learner (not the problem) from the scene. It is also clear that while there are in some cases, codes of conduct, these do not cover all areas of discipline problems. For instance, it was clear that schools did not have ways of dealing with problems emanating from township and village conflicts.

Recommendation 2

Schools must have clear procedures regarding the management of discipline.

Motivation

It is clear that responsibilities for managing discipline are not well defined. Principals seem to be expected to shoulder the entire scope of discipline. For instance, there should be clear procedures regarding classroom discipline. In this regard, educators should be capacitated in terms of classroom discipline, which should include specific problems as against a "one-size fits all" approach to classroom discipline.

Recommendation 3

Learner assistance programmes should be explored as a viable approach to assisting learners with personal problems.

Motivation

It is clear that some learner indiscipline is a manifestation of personal problems and a coping mechanism. Learner assistance programmes could use such instruments as peer counselling and mediation. This would create conditions that learners would find comfortable as against always having to deal with adults.

Recommendation 4

In determining post provisioning for schools, the post provision model needs to take cognisance of the fact that distribution of learners per classes is rarely homogeneous.

Motivation

This will drastically reduce overcrowding in classrooms at schools and reflect the true state of educator-learner ratios in schools. Of course this would also help in addressing learner discipline problems caused by overcrowding.

Recommendation 5

Educators and parents must be capacitated in terms of dealing with discipline problems.

Motivation

It has been realized that parents have left the burden of discipline to educators, most of whom still lack the skills for managing and enforcing discipline. Parents also might be faced with disciplining children especially when they are out of their sight, that is, at school. In this regard, parents are usually surprised at their "sweet" children misbehaving at school.

Recommendation 6

Surveillance cameras should be installed around school buildings so that acts of indiscipline can be easily detected and dealt with.

Motivation

School conditions, especially in overcrowded schools are such that most misbehaviour happens away from educators, so that much of it goes undetected. A surveillance system would assist in monitoring learner (mis)behaviour even in obscured areas of the school.

Recommendation 7

Professionally trained people like police officials should be placed in the schools to guard against acts of indiscipline that include such offences as carrying of weapons, drugs and alcohol into the schools premises.

Motivation

Some acts of misbehaviour are such that educators cannot deal with by virtue of their professional training. Therefore, trained people in various aspects of learner behaviour need to be enlisted for assistance in this regard. This would go for psychologists, psychiatrists, motivational speakers and NGOs that specifically deal with such social circumstances that influence people to seek shelter from indiscipline. This should be included in the whole school planning process and be part of the school discipline system.

Recommendation 8

Parental involvement in learner discipline in secondary schools must receive utmost priority.

Motivation

It is clear from TLO responses that parental involvement is minimal in secondary schools. Parental involvement has been proven through research as reported by various literature sources as an important aspect of assisting in learner discipline.

Despite its comprehensiveness, this research was limited by certain factors.

5.5 LIMITATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research was limited by the following factors:

- Themes emerging from the interviews extend beyond the scope of the research in terms of its problem statement. For instance, the research

could not deal with reasons for lack of parental involvement as well as the effect of the current initiation school practices on learner discipline.

- The population and sample could have included parents and learners to solicit their views regarding learner discipline in secondary schools. This also was beyond the scope of this particular research.
- The disparities between rural and urban township schools could have been explored more. Learner discipline issues could more likely reveal differing patterns especially if cultural backgrounds of villages and townships are considered.

These limitations open up areas for further research.

5.6 RECOMMENDATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- Research should be undertaken on reasons for lack of or poor parental involvement in so far as learner discipline in secondary schools is concerned.
- Research could be undertaken such that it involves parents, community members and educators in its population.
- The discipline problems in rural and township schools could be explored so as to come up with specific recommendations directed at the particular circumstances of these areas.
- Cultural influences on school discipline could be explored so as to deal with issues like initiation schools and implications of being graduates of the schools and being learners in multicultural environments.

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the overall summary of the research. This included a summary of each chapter, findings relating to the research aims,

recommendations, limitations of the research and recommendations for further research.

The overall finding confirms the problem statement that there is indeed a discipline problem in secondary schools.

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ANNEXURE A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding discipline in secondary schools?
- Which discipline problems are experienced in secondary schools?
- How does (in)discipline affect teaching and learning?
- What are the causes of discipline problems in secondary schools?
- Can you describe the current discipline practices at your school?
- What is the principal's role in the discipline practices of the school?
- Are there any other barriers to effective discipline practices that we not discussed yet?
- How could discipline be instilled/enforced in secondary schools?



ANNEXURE B

Department of Education
Lefapha La Thuto
Departement van Onderwys
BOPHIRIMA REGION



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TALEDI AREA PROJECT OFFICE
17 Van Niekerk Street, VRYBURG 8601
Private Bag X10, VRYBURG 8600

Date : 05 September 2006
To : Mr B.G Nthebe
Jerry Mahura Intermediate School
From : APO Manager
Taledi

SUBJECT : RESEARCH FOR MED PROGRAMME

Dear Mr Nthebe

Your letter dated 26 August 2006 has been read and the contents thereof noted.

Be informed that permission is granted for this important research on "Managing learner discipline in Secondary Schools".

Kindly show principals this letter to ensure that access to schools is granted for the purpose of this research.

We are confident that this research will enrich the learning experience of the Taledi APO learning institutions.

We wish you the best of luck in this research.

Yours truly,


G.P. VALTYN
TALEDI APO MANAGER

