

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

Teachers' Management of Learner Discipline in a Primary School

in the Phoenix District.

by

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A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of

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Abstract

This study set out to explore how teachers at a primary school in the Phoenix area in Durban manage discipline problems among learners. I employed a qualitative approach to collecting data. This facilitated meaning making from the data by considering the bigger picture and converting the raw empirical information into what is known in qualitative research as ‘thick description’. The two main methods used were observations and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. A series of semi-structured interviews with probing questions for clarity were used extensively, with each interview lasting approximately 40 minutes. The sample size was five participants. Participants were teachers purposively chosen from the researched school, all of whom resided in the Phoenix district. Data analysis of the responses to the open-ended interview questions were categorised and were inductive in establishing themes through the process of coding. These themes were then organised into increasingly more meaningful units of knowledge. Three broad findings emerged. The first is that many teachers use a heavy handed approach to manage discipline problems among learners. The second is that other teachers used a softer, more ‘gentle’ approach in handling discipline problems. The third is that the school policy does not seem to have the desired effect in terms of assisting teachers to manage discipline problems. While I arrived at these findings from my observations as well as from the interviews with teachers, it should be pointed out that some teachers, who may have subscribed to ‘softer’ forms of discipline, might also occasionally use a ‘tougher’ approach. Furthermore, other teachers who were routinely ‘tough,’ might have a ‘soft side’ (at times). This study recommends that a sound understanding of the learners’ local context and backgrounds will equip teachers to formulate practical ways to manage discipline which will act as a guiding tool in eradicating the problems that originate from having to make decisions in the absence of a firm set of principles. An appropriate discipline system should be established by teachers of their own accord and engineered to suit their personalities and the realities of their learners, the community and the school.

Declaration

I, Nirasha Singh, declare that:

- (i) The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original work.
- (ii) This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- (iii) This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signed: _____

Nirasha Singh

Labby Ramrathan

Date: December 2012

3 August 2012

Mrs Nirasha Singh 204516733
School of Education

Dear Mrs Singh

Protocol reference number: HSS/0427/012M
Project title: Teachers management of learner discipline in a Primary School in the Phoenix District

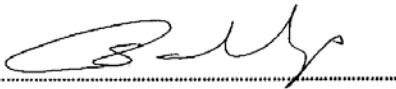
EXPEDITED APPROVAL

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted full approval following your response to queries raised by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully



.....
Professor Steven Collings (Chair)

/px

cc Supervisor Professor L Ramrathan and Dr V Hamlall
cc Academic Leader Dr D Davids
cc School Admin. Mrs S Naicker

Dedication

This research study is dedicated to my Mum, Sheila and my late Dad, Premdaw and grandparents Rampirit and Sampathy Rampersadh for their encouragement to pursue academic studies. Daddy, you were my guardian angel who watched over me and supported my perseverance!

To my Guruji and Sathya Sai Baba, I convey endless praise, appreciation and gratitude for bestowing me with strength, determination, skills, and anticipation during this long, hard expedition.

To my husband, children and sisters, who persistently inspired me to overcome all odds and uplifted my spirits during my darkest hours.

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Chapter One

General Overview of the Study

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will provide an introduction to this research study, the rationale for the study and the problem statement. The background to the study, the researched school and the framework for the research will also be outlined. The study's paradigmatic perspective will be discussed. This introductory chapter sets the background for this study. It clarifies the main research problem and the research questions. It further explains the purpose of the research briefly discusses the research methodology and provides an introduction to the succeeding chapters.

This study examines the role of teachers in the management of learner discipline problems in a primary school where I am currently employed as a teacher. While the management of learner discipline is the major focus of the study, other key issues that relate to this process are also examined. In addition this research study examines the types of discipline problems that teachers face at this school and some of the factors that contribute to these problems. For the purposes of this study I use the pseudonym "Protea" for the actual name of the school. In the past few years I have become interested in issues of learner discipline, particularly how to deal with learner discipline. Concern has been expressed in South Africa and elsewhere in the world about the problem of discipline generally, but in recent years the management of learner discipline has become a focal point of policy and media attention (Rossouw, 2003; Cohen, 1996; Joubert & Prinsloo, 1999).

Teachers teach more successfully and learners learn best in an environment that is safe and orderly (Rossouw, 2003). Cognisant of this, it is the intention of this research project to examine how teachers manage learner discipline problems in a primary school in Phoenix. I concur with Amado and Freire (2009) who point out that poor discipline incidents such as disruptive behaviour affect good classroom functioning. Therefore the management of learner discipline is imperative in order to facilitate a culture of teaching and learning in the classroom and school; failure to do so might adversely affect learners' education (Amado & Freire, 2009).

From my own experience as a mother and teacher for 18 years, I found that school children seek to establish their own, individual way of life; in doing so, they rebel against discipline and authority. Many children nowadays have been emancipated and live their lives the way they want to; when teachers try to discipline them they may rebel and become aggressive (Landsberg, Krüger & Nel, 2005). Consequently, teachers experience difficulties, feel that they are challenged, and may lose control. When learners breach school discipline policy this has profound negative effects on teachers. Many teachers subjected to abuse or intimidation fear for their safety, and experience a lack of sense of dignity at work, intense feelings of anger, humiliation or shame, or isolation and depression (Fakunle, 2010). In my experience, many teachers resort to undesirable measures to handle and manage discipline problems at school.

When some learners are unruly and disruptive, this inhibits a teacher's ability to continue teaching the rest of the class (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Most teachers tend to stop teaching and verbally reprimand the culprits, but if the bad behaviour persists, they may get very angry with learners and chase the learner out of the class, or make the learner stand at the back or front of the class. Some teachers avoid disciplining learners and opt to send them to the phase Head of Department (H.O.D) or the principal. Teachers have also been known to strike learners as a result of rage and frustration. In other cases, teachers may resort to detention during the lunch break or after school. While some teachers are very strict, others choose to counsel learners and offer pastoral care as a tool to deal with delinquency and encourage learners to change their behaviour (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

Below I highlight the seriousness and importance of addressing this problem both in South Africa and internationally by providing a brief overview of previous research findings and arguments.

Good school discipline is one of the most significant characteristics of an effective school and an indispensable feature of school and classroom management. However, Rossouw (2003) observes that learner discipline problems are a prevailing problem and a prominent feature in schools in South Africa and all over the world. He further argues that discipline is imperative for maintaining harmony in a school and for securing an ambience in which learners can learn without disruption and chaos. Learner misconduct in the classroom interferes with teaching and learning and is thought to be a precursor to later school dropout and similar negative social outcomes (Slavin, 2003). Effective discipline creates an atmosphere

conducive to high academic and non-academic achievement, as learners perform better when they know what is expected of them.

Learners need discipline for their own feeling of well-being as ill-discipline can destroy the possibility of a safe and orderly environment and thereby hamper the core purpose of the school (Rossouw, 2003). Sound discipline and safety underpin every aspect of a learner's school life as learners learn to their best of their abilities in a disciplined environment. Learners need to know the limits and become aware of boundaries; this allows them to develop a sense of discipline, security and independence (Amado & Freire, 2009).

The South African Department of Education (2000) stipulates that discipline depends on constructive, corrective, rights-based, positive educative practices rather than punishment or explicit disciplinary actions which are perceived as punitive, destructive and negative.

According to Curwin (2003) discipline is a word that is frequently used by teachers, parents and administrators, yet there is little agreement on its precise meaning. Some may regard discipline as an act of punishment, while for the teacher it denotes classroom management or controlling learner behaviour. The key definition of discipline involves enabling learners to make appropriate choices, knowing that there are both positive and negative consequences of their behaviour at school (Curwin, 2003).

While the definition of discipline can be approached from many perspectives, this study adopts Smith & Rivera's (1993) definition, as it allows for the recognition of diverse types and causes, and promotes an analysis of how teachers manage learner discipline problems.

On the basis of the above mentioned factors relative to learner discipline problems a study of the perennial problem of discipline is of great importance.

1.2 Background to the Research Study

In any school, teachers teach more effectively and learners learn best in an environment that is safe and orderly; however, the disintegration of learning environments in schools and the lack of learner discipline have emerged more frequently and vigorously in South African education in recent years (Rossouw, 2003). Despite the commitment of the government to provide resources and improve school conditions, reports reveal that many schools are not working effectually (Department of Education, 2000). Apart from the difficulties of

maintaining order and control and the irregular delivery of state services in support of schools, teachers and learners are charged with achieving the national vision of quality education and justice in schools as these are requirements that are set out by the Department of Education (2000). Many schools in South Africa are struggling to provide quality education, which necessitates the holistic and healthy development of learners and the maintenance of learner discipline. The education department also claims that many schools are unable to provide learners with a nurturing environment to counteract or handle dysfunctional families, aggression, violence and poverty in communities (Department of Education, 1996). Consequently, learner discipline in schools is crumbling and learners' relationships with teachers are deteriorating; many learners opt to be disrespectful towards their teachers. This type of learner attitudes causes school effectiveness to disintegrate and the culture of teaching and learning to collapse (Charles, 2002). Van Wyk (2001) concurs with Joubert and Prinsloo (1999) that learner disciplinary problems in South Africa range from disruptive behaviour, to late coming, absenteeism, truancy, neglecting to do homework, bullying, physical violence, theft, vandalism, verbal abuse, lack of concentration and constant violation of the school's code of conduct, among others. These problems make it complex and impossible for teachers to teach and manage their classes effectively, particularly due to the lack of effective alternatives after the banning of corporal punishment.

Cohen (1996) and Joubert and Prinsloo (1999) note that since the first democratic elections in 1994 South African society has undergone major social, political and economic changes in its endeavour to establish a democratic nation. Amidst various transitions in the education sector was the abolishment of corporal punishment in all schools in June 1995 in terms of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of (1996). Benson (1995) argues that learner discipline in schools has become ever more topical since the passing of the Act, as an upsurge in disciplinary problems seemed to accompany this prohibition. Stripped of this disciplinary measure which many teachers relied on and which was overtly sanctioned by the law in South Africa, teachers felt powerless and lacked the means to enforce discipline in alternative ways (Cohen, 1996; Joubert & Prinsloo, 1999). While the South African Schools Act No. 84 of (1996) still requires that all teachers maintain discipline in the classroom environment to facilitate the education of learners free from disruptive behaviour and offences like bullying; Benson (1995) notes that they were not provided with alternatives by the Education Department. He further argues that the teachers' authority seemed to have been undermined; many teachers were immobilised as they had no training in, or knowledge of effective

alternative methods. However, approximately five years later, the first written document (Alternatives to Corporal Punishment, 2001) by the Education Department on alternatives to corporal punishment appeared. It should be acknowledged that it was difficult for teachers to adopt alternative strategies to discipline learners; many teachers found it hard to let go of the old ways of maintaining discipline through corporal punishment (Cohen, 1996; Joubert & Prinsloo, 1999). Some of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment require specialised training for effective implementation. A departmental publication on alternatives to corporal punishment suggested that if there were learners who display particular difficulties in the classroom such as “disruptive behaviour, aggression, bullying among others, teachers should seek help from their colleagues and if necessary from professionals such as psychologists or community counselors” (Department of Education, 2001, p.14). Such professionals are not accessible to many schools, especially in the rural areas of South Africa. Unfamiliarity with alternatives to corporal punishment has resulted in teachers being confronted with a deteriorating state of learner discipline. The media have reported many incidents in which children were humiliated and hurt emotionally and psychologically because of teachers’ lack of knowledge of alternative methods of discipline. This clearly indicates that problems in applying alternative methods to corporal punishment still exist ten years after corporal punishment was banned (Benson, 1995). Given this background, learner discipline can be ranked as one of major issues facing South African schools; research conducted by Van Wyk (2001), De Wet (2003) and Joubert and Prinsloo (1999) confirms that there is a major breakdown in discipline in schools. Sergiovanni (2005) affirms that little learning will occur in a school where learners are unruly and disruptive.

1.3 Context of the Researched School

Protea Primary School is located in the core of a historically Indian urban area setting, with many learners coming from families with low incomes. With the advent of democracy in South Africa, over the past decade the school has seen an influx of learners from the neighbouring squatter settlements of Bhambayi and the border areas located in the periphery of Inanda and KwaMashu. The majority of these learners come from poor socio-economic home environments, with dysfunctional family backgrounds plagued by death, divorce and abandonment. High levels of unemployment and poverty and related social evils such as domestic violence, drug abuse and gangsterism all have a negative impact on the behaviour of the learners at this school. Landsberg, Krüger and Nel (2005, p.28) maintain that the

unfavourable circumstances that lead to a school being classified as 'disadvantaged' are schools serving communities that are characterised by poverty, dysfunctional families, deprivation, low income, unemployment, violence, crime, and low standards of hygiene and cleanliness. While Protea may be a poor, disadvantaged school with learner discipline problems, many parents in this community and its surrounding areas prefer sending their children to Protea. From school parent meeting discussions, many learners' parents have indicated that at Protea the school fees are affordable and they want their children to be taught in English (the medium of instruction). A recent trend has been that learners who live outside the immediate community also commute to this school.

Protea has approximately 450 learners, ninety percent of which are from historically disadvantaged homes. Protea has a staff complement of 11 fulltime and five temporary teachers who are employed by the School Governing Body (S.G.B), two Heads of Departments (H.O.D), that is, a Foundation phase H.O.D and an Intermediate and Senior Primary H.O.D, and is headed by a Principal. Classes range from Grade RR to Grade 7, with two units per grade, with approximately 35 to 45 learners per class and a maximum class size of 50. The medium of instruction is English, with Afrikaans as the first additional language and isiZulu as a second additional language. All nine learning areas, including sport and extracurricular activities like chess are taught in the senior primary phase, and all three learning areas in the Foundation phase are also taught, inclusive of mini sporting activities. This school prides itself on the delivery of what the community and other commentators believe to be a high standard of education.

Although Protea has very limited resources at its disposal, and draws its learners from various communities where unemployment, poverty and violence are common, the school has, had good learner discipline and historically enjoyed a reputation for producing many high flying learners who had performed well enough in high school to gain university entrance and secure good jobs, of becoming doctors, lawyers and teachers. From my interaction with teachers who have been at Protea from inception and others who have been teaching at this school for over ten years, they have always been complaining of the decline in learner discipline. Stakeholders have also expressed concerns that this school's disciplinary environment has deteriorated in recent years. Some teachers have suggested that a contributory factor may be due to the large classes that exists (Olayemi, 2012). In view of the decline of learner discipline at Protea Primary I purposely selected this school to pursue my

research study to investigate possible reasons for this decline and to suggest some strategies to manage learner discipline problems at this school.

1.4 Background of the Researcher

As a teacher at Protea Primary School for the past 10 years, I have noted a substantial decline in learner behaviour and increased anxiety on the part of teachers in attempting to manage these problems. This motivated me to investigate the problems encountered by teachers at the school in question and how they are managing learner discipline. Since I am based at the research site, it was relatively easy to gather data in the form of interviews and observations. My additional teaching experience in six different schools in the Phoenix district and two other schools on the South Coast provided me with a wealth of experience that facilitated the research study. My personal experience and that of colleagues in the different schools is that learner discipline problems are the subject of many teacher discussions. This further contributed to my desire to undertake this study. Strydom (1998) postulates that researchers are ethically obliged to ensure they are competent and proficient to undertake the research that they have proposed. I have completed my Bachelor of Education (B. Ed) Honours degree in Educational Leadership and Management and Advanced Certificate in Education with the University of KwaZulu-Natal, as well as a Higher Diploma in Education.

My objective in this study was not to merely look at the role played by teachers in managing discipline, but to also offer viable guidelines to address the disciplinary problems characterising this Phoenix school. The findings from the data collected at this specific school will be used to formulate guidelines and recommendations that could help teachers and S.M.T.'s to manage discipline at their schools. In undertaking this study, I was seeking solutions to the problem of the perceived lack of discipline in Protea Primary school. Ultimately, I hope to contribute constructively to fortifying this community in which I have previously resided in and continue to work, by making a positive contribution to enhancing the quality of life of its members through the provision of quality education.

1.5 Purpose of study

The purpose of this research study is to examine the role of teachers in the management of learner discipline problems in a primary school. Generally, learner ill-discipline and multifarious behavioural problems in the classroom are increasing. There is a dire need to

investigate ways in which discipline can be maintained in schools. This research seeks to identify and develop strategies that can be utilised to inculcate a willingness in teachers to contribute constructively to the promotion of successful school discipline. The objective will be to assist teachers to identify methods that will enable learners to learn in an orderly and physically safe environment, which should contribute to disciplined learners and academic success.

Many scholars (Smith, 2008; Smith, 2001; Elam, Rose and Gallup, 1993) claim that maintaining learner discipline in schools has, over time, become a thorny issue for many teachers. The concerns raised by these scholars relate to schooling in the Phoenix area, and these have prompted me to undertake this research.

A review of various literature of researchers like Vally (1998); Elam, Rose and Gallup (1993); Duke and Gottfredson (1989) and Smith (2008) reveals that school managers and teachers are not adequately equipped to deal with learner discipline; therefore a study on the management of learner discipline in primary schools is appropriate (Wolhuter & Steyn, 2003; Wolhuter & Staden, 2008). This research study intends to shed some light on issues around the management as well as the causes of discipline problems in the school and recommend strategies that can be used by teachers to manage discipline.

1.6 Problem Statement

The purpose of a problem statement in qualitative research is to provide a rationale for studying a particular issue (Creswell, 2007). It is interesting that some teachers are able to maintain discipline in their classrooms, while their colleagues struggle to do so. Many researchers highlight that learner discipline has become one of the greatest challenges that teachers face; if teachers do not have the necessary discipline management skills, productivity may regress (Vally, 1998; Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1993; Duke & Gottfredson, 1989). Discipline problems promote a lack of productivity in schools; they result in the loss of quality teaching time and pose a danger to the teaching fraternity (Elias, 1998).

According to the Phi Delta Kappan Gallup public opinion poll learner discipline problems are one of the major dilemmas facing public schools (Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1993; Duke & Gottfredson, 1989). In the wake of the post apartheid education system regulations and legislation that regulate discipline and punishment, many teachers are finding it progressively more difficult to sustain discipline in their classrooms. Teachers feel that they are not able to

exercise control in the classroom since the banning of corporal punishment in schools under the South African Schools Act (1996). In support of this Vally (1998) argues that many teachers are unfamiliar with alternatives to corporal punishment and as a result they experience difficulties in maintaining learner discipline.

Many teachers in the apartheid education system used corporal punishment and punitive measures to discipline learners and maintain discipline in the class and in schools (Vally, 1998; Elias, 1998). The South African Schools Act (1996) states that teachers are not permitted to inflict corporal punishment or subject a learner to mental or physical abuse at any school. Former national Education Minister Kader Asmal (2001) asserted categorically, that corporal punishment cannot be administered as a corrective tool. While some schools comply with the South African Schools Act (1996), others still use corporal punishment as they are unfamiliar with alternative ways of handling discipline issues (Vally, 1998). In the preface to the document that outlines alternatives to corporal punishment Asmal (2001, p.1) states that, “many teachers find themselves in a position not knowing what to do in the absence of corporal punishment”. The legal position on corporal punishment has compounded teachers’ problems with respect to badly behaved learners. When the Department of Education (D.O.E) abolished corporal punishment, it recommended alternatives; however, many teachers perceived these methods as ineffective (Department of Education, 2001). The result has been a swift deterioration in learner behaviour at schools. In many schools, there is a culture of disrespect, defiance of authority, truancy and arrogance (Van Wyk, 2001). Vally (1998) further argues that ill-discipline abounds and respect and morality have declined; whilst teachers are assigned the task of fostering a culture of teaching and learning, the conditions to achieve these honourable goals are fast crumbling. He further claims that this is a frustrating and demoralising state of affairs for teachers.

Drawing from the literature review and my own experience as a teacher, it is evident that learner discipline problems are a major challenge for teachers in carrying out their duties. This study seeks to establish how teachers experience this problem and how they are managing learner discipline. Scholars concerned with educational issues such as Vally (1998) and Asmal (2001) have pointed out that teachers do not possess adequate knowledge and the necessary skills to handle and manage learner discipline in their classrooms. The focus of this study is therefore not the nature of the discipline problems, but rather teachers’ management of these problems.

1.7 Rationale for the study

The rationale for this study is that learner discipline is a major problem faced by many teachers in schools and is hampering the teaching and learning process (Gottfredson, 1989; Elias, 1998; Vally, 1998). Studies highlight that learner discipline problems in schools also affect teacher morale and can prove to be very critical in schools. Some teachers are unable to handle discipline problems and become frustrated. Some have even left the teaching profession, while others express their intention of doing so (McIntyre, 2005; Du Plessis & Look, 2007). Poor learner discipline has affected student teacher recruitment, as people have become reluctant to become teachers (McIntyre, 2005). From my own experience and that of colleagues, unruly learner behaviour causes significant disruptions in school, particularly in teaching and learning and this may result in the underperformance of some learners. Amado and Freire (2009) postulate that in a classroom where a teacher is unable to maintain order and discipline, learners may become unmotivated and distressed; the climate for learning is eroded, leading to learner underachievement. The reason for this is that learners of today simply do not know how to behave, both inside and outside of a class or school (Elias, 1998).

According to Wolhuter *et al.* (2008) research from a variety of disciplines has shown that there is an insufficient understanding of teachers' perspectives on learner discipline problems. The aim of this study is to therefore elicit the perspectives of the teacher's of Protea Primary school in order to determine the nature of learner discipline problems that they are challenged within. These teachers experience learner discipline problems firsthand, especially in the classroom and on the playground, and are on the receiving end of these problems. Therefore this study intends to examine the way discipline could be managed and addressed in a primary school in the Phoenix district. It is evident that discipline problems in our schools have reached unprecedented proportions (Vally, 1998). This study also aims to make recommendations on how teachers can cope and handle learner discipline problems. I anticipate that the findings from this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and will be helpful to teachers by enabling them to embrace more constructive methods of inculcating a culture of discipline amongst learners. I also hope to assist teachers to develop their own individual systems of managing learner discipline in line with their personalities and philosophies as well as the needs and social realities of the school and the community.

1.8 Key research questions

Joubert and Prinsloo (1999) hypothesise that establishing and maintaining discipline in a school is a joint collaboration involving not only school managers or teachers but all stakeholders. They argue that some teachers labour under the misconception that learner discipline management is essentially the sole duty of school managers. This has contributed to learner discipline problems, adversely affecting the culture of teaching and learning in a school.

To examine the management and handling of discipline among learners in South African schools, the following research questions will drive the research study:

[1] To what extent do learner discipline problems affect the day-to-day functioning of the school in terms of the nature and extent of these problems in one primary school in Phoenix?

[2] What are the causes of learner discipline problems at this primary school in the Phoenix area?

[3] How do the school and particularly teachers react to learner discipline problems and how do they manage these problems?

1.9 Overview of Research Design and Methodology

Sekaran and Bougie (2010) refers to a research design as a plan or blueprint of how a researcher intends conducting a research study and the procedures used to answer the research questions. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) a research design is a presentation of the overall structure for the research process that a researcher pursues, the data collected and the data analysis that is conducted. The research design also describes the sample from an identified population, the research site where the sample is located and the circumstances under which the respondents will be studied. This qualitative case study endeavoured to understand the social world of the participants, and consequently fell within the interpretivistic research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). During the data collection process I interacted with the S.M.T and teachers at the school and in doing so, I attempted to interpret how the respondents, in the sample gave meaning to their experiences. The principal and the S.M.T were supportive of the research study. Prior to the commencement of the study, I forwarded my request to conduct research to the principal of the school and the ward

manager after receiving a letter of approval from the Department of Education, KwaZulu-Natal. The volunteers for the study had confidentially submitted their names to me and they formed the sample. I conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with probing questions for clarity which lasted for approximately 40 minutes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982).

These interviews were tape-recorded for the purpose of analysis (Patton, 1990). Observations were the secondary source of data collection used at the research site; they formed an integral part of data gathering for this study (Cohen *et al.*, 2007). The use of observations enabled me to gain a direct experience of what was transpiring at Protea Primary, rather than relying on secondary accounts; that is, on the respondent's, interpretations only. In view of the fact that this was an interpretive study, the interpretation of the data was based on what was observed during the observation process, heard during the interviews and understood by the analysis of the transcripts, which led to the identification of the causes and management of discipline problems at the school. My role as observer was non-intrusive in the classroom and school; there were no interruptions in the normal teaching and learning process. While the sample only included five respondents, that were purposively selected, there was adequate representation of respondents, from diverse cultures, genders and teaching experience whose responses contributed to this study. I attempted to understand the social phenomena from the respondent's perspective with regards to the challenges they faced with learner discipline and the management techniques that they adopted. Data analysis of the responses to the open-ended interview questions were categorised and allowed for themes to be identified through the process of coding for the purpose of data organisation into increasingly more meaningful abstract units of knowledge.

1.10 Structure of the Dissertation

Concerns about school discipline predominantly relate to diverse types of learner misbehaviour in the classroom, which impedes the teaching and learning process. Valuable instruction time is wasted in dealing with issues of ill-discipline. However, some schools have a safe, orderly and well disciplined learning environment, despite large learner enrolments, a poor socio-economic background and a disadvantaged geographic location. This does not occur by chance, but is the result of the application of effective strategic management initiatives. This research study is logically structured to present a synthesis of findings from a small scale investigation in a selected public primary school into the management of learner behaviour.

1.11 Outline of Chapters

This research study comprises of the following chapters:

Chapter One: Contextualisation

This chapter commences with the introduction and provides an orientation for the research. It includes the background to the research problem, the school and brief information about the researcher. The purpose of the study, problem statement, rationale for the study, key research questions, methodology and organisation of the study are also presented. This chapter sets the scene by positioning the study in the context of the present issues facing the education system and the challenges that require solutions.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter focuses on the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study, derived from the emerging literature in an in-depth literature review that examines teachers' involvement in learners' education with specific reference to strategic management approaches regarding learner discipline. It discusses the diverse meanings associated with the term 'discipline' and the definition that this study employed. Both South African and international literature are reviewed. The different types of learner discipline problems, namely, disruptive behaviour, bullying and school dress code are emphasised, as these proved to be common discipline problems in schools. The challenges that confront teachers on a daily basis and that inhibit teaching and learning, are discussed. Current initiatives, including the punitive and lenient approaches, such as praise and rewards, are examined. The theoretical frameworks that informed this study; Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline theory and the Assertive Discipline model, are presented.

Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter three provides an overview of the qualitative research design and methodology employed to conduct this study and outlines how data were collected and analysed. This study adopted an interpretivist research paradigm and the main research tool is semi-structured interviews and observations, as these are likely to be less time consuming. Five teachers were purposively selected to form the sample for this study. Ethical clearance was obtained from the UKZN Ethics Committee, the Department of Education, the principal of the school selected for the research study and the respondents. Measures that ensured

trustworthiness were maintained and I ensured that the data findings generated through the interviews and observations were credible and dependable. The tape-recording of responses facilitated verbatim transcription for analysis and this contributed to the validity and reliability of the research. The limitations of this study are also highlighted.

Chapter Four: Analysis and Findings

This chapter analyses and interprets the data obtained from the semi-structured interviews and observations. It describes the analysis of the research findings from the data collected in this qualitative study and presents it in a logical and coherent manner so as to form a basis for teachers to strategically manage discipline in schools. This chapter presents respondents' verbatim responses which were tape recorded and transcribed. I analysed these responses and undertook an in-depth literature review to support the findings. The data findings were categorised into the following themes: the social behaviour of learners, home and social problems, and school practices and conditions which were identified as the cause of learner discipline problems at Protea Primary. The strategies that teachers utilised to manage learner discipline problems surfaced, with some using compassionate management approaches and rewarding acceptable behaviour on the part of learners. Others used more stringent management strategies, including the school's code of conduct which was applied at the teacher's own discretion. The effectiveness of these management approaches used by the teachers at Protea Primary, are also discussed.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter five focuses on the conclusions reached from the findings emanating from the respondents' responses and offers educational stakeholders practical and procedural recommendations based on interpretations derived from the research study regarding the management of learner discipline in schools. It further highlights the immense potential that a management approach has for the enhancement of learning and teaching environments. This chapter commences with a summary of the research process; this highlights the key research questions in order to establish whether the objectives of the study were achieved. A brief outline of the preceding chapters that formed this research study is provided. The main conclusions of this research study encompass the diverse learner discipline problems facing teachers at Protea Primary, as well as the three management approaches that emerged. The discipline strategies employed by the teachers include the heavy-handed approach, a softer

approach and school policy which elucidate the inconsistencies of the management of discipline problems at Protea. The classroom discipline management models of Rudolf Dreikurs' Logical Consequences model and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline model formed a critical foundation for this research study; they provide teachers with significant insight into the continuum of teacher *versus* learner control. Recommendations to improve learner behaviour are provided, as well as possible management strategies that teachers may employ. Finally, this chapter outlines possible topics for further research. The limitations of this study are outlined and the chapter ends with a conclusion.

1.12 Conclusion

Learner discipline problems remain a major impediment to teaching and learning in South Africa. This chapter has provided an overview of the context of this study, the background to the study and the school selected as the research site. A brief description of the researcher was also provided. The purpose of and rationale for the study were stated and the key research questions were formulated. The research design and methodology were explained and the field of study was demarcated. This study contributes to the burgeoning literature on learner disciplinary issues and to a greater understanding of classroom management principles which could be valuable to teachers in promoting effective discipline. This chapter clarifies the main objectives of the study and the approach that will be adopted to achieve the said objectives. Finally an outline of the research study was presented. The next chapter undertakes a review of the literature that has a bearing on the main research question of this study.

Chapter 2

2. Review of related literature

2.1 Introduction

Since the South African Department of Education outlawed corporal punishment in schools in June 1995, learner discipline has become a topical issue, particularly as an upsurge in disciplinary problems appears to have accompanied this prohibition (Benson, 1995). The quintessence of effectively managing learner discipline is the ability of the management of a school to recognise the significance of theoretical frameworks when conceptualising the problem of discipline in local contexts, as well as the potential that a strategic management approach has in translating such frameworks into effective and efficient practice. This chapter provides an overview of theoretical issues which relate to discipline and its management by employing strategic management approaches. It is noted that a related literature review is central to any research project.

I reviewed a wide variety of literature to achieve an in-depth understanding of learner discipline in schools, its management, and the challenges and influences associated with it. The literature review encompassed an exploration of definitions related to learner discipline, what constitutes 'good' or 'poor' learner discipline practices in schools and related theories on learner behaviour and management practices.

Key concepts such as the causes of learner discipline problems, and home and social issues were explored in order to establish how they interact in relation to learner discipline and its management. The literature offered me comprehensible, diverse research instruments utilised in data collection, whilst the body of knowledge presented in the literature provides a foundation on which the research was based, allowing for an analysis of the data and for recommendations to be made. The work of various researchers such as (Vally, 1998; Serakwane, 2008; Adams, 2004; Cohen, 1996; Elam, Rose & Gallup, 1993; Duke & Gottfredson, 1989) amongst others, proved useful in laying this foundation.

A lack of discipline and self-discipline amongst primary school learners in South African schools has contributed to unsuccessful teaching and learning (Rossouw, 2003; Amado & Freire, 2009). It is therefore important to investigate the perceptions of discipline held by teachers in order to understand the impact of learner discipline in schools. Furthermore, it is

imperative to understand that learner discipline influences every activity that learners are engaged in. The problem of learner discipline has become increasingly urgent in South Africa and other countries (Cohen, 1996; Joubert & Prinsloo; 1999; Vally, 1998; Bennett, Finn, & Cribb, 1999; Martin & MacNeil, 2007).

This literature will be discussed under the following sub-headings: International Perspective; South African Perspectives in the area of learner discipline; Conceptualising Discipline; Causes of Learner Discipline Problems in Schools; Teachers' Management of Learner Discipline Problems in Schools; and the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will underpin this research study.

I highlight the seriousness of this problem below by starting with international and South African perspectives on learner discipline.

2.2 International Perspective

Martin and MacNeil (2007) assert that school discipline is and has been an ongoing problem for principals and teachers. They endorse that the hallmark of a successful school principal and a successful school is to provide a safe and secure learning environment. The Phi Delta Kaplan Gallup public opinion poll has consistently rated discipline as primary problem that faces public schools. According to Bennett, Finn, & Cribb (1999) surveys illustrate that Americans felt that many schools are disorderly, undisciplined places. They hypothesise that schools are to be blamed for not holding learners accountable for their actions, and for tolerating the condemnation of parents who criticise or sue when schools attempt to inculcate accountability among learners. Martin and Mac Neil (2007) affirm that teachers are constantly under pressure to demonstrate development in their learners' performance in assessments and may have little patience or tolerance for classroom behavioural problems. Undoubtedly, improving learner discipline is not merely a safety issue, but is also fundamental to academic and social success. Martin and Mac Neil (2007) also suggest that principals need to recognise the uniqueness of the problems that they encounter in their schools and have a thorough understanding of the resources accessible to them to assist in solving learner discipline problems. Principals need to utilise different strategies for different problems as the situation may vary from school to school and for different communities.

Gaustad (1992) emphasises that school discipline has two focal goals; firstly, to ensure the safety of learners and personnel, and secondly, to provide an environment conducive to teaching and learning. However, serious learner misbehaviour encompassing violent or criminal behaviour may defeat these goals. Moles (1989) observe that the most common discipline problems that teachers encounter involve non-criminal learner behaviour. He further elaborates that although these problems may be less dramatic and not threaten individual safety, they still have a negative impact on the learning environment. Disruption by disorderly learners interrupts lessons for all learners, leading to the loss of teaching and learning time (Gottfredson & Oliver, 1989). Duke (1989) highlights that while good behaviour is essential, it is not enough to guarantee academic growth. He adds that successful school discipline strategies can promote responsible learner behaviour, offer learners a gratifying school experience and discourage misbehaviour. Local research reveals similar findings.

2.3 The South African Perspective

According to Kassiem (2007) discipline problems in schools are getting worse and at some schools are completely out of hand. At a three-day national conference on learner discipline held in Potchefstroom, South Africa in (2007), Du Plessis and Loock, who are professors at the University of Johannesburg said that “Discipline at some schools were so bad that it had led to both a reduction in the number of people who were prepared to become teachers and in the overall number of teachers” (cited in Kassiem (2007, p.1). Du Plessis and Loock (2007) state that pupil misbehaviour and rudeness was the leading cause of teacher resignations. They further state that disciplining learners, particularly those with serious behavioural problems was a long standing challenge for teachers. At the heart of this challenge is the use of punitive *versus* supportive disciplinary practice. This statement indicates that while the use of punitive measures such as corporal punishment may be banned, alternatives are not available. According to Du Plessis and Loock (2007) youth who are not in school are at an exceedingly high risk of delinquency and crime. They further emphasise that zero tolerance policies have not increased school safety or improved the school climate but have instead resulted in negative consequences; for example, an increase in school drop-out rates.

According to Wolhuter *et al.* (2008) while research has concluded that learner discipline is a problem in South African schools, existing studies have tended to focus on the experiences of school principals and learners; teachers’ perspectives are lacking. It is teachers who primarily

experience learner discipline problems schools. A sample of teachers at schools in the Vaal Triangle region, North West Province and Free State Province completed a questionnaire that explored: learner discipline in their schools; the state of the learner discipline in their classes and the schools; the nature and frequency of discipline problems; methods used to maintain discipline; the effectiveness of these methods; and the effect of learner discipline problems on the lives of teachers. The biographical details of respondents indicated that the sample included the total spectrum of teachers in South Africa regarding age, experience, post-level grades, learning areas which teachers teach, and school categories (historically Black, White, Coloured and Indian schools) where teachers are employed. According to the findings teachers are more directly and more commonly affected by learner discipline in schools than principals. The survey also concluded that discipline is a crisis in schools. This suggests that the perspective of a variety of role-players, that is, teachers, parents and learners must be considered in order to improve learner discipline.

South African researcher Serakwane (2008) conducted research on establishing discipline in a contemporary classroom. She employed a qualitative research design to understand this phenomenon with a case study of three high schools. The data were gathered by means of interviews and observations. Serakwane's (2008) findings concur with those of various international and national researchers who indicate that many teachers are struggling to implement disciplinary measures and procedures that uphold order in the classroom and that they are confused about what discipline strategies they should employ. She also established that teachers affix different meanings to the word discipline and that the meaning that individual teachers attach to discipline impacts on their selection of discipline techniques. Serakwane (2008) claims that many of the strategies to maintain discipline that are used by teachers are control-oriented and pivot on rewards and punishment. The study also indicated that when these control-oriented techniques are utilised, learners employ diverse coping mechanisms, which eventually cause these techniques to be unsuccessful, and diminish learners' opportunity to develop self-discipline. Serakwane (2008) suggests that teachers need to utilise practical discipline techniques to maintain discipline in their classrooms and to achieve a good teacher-learner relationship. Teachers need to empower learners to take responsibility for their own behaviour and establish partnerships with parents and other support structures on behaviour management. Serakwane (2008) also suggests that teachers should benchmark for appropriate practices with teachers from other schools and conduct

internal workshops to share classroom discipline issues and solutions; skills development programmes for teachers are also recommended.

It is evident from the above studies that learner discipline problems are a major challenge to teachers both internationally and nationally.

2.4 Conceptualising Discipline

The term “discipline” comes from the Latin word “disciplinare,” which means ‘to teach’, or ‘Disco’ which means instruction and knowledge imparted to disciples or learners, and “disciples” which means learners or followers (Mackenzie, 2001, p.4). Discipline and disciple are two different concepts that are interrelated. Cawood and Gibbon (1981) concur that disciple and discipline are related concepts which denote willingness to learn from someone like a teacher and be influenced by that person. Jones (1989, p.6) defines “discipline as the maintenance of a methodical system that creates an environment in which learning takes place, and that allows the aims and objectives of the school to be accomplished.”

Smith & Rivera (1993) describe discipline as a system of rules and mechanisms to ensure that disciplinary codes are followed. They further advocate that disciplining learners does not have to result in an oppressive ambience, where learners behave because they are afraid of the consequences of not following the rules of conduct. The primary rationale behind the educational system is to teach learners social and academic discipline. The term discipline also refers to the positive guidance of a child towards adulthood (Smith & Rivera, 1993).

Duminy and Thembela (1983, p.81) define “discipline as the systematic training of the physical, mental and moral capacities of the child through exercises and instruction.” Cawood & Gibbon (1981) claim that discipline is creation and maintenance for work, self-control, preparation for responsible citizenship, obedience, the practice and acquisition of acceptable patterns of behaviour, a measure of control by a teacher over his/her learners and the controlling of energy that leads to action. It is essential to emphasise that in this context discipline does not simply mean ensuring that learners are quiet and orderly in class. There is an immense difference between order and discipline. Order is related to the external consequences of the learning environment, for example, it is by virtue of the authority conferred upon a teacher that he/she can maintain order (Duminy & Thembela, 1983). However, discipline deals with the innermost in a person and, in this context, discipline is the inward being in both the teacher and learner. It does not depend on a particular individual

who considers it his/her duty, alone, to cause the class to keep quiet, but lies in an inward disposition that develops out of inner acceptance and that concerns a will towards the correct direction. In this context, it is imperative that discipline is encouraged by a teacher while the learner must accept it. However, it is critical that the learner learns to be self-disciplined alongside the process of learning (Cawood & Gibbon, 1981).

For the purposes of this study, I incline towards Smith & Rivera's (1993) definition as it allows for the identification of different types and causes of discipline problems and, importantly, allow for an analysis of how teachers manage discipline problems.

2.5 Types of Learner Discipline Problems

According to Marais and Meier (2010) since the banning of corporal punishment in South African schools, disruptive behaviour and bullying of learners has become an issue of national concern, which threatens the existence and survival of the school system. It is clearly evident that learner discipline problems are rife in schools and have become severe enough to warrant attention (Rossouw, 2003; Cohen, 1996; Joubert & Prinsloo, 1999). Against this background, I identify and discuss the types of learner behaviour that most often takes place in some schools.

2.5.1 Disruptive Behaviour

Disruptive behaviour on the part of learners continues to be the most consistent challenge that is experienced by teachers (Marais & Meier, 2010). They further argue that the question of control of learner behaviour and discipline is still perplexing and is an unresolved educational issue. Disruptive behaviour may be defined as inappropriate behaviour that is attributable to disciplinary problems in schools and infringes on the fundamental rights of the learner, his/her safety and his/her right to be treated with respect in the learning environment (Mabeba and Prinsloo, 2000). Levin and Nolan (1996, p.23, 24) postulate that disruptive behaviour is behaviour that inhibits the achievement of the teacher's purpose, which may be classified into four basic categories, namely:

- “behaviour that interferes with the teaching and learning act (for example, a learner who distracts other learners during lesson

presentation, who refuses to follow directions, or displays aggressive behaviour);

- behaviour that interferes with the rights of other learners to learn (for example a learner who continually calls out while the teacher is explaining content);
- behaviour that is psychologically or physically unsafe (for example, leaning on the back legs of a chair, unsafe use of tools or laboratory equipment, threats to other learners, and constant teasing and harassment of classmates);
- behaviour that causes the destruction of property (for example, vandalism in the classroom).”

Disruptive behaviour is a common reason for poor discipline which is typically due to learner’s inability to cope with classroom tasks. Learners demonstrate their frustration by means of loud outbursts, while the rest of the class may remain passive (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). According to Levin and Nolan (1996, p.161) some of the frequent daily disruptive behaviour challenges that teachers countenance in their classrooms are verbal interruptions, for example are, “talking out of turn, name calling, humming, calling out,” and off-task behaviours, for example, “daydreaming, fidgeting, doodling, tardiness, inattention, physical movement that, whether intended or not, is bound to disrupt”, for example, “wandering about, visiting other learners, passing notes, sitting on the desk, throwing objects around the classroom” and disrespect personified by “verbal aggression, teasing, punching, neglecting academic work, refusing to follow directions, and assault”. They add that these are called surface disruptive behaviours because they are not the outcome of deep-seated personal problems, but are normal developmental behaviours of learners. Rayment (2006) and De Wet (2003) observe that serious disruptive behaviours involve, for example, conflict degenerating into physical violence which is one of the most daunting misbehavioural acts to handle. Physical fighting is reputed among learners to be the ideal means of resolving their conflict situations, while bullying is another serious disruptive behaviour that negatively affects both the emotional and physical experiences of learners in the school. Robertson (1989) concurs with Willey (2005) and claims that possible motives for a learner’s disruptive behaviour are attention seeking from their teachers and peers, creating excitement, and malicious teasing of teachers in a ploy to avoid class work. He further contends that a

widespread explanation offered for a child's attention seeking behaviour is compensation for the lack of parental care (Rayment, 2006).

Disruptive behaviour by learners creates chaos by disrupting the daily operation or functionality of schools. In an effort to deal with such misconduct, many schools have adopted codes of conduct outlining acceptable discipline, including the procedures to be followed in dealing with nonconformity. However, such procedures may not supersede any educational legislation, particularly the South African Schools Act (1996) and the South Africa Constitution Act 108 of (1996). Of cardinal importance is that such policies are formulated on the basis of the idiosyncratic circumstances prevalent in that particular school.

According to De Wet (2005) irrespective how well teachers prepare their lessons, how motivated they are and their competence to manage disruptive behaviour, learner performance is affected and influenced by learner discipline. It is therefore important that teachers are not only acquainted with theoretically acceptable and effective methods of managing disruptive behaviour, but that the way they execute discipline is pragmatic and achieves the goal of preventing and correcting disruptive behaviour.

2.5.2 Bullying

Bullying is regarded as a long-standing act of violence that is directed against a person who is not proficient enough to defend him/herself in a tangible situation (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995). De Wet (2005) defines bullying as intentional, recurring and systematic, insensitive acts or unkind words and behaviour by a child or a group of children towards another child or other children in the school. It may play out in several forms, including physical bullying, for example punching, poking, strangling, hair-pulling, beating, biting, excessive tickling, direct vandalism and verbal bullying. Verbal bullying comprises of acts such as hurtful, upsetting name-calling, persistent teasing, gossiping and even racist comments (Rayment, 2006). Due to the misperception that bullying is merely a part of the growing up process, many learners remain quiet about abuse or bullying and many teachers fail to take action as they are oblivious to its occurrence. Rayment (2006) further argues that bullying can have negative, lifelong social, emotional, psychological and educational consequences, both for perpetrators and their victims. Baron, Byrne and Branscombe (2006) and Olweus (1993) asserts that bullying infringes on a learner's human rights, dignity, privacy, freedom and safety. He further postulates that every child has the right to be protected from abuse, neglect,

maltreatment or degradation and that it is also evident from studies conducted that victims of bullying often confide in their friends, rather than adults.

According to Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) many dynamics of life may contribute to bullying behaviours; for example, bullies who are bullied by siblings at home, frustration that may lead to bullying due to poverty, low intelligence, conflict in the family, for example, a family unit that is physically intact but characterised by internal conflict, constant tension and physical abuse, broken homes due to death, divorce and abandonment, lack of parental involvement, high levels of discord, bullying behaviour may be modelled on others, humiliation and being unproductive in school and emotions of inferiority arising from *bona fide* or imagined physical differences. Their study further indicate that bullies come from homes where forms of physical punishment are used and where children are taught to strike back physically as a means of handling problems, relieving their stress or coping with anger and where love and care from parents are frequently lacking. Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) also maintain that there is relationship between parental rejection and aggressive delinquent behaviour.

Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) note, that other factors that contribute to bullying behaviour are school and social issues and the influence of television and the media. According to their research a relationship exists between juveniles' exposure to violence and aggression on television and aggressive behaviour. De Wet (2005) argues that the school also contributes to bullying when astringent rather than when affectionate attitudes are adopted, for example, towards learners who experience elevated levels of conflict or violence in the home, when school rules are not clearly outlined or when there is insufficient, appropriate supervision of learner behaviour. Olweus (1993) maintains that learners who regularly display bullying behaviour are generally defiant or antagonistic towards their teachers and school authorities, are antisocial, opt to break school rules and be disrespectful and exhibit behavioural problems. According to Rayment (2006), some learners create disciplinary problems by indulging in violent behaviour because they are angry and resentful and are not mentally and emotionally equipped to handle their feelings or express their anger constructively.

According to research carried out in Belgium by Smith and Sharp (1994) a bully or a victim's problems are considered to be a threat to children's safety at school, where older learners believe they are naturally superior to, and can control, younger learners. They assert that learner bullying in primary schools is a cause for trepidation among teachers, parents and

learners and that unless bullying in primary schools is curbed, no effective teaching and learning will occur.

Van der Westhuizen (1991) maintains that while there is no particular solution to this problem, if schools are serious about addressing bullying, they should develop and implement a code of conduct aimed at reducing bullying. According to Smith and Sharp (1994), an anti-bullying policy should be drawn up by the by S.M.T, teachers, parents and learners; it is a statement of intent which sets out agreed procedures and systems defined by the school for managing bullying behaviour with a view to promoting anti-bullying values within the school. Clarke and Murray (1996) claim that very few schools in South Africa have anti-bullying policies and that it is widely recognised that schools that actively promote good behaviour rather than merely responding to misbehaviour are prone to be more effective schools. The fact that both the bully and the bullied originate in the school, suggests that the school is well placed to address bullying; therefore, schools need to establish a social climate where social peer pressure or physical aggression is not used as a means of gaining popularity, maintaining group leadership, or influencing others to do what they are told (Smith & Thompson, 1991).

2.5.3 Not Adhering to School Dress Code

In many countries, including Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, Japan and a number of African countries like South Africa, school uniforms are worn at school. In others, such as France and Germany, school uniforms are only worn in a few schools; however, in some of these countries opinions are changing. Both France and Germany have recently considered bringing school uniforms back, and in the United States of America the percentage of public schools in which children wear a uniform increased from 11.8 percent in 1999 to 17.5 percent in 2000 (Brunsma & Rockquomore, 1998). Richards (2010) argues that schools that are struggling with learner discipline problems or learner performance may view school uniforms as a strategy to improve their school, while some critics claim that such a strategy is only a superficial fix that does not address the underlying problems in schools. Brunsma and Rockquomore (1998) further argue that since school uniforms have the potential to reduce distractions in the classroom, they may also improve learner discipline and increase learner performance by helping learners pay attention and focus on their work. Richards (2010) maintains that wearing uniforms bestows learners with a sense of identity and alleviates competition to wear branded clothing, which creates discipline problems and encourages

bullying. She further asserts that uniforms tend to work best when combined with a well conceived overall school policy, specifically the school's code of conduct. In contrast, Marais and Meier (2010) observe that school uniforms have become an issue of contention, as some learners are not happy to wear them and combine the uniform with a fancy, coloured jacket or jersey which is a violation of a school's code of conduct and impacts on discipline in the school.

2.6 Causes of Learner Discipline Problems in Schools

There is a significant body of research that indicates that the culture of learning and teaching seems to be disintegrating in South African schools, including primary schools and that significant role-players are overwhelmed by disciplinary problems and lack the capability to manage these problems effectively (Vally and Porteus, 2000).

Prior to taking up the challenge of maintaining discipline, it is imperative for teachers to consider the factors that contribute to learners' discipline problems. This will help teachers to take proactive steps to curb disciplinary problems. As Lemmer (1998) observes, when one attempts to face challenges of maintaining discipline on the school premises, one should look at what is best and most practical for learners. I start my discussion by examining how home and family situations and conditions impact on the behaviour of learners in the school context.

2.6.1 Home Environment and Family Context

The school, home and society all play a role in a learner's discipline problems. Adams (2004) claims that when learners are exposed to undisciplined or violent home environments this type of behaviour may manifest itself in school, with the learner displaying disruptive behaviour, for example, fighting and using vulgar language. He argues that learners often bring their personal problems to school, as they are unable to deal with them on their own. He further argues that, in this type of home environment, there is no or very little parental involvement or interest in children's schoolwork; this may cause learners to display the same attitude and be disorderly in class. When learners have no interest in their schoolwork they may become bored, as they are unable to complete the tasks set by the teacher; this causes disruptive behaviour (Adams, 2004).

It is widely recognised that parents play a crucial role in learners' progress, educational development and, importantly, the management of their children's behavioural issues (Adell, 2002). Many countries that are educationally progressive encourage the active interest of parents and local communities in the education and discipline of their children; this is lacking in South African schools (Robertson, 1989). My observation concurs with that of Robertson (1989). This causes many learners to become frustrated and display behavioural problems. Due to low literacy levels, many parents are unable to assist children with their homework; in some instances the learners live with grandparents and caregivers as their parents are working in the urban areas. This results in poor performance and discipline problems (Castejon & Perez, 1998).

Robertson (1989) maintains that family conflict and dissonance, parents' literacy levels, criminality and violent behaviour in parents, large families, overcrowding in the home, low occupational status, unemployment and poverty are all associated with emotional and behavioural disturbance, including reading retardation. He adds that the reasons for a child's good or bad behaviour can be traced to the home environment and, in some instances, the school. Adell (2002) concurs with Robertson (1989) and notes that the home background may help to explain a child's frame of mind, skills level or behaviour patterns; however he adds that some children might be predisposed, genetically or congenitally, to learning and behavioural problems. He further asserts that failing and behaviour problems are powerfully associated, but learners can also develop behavioural problems due to temperamental factors. Willey (2005, p.1) recognises three crucial causes for bad behaviour; firstly "many parents work really hard and do not spend adequate time with their children"; this is known as the "guilty parent syndrome" because when parents are with their children, they are reluctant to impose discipline for fear of damaging the relationship. Secondly, "a poor diet" may lead to poor behaviour; if a learner is hungry he/she may become disruptive, fidgety, restless and unable to sit still and concentrate on schoolwork (Willey, 2005, p.1). Robertson (1989) and Willey (2005) both argue that some learners are disruptive because they have been subjected to distorted or inadequate care throughout their childhood due to a diversity of family and financial complexities and neglect; this causes them to demand attention in the classroom. Adell (2002) agrees that family conditions are either a positive or negative contributor to learner behaviour. He adds that social factors in the life of a child, such as the break-up of the family, divorce, death, abandonment, poverty, unemployment and substance abuse may positively or negatively influence a learner's behaviour. Thirdly, he observes that, "lack of

communication” is the another major factor for bad behaviour as the increase in easily accessible entertainment, such as television, radio, MP3 players, ipods, cell phones, computer games internet, etc has attributed to a decline in direct communication between parents and their children (Willey 2005, p.1).

2.6.2 Death, Divorce and Abandonment

A research study on poor discipline problems and learner performance among African Americans by Mcloyd, Jayaratne, Ceballo and Borquagj (1994) found that the factors that influence poor discipline and learner performance include poverty, cultural differences, unstable homes due to death, divorce and abandonment, alcohol and drug abuse, violence at home and teenage pregnancy. These findings resonate with this study in that many of the learners at Protea are plagued with similar home environments. Another contributory factor is domestic arguments during the process of divorce, or even when family unit is physically intact but characterised by internal conflict and constant tension which results in child neglect, violence and aggressive, delinquent behaviour (Kratcoski & Kratcoski, 1995). Baron *et al.* (2006) further argues that role models from an early age contribute to behavioural problems; when children are exposed to violent acts like the father physically abusing the mother; they think this is acceptable behaviour and may also resort to aggression and violence by fighting with other learners, bullying and dropping out of school. The family may be physically disrupted by the loss of a parent through death, separation, or divorce. The literature notes that children who come from intact homes are less likely to display major discipline problems or repeat a school grade even when socio-economic status was removed statistically. Adell (2002) concurs with Saiduddin (2003) that, learners from unstable families who are emotionally disturbed by death, divorce, abandonment and poverty tend to misbehave and underperform. Research carried out by Adell (2002) in South Africa found that parents who abuse drugs or alcohol provide bad role models and cannot assist, motivate or correct their children’s behaviour. In contrast, it has been established internationally that poor discipline in schools is a problem not only in the poor social echelons of society, but also in countries that are classified as developed. If a learner has been abandoned by their parents, is an orphan, has experienced their parents’ divorce, or has a parent who is terminally ill, the learner will struggle to cope with schoolwork, resulting in discipline problems like disruptive behaviour, bullying and aggression due to her/his emotional state (Karande & Kulkarni, 2005).

Dave (2000) defines a single parent family as a family comprising of a single father or mother having their own biological and dependent children. A single parent family is created in different ways, through the death of one parent, divorce, separation or desertion. Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009) claim, that the death of a husband results in single mothers shouldering the responsibility of becoming the primary wage earners. Many single parent families face financial crises in attempting to meet the basic needs of children such as food, clothing, school fees, maintaining the previous standard of living and meeting personal expenses. Divorced mothers are trapped in a similar vicious cycle of financial problems and other stressful life events (Kotwal & Prabhakar, 2009). The role of single parent is a challenging one especially when the family is headed by a woman, who often has no other adult with whom to share decision making, the discipline of children and financial responsibilities (Dave, 2000). Many single mothers find it hard to maintain discipline among their children due to the absence of a male father figure as well as focusing on the need to put food on the table. Single parents work long hours and their children are sometimes unsupervised for long periods of time. This causes learners to feel insecure and become disruptive and attention seeking in class, as their parents do not spend much time with them and have no time to assist them with their homework. Some children may also become part of gangs in their community, which may lead to aggressiveness and acts of bullying (Karande & Kulkarni, 2005).

Karande and Kulkarni (2005) suggest that the school environment should link up with the environment at home in terms of warmth, love, understanding, and encouragement. According to Saiduddin (2003) teachers should create a positive, caring school environment where learners feel at home at school and where they can openly discuss their trials and tribulations and what prevents them from behaving to the required standard according to the school's code of conduct. A caring environment at school leads to the attainment of good discipline and educational achievement. Schools are the testing ground for the success or failure of learners in adapting to the demands of society. Higher levels of success are achieved in a climate with high learner involvement, personal learner-teacher relationships, and innovative ways of improving the discipline of learners. Involving parents would allow the school to seek assistance from the relevant authorities, like social workers and psychologists to provide necessary interventions. The findings of this study will enable me to recommend remedial measures that would address the problem of poor discipline, as many children suffer from unpredictable home environments. Enhanced communication between

teachers and parents would enable them to come up with joint strategies to address children's discipline problems (Adell, 2002).

2.6.3 Social problems - Poverty

Engelbrecht, Kruger and Booysen (1996) argue that poor discipline in schools is an international problem that has been linked to low socio-economic background. Education does not exist in a vacuum; it reflects the extensive social and economic structure of a country. Adell (2002) also supports this view by claiming that differences in learners' discipline problems represent social realities such as poverty and political and socio-economic problems which create a negative social environment at home. According to Kirov (2002) poverty has spatial, racial, and gender dimensions which are primarily concentrated in provinces that have a large rural population which is predominantly Black. The high poverty levels in South Africa can be attributed to the high illiteracy and unemployment levels which perpetuate learner discipline problems. The school that was selected as a research site is one of the poorest schools in the Phoenix community. This school houses learners who experience high poverty levels and whose parents have low levels of education and high unemployment rates. Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009) affirm that the ambience at home facilitates the fostering of good discipline or challenging learner discipline problems. He further alleges that domestic disagreements amongst parents, particularly those who are poor and unemployed, result in child neglect and behavioural problems. A number of research studies cite serious malnutrition problems that impact on the poor academic performance of learners. De Wet (2005) and Munn (1996) argue that children who come from poor socio-economic backgrounds tend to misbehave not by choice but due to the lack of a proper diet which results in their inability to concentrate. A poor family socio-economic background may also cause learners to display bullying behaviour (De Wet, 2005). In some instances the bully may resort to attacking other learners with the intention of dispossessing them of their valuables such as money, pens, crayons, rulers, or their lunch. Thus Kirov (2002) maintains that there is a relationship between poverty and delinquency as a hungry child is prone to turn into a thief due to starvation. Feeding schemes in schools can assist in curbing such problems, since learners will receive balanced meals that will lead to an improvement in their behaviour (Munn, 1996). There are a large number of underprivileged learners at Protea. This school attempts to help these learners by providing a daily meal which is sponsored by non-governmental and religious organisations.

2.6.4 Issues of Un/Employment of parents

Many of the parents in the Phoenix community are single, illiterate, and unemployed. Many learners hail from poor socio-economic backgrounds and are left in the care and supervision of grandparents who are illiterate or have low levels of literacy, or caregivers, when their parents leave home to search for jobs in the urban areas. Such parents work far from home, sometimes in other provinces. Due to low literacy levels, many mothers are employed as part-time domestic workers, while others have temporary jobs. The few that have completed their schooling are permanently employed; such parents are able to support their children, provide them with nutritious meals, take an active interest in their schooling and instil good discipline in them. Castejon and Perez (1998) assert that the educational levels of parents have a significant influence on learner discipline problems in schools as the learner's perception of family support directly affects their discipline and performance in school. They further claim that when children's parents are not adequately literate, they are disadvantaged, because the modern curriculum requires that children complete assignments and projects at home and they need their parents' help to do so. Children whose parents are unable to assist them become frustrated and disruptive, as they do not understand the learning material and fail to submit projects and assignments for assessment; this, in turn, may cause them to fail and turn to delinquency. Marchesi and Martin (2002) conducted research on social class in Spain and America and found that there is a high correlation between poor discipline, low school achievement and a low socio-economic background with high levels of poverty and unemployment. Educational failure is legitimised by inherent inferiority; where there is a high illiteracy rate, poor hygiene, and lack of adequate child rearing practices, especially among parents, all of which are regarded as a manifestation of unemployment and poverty which exacerbate learner discipline problems in schools (Baron, *et al.*, 2006).

Unfortunately, some learners are the product of teenage pregnancy and their parents possess low literacy levels and face unemployment (Marchesi & Martin, 2002). Kirov (2002) and Munn (1996) argue that these families might not be able to provide adequate food for their children, which may result in learners misbehaving on the playground or in the classroom. Kratcoski and Kratcoski (1995) and Baron, *et al.* (2006) assert that the stress of poverty, unemployment, welfare existence, poor housing, education, limited opportunities and others aspects of life associated with the bottom rungs of the social ladder contribute heavily to learner discipline problems.

The presence or availability of parents is crucial since they provide information, learning opportunities, behavioural models, and connection to other resources. Consequently, the absence of such support severely limits these transactional protection processes and results in low self-esteem; this manifests itself in behavioural problems (Saiduddin, 2003). In the next section I focus on the lack of parental involvement.

2.6.5 Lack of Parental Involvement

According to Epstein (1991) parental involvement is defined as parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision-making, and collaborating with the community. Parents are an invaluable resource to their children and can be regarded as the child's first teacher, but when the child enters school some parents shy away from their responsibility and transfer it to the teacher. Van Wyk (2000) concurs by asserting that many parents are reluctant to co-operate with teachers in instilling discipline in their children and attempt to transfer the responsibility to teachers so that they do not have to handle disciplinary problems.

According to the National Education Policy Act 27 of (1996) parental choices, responsibilities and strategies have been formulated to develop and encourage parental involvement at home and at school to facilitate an effective partnership between home and school. Teachers have a responsibility to involve parents in their children's schooling. However, parental involvement is lacking in many South African schools and this is a major contributory factor to learner discipline problems (Oppelt, 2000). Hanafin and Lynch (2002) argue that when schools collaborate with parents to support learning, it acts as deterrent to learner discipline problems. However, Mkwanzazi (1994) argues that in some Black communities, many parents compartmentalise their lives and do not play an active role in their children's education or discipline. My research at Protea reveals similar patterns, where parents are reluctant to visit the school when requested to do so to address learner misbehavior. They often state that they are unavailable due to work commitments and that it is the responsibility of the school to manage these problems. This lack of interest and involvement on the part of parents contributes negatively to learner discipline, as learners use the situation to their advantage; they are aware that their parents will not come to school even if they misbehave, do not complete their class work or homework, are disruptive, or exhibit violence and aggression or bullying. Children feel secure, behave well and perform better academically when their parents are directly involved with schooling activities. Dowling and

Osbourne (1995) claim that when parents and teachers collaboratively manage learner problems, learners experience consistency and feel more comfortable working and learning in the school context. Blandford (1998) supports the notion of collaboration and observes that it yields several benefits such as, ensuring that children behave appropriately, wear uniforms, arrive timeously at school, are not frequently absent, have the necessary resources like pen and books and display work ethics by completing given tasks. Parents ought to take responsibility for their children's behaviour and be actively involved in their schooling in order to promote good discipline. Schools encourage the involvement of parents in school matters by sending them copies of the school's code of conduct, newsletters, progress reports, and letters informing them of school activities, for example, parent meetings and field trips, as well as matters pertaining to discipline issues or academic matters.

Christie and Collins (1984) argue that despite the moral degeneration experienced in South African schools, teachers try to promote parental involvement even in impoverished home situations by giving learners homework so that their parents can assist them despite the odds, thus promoting improved achievement and discipline. Active parental involvement can be advantageous to schools, as some parents have special skills like social and health workers who can help teachers to foster discipline in school (Dowling & Osbourne, 1995). To promote parental involvement schools could consider educating parents about ethical values, because the messages learners receive about what is good, right and appropriate conduct should be consistent between schools and home to ensure the same level of respect for authority, persons and property (Niemi & Sihvonen, 2011).

2.6.6 Poor Work Ethics in the School Setting

Teachers possess the skills to equip learners with life skills such as displaying good work ethics towards their schoolwork and promoting personal and community development (Fakunle, 2010). They are directly responsible for carrying out the primary goal of quality education for all learners, as education is frequently interrelated, directly or indirectly, with economic development, health, and peace. Niemi and Sihvonen (2011) note that in Finland, the responsibility for providing education to prospective teachers at primary and secondary schools was transferred to universities in 1971 so that they could instill knowledge, values, attitudes and appropriate behaviour in learners. She further argues that teachers undoubtedly have a strong influence on learning, and that good teachers ideally produce good learners with the knowledge, values, attitudes and behaviours necessary for responsible citizenship.

Work ethics is an important part of learning in primary schools with attention given to its instruction in a number of areas in the curriculum. Good or poor work ethics is a major contributor to a learner's behaviour.

When children adopt good work ethics, it teaches them responsibility. Children need to be responsible and accountable in carrying out their daily duties. Instilling good work ethics inculcates good morals and values in children. When learners adopt good work ethics it teaches them to be conscientious and disciplines them to carry out given tasks. Niemi and Sihvonen (2011) further argue that teacher education programmes agree that core values such as work ethics can and should be taught in our schools. It is up to the teaching profession to ensure broader and deeper implementation by assisting learners in developing appropriate work ethics towards their schoolwork. Räsänen (2000) argues that the teaching profession is fundamentally an ethical profession. She claims that professional ethics is not a question of rhetoric or repetition, but personal involvement and determination, which includes cognitive and poignant aspects and striving for corresponding actions from learners to motivate them to get involved in their schoolwork. She argues that the culture of completing written tasks is disintegrating amongst learners, as daily learning is deteriorating. Räsänen (2000) further claims that some learners try to imitate their role models, who are teachers; teachers who are not entirely dedicated and committed to carrying out their specific duties as outlined by the Department of Education provide bad role models and their learners will copy bad habits, such as when teachers come late or unprepared to their classes. When teachers display a positive attitude towards teaching their learners and display good work ethics, learners may follow suite (Marais & Meier, 2010). If teachers offer pastoral care to learners by trying to establish the reasons for their poor work ethics, these learners may develop suitable work ethics. Rayment (2006) explains that parental involvement is fundamental in instilling appropriate work ethics in children by checking, monitoring and helping their children with homework and checking if their class work is completed on a daily basis. This will motivate learners to develop good work ethics and good discipline, as a child who is gainfully occupied does not have time to be disruptive and misbehave (Marais & Meier, 2010).

While home and social problems do carry over into schools, many discipline problems are created through various school practices and conditions (Edwards, 2004). In the next section I focus on how school policies and practices contribute to learner discipline problems.

2.6.7 School Policies and Practices

School personnel or a learner's peers can aggravate situations by reacting in ways that exacerbate the situation (Wright, 2000). Schools also need to take responsibility for some of these problems. According to Adams (2004) learners may also be disruptive if policy is not being administered consistently and if a school has a non-functional discipline policy, where learners constantly get away with or are let off the hook regarding acts of ill-discipline. Gottfredson (1989) hypothesises that when school rules are unclear and perceived as unfair or inconsistent, learners will not follow these rules. He further asserts that when teachers and S.M.T.s are uncertain about the specific rules they had agreed on and what the repercussions of breaking the rules are, discipline problems escalate and result in poor co-operation with learners. Discrepancies between staff members may arise, for example, when some teachers enforce the school rules and others either do not or are lenient or overfriendly with learners. Inconsistencies like poor dismissal times may also intensify discipline problems in schools. Discipline problems may also arise if learners are left unsupervised in their classes, assembly lines or on the playgrounds (Adams, 2004). Large class sizes and the lack of adequate resources are another impediment to teaching and learning, as maintaining discipline can become a painstaking task (Olayemi, 2012).

Large classes are regarded as a negative factor in creating a favourable classroom environment that is conducive to teachers teaching and maintaining discipline (O'Sullivan, 2006). (Olayemi, 2012) argue that some learners in a large class tend to underachieve academically, as valuable time is wasted when teachers attempt to maintain discipline and order with disruptive learners. Teacher-learner ratios have been raised as a matter of concern by many teachers. The quandary of teacher-learner ratios, coupled with many other problems illustrate that there are many grave inadequacies in the South African education system which contribute to learner discipline problems (Fontana 1985). O'Sullivan (2006) and Thembela (1984) argue that teaching large classes is a more difficult, daunting task especially when learners are taught in English and the majority are African language mother-tongue speakers. They further argues that when teachers teach classes of more than 35 learners, this creates the problem of individualisation; teachers who work under such conditions may be more likely to be tempted to resort to corporal punishment to deal with discipline problems. McIntyre (2005) adds that where school class sizes are larger than 35, maintaining order in the classroom can divert the teacher from instruction, creating less opportunities for

concentrating and focusing on what is being taught. In turn, teachers may concentrate their attention on motivated learners, ignoring those who are attention-seeking and disruptive. Olayemi (2012) believe that small classes have a positive effect on learner behaviour. They note that teachers need to develop a responsible, cooperative classroom and promote positive interactions, encourage learners to possess positive self esteem and develop safe, non-threatening but motivating learning environments thus encouraging appropriate learner discipline. Teachers may manage large classes by using worksheets and booklets that learners are required to complete as additional class work and home-work in order to complete the specified teaching curriculum, which is difficult to achieve when there are continuous disruptions in large classes (Olayemi, 2012).

2.6.8 Code of Conduct

The South African Schools Act of 1996 states that all the relevant stakeholders need to collaboratively draw up a code of conduct to maintain discipline and order for both learners and teachers in the school situation.

According to Bray (2005) the code of conduct deals with negative behaviour and provides measures to deal with such incidents; disciplinary measures are therefore devised to promote and to maintain a well-disciplined school environment and simultaneously prohibit and punish unacceptable conduct consistently through measures that also encourage the culprits to improve their behaviour. Van de Bank (2000) suggests that every school adopt a code of conduct pertaining to the specific ethos of the school and incorporating school and community values. He adds that teachers and learners should be made aware of the school's code of conduct in order to facilitate an understanding of the consequences of its transgression. Supporting the idea that every school adopts its own code of conduct, Charles (2002) advises teachers to work together with their learners to establish a code of conduct that specifies how everyone is supposed to behave. For effective discipline adherence, Morrell (1998) concurs that learners should be directly involved in the drafting of any home-school agreement, especially the code of conduct policies, and should be required to read and sign acknowledgement of these policies together with their parents. Schools are encouraged to involve parents as much as possible in developing home-school partnerships and policies. Edwards (2004) argues that the role of the parents is crucial; in some schools parents are asked to sign home-school agreements regarding the code of conduct. This ensures that

parents are aware of and support the school's approach and will ensure that their children follow the rules regarding attendance, discipline and homework.

Du Plessis and Looock (2007) argue that learner discipline has deteriorated since the abolition of corporal punishment as the alternatives are not effective; this further exacerbates learner discipline problems in schools. When the rules and consequences of transgressions are consistently enforced by school authorities and complied with by learners, this reduces the need to enforce tough disciplinary action or measures against misbehaving learners and encourages good discipline in a school (Van der Bank, 2000).

In the next section I shift the focus to the management of learner discipline, highlighting the two broad Management approaches, that is Stringent Approach and Lenient Approach.

2.7 Management of Learner Discipline

2.7.1 Stringent Approach

Skiba and Peterson (2000) and Kohn (1996) argue that when teachers are stringent and use harsh language, criticise learners and threaten them in order to get them to complete their class work on time, this may lead to reduced class participation and behaviour problems amongst learners. Barth (2004) concurs that the use of punitive disciplinary approaches improves learner behaviour temporarily; however, it may tend to increase the probability of deviant and antisocial behaviours, such as aggression; adolescent delinquency, bullying and violent acts inside and outside the school; the very conduct that schools seek to curb. Skinner (2012) maintains that when bad behaviour is punished; it may merely be suppressed and may reappear later under different circumstances. Arif and Rafi (2007) note that studies reveal that punishment is efficient, in the sense that there is often immediate compliance from the learner; however, if exercised extensively it may contribute to negative effects like low self-esteem, withdrawal, impulsiveness, anxiety, depression delinquency and substance abuse. Dreikurs, Grunwald and Pepper (1998) theorise that instead of punishment curbing bad behaviour, it can aggravate it. They further state that punishment does not discourage misbehaviour, but rather reinforces the learner's view of teachers being treacherous. Munn and Smith (1999) are of the opinion that instead of always punishing learners for misbehavior they should be praised or rewarded for good behavior; in this way other learners, specifically delinquents, may be positively motivated to behave accordingly.

Morrell (1998) argues that South Africa's education system historically used corporal punishment to maintain discipline. Criticism of corporal punishment led to its abolition in 1996. The use of corporal punishment has disappeared from middle class, formerly White schools; however it is still relatively common in township schools. Justus (2005) indicates that the reason for the persistent and illegal use of corporal punishment in schools is the absence of alternatives. This is the legacy of authoritarian education practices and the belief that corporal punishment is necessary in order for orderly education to take place. Corporal punishment persists because parents use it at home and support its use in schools (Justus, 2005).

2.7.2 Lenient Management Approach

Noguera (2008) maintains that ensuring safe and orderly schools does not necessitate changing schools into prisons or detention centers. He postulates that what is required even more than a shift in disciplinary tactics is the recruitment of teachers who question the tendency to punish through exclusion and humiliation and see themselves as children's advocates who can also adopt a lenient approach, as opposed to being wardens and prison guards. A lenient approach has the potential to create schools where learning and academic achievement is encouraged for all learners, and where disciplinary problems are responded to in a manner that is consistent with the broader educational goals. Lenient teachers are good empathisers who are aware of and understand the child's background and the problems that exist (Macnamar & Moreton 1995). Macnamar and Moreton (1995) further affirm that lenient teachers try to establish the possible reasons for or motives behind the child's misbehavior. Learners may be disruptive because they are seeking attention and are not loved or cared for by their parents. Others may have a history of physical or sexual abuse; serial relationships might also cause emotional problems. Such learners feel rejected, abandoned, incompetent and depressed. They may display their emotions by hitting, kicking, getting into fights, verbally threatening, insulting and bullying other learners to try to gain the teacher's love and attention. In view of these factors Kerr and Nelson (1998) stress the need for teachers to understand the diverse emotional needs of learners with behaviour problems and to cope with them through pastoral care, together with more discussion and less shouting; these are the characteristics that are displayed by lenient teachers.

When assisting learners with behaviour problems, lenient teachers also try creating a warm and safe learning environment which encourages an eagerness to learn and may in turn

discourage discipline problems and rebellious attitudes (Eggleton, 2001; Kerr & Nelson (1998). Learners who are struggling academically and have not been taught by teachers who have cultivated a love of learning or regard school as a boring, compulsory chore are more likely to be disruptive and defy authority (Noguera, 2008). Although these learners are typically more likely to be disciplined, punishing them is often ineffective because it is not aimed at connecting them to learning. Counseling will therefore be a pre-requisite, which is offered by teachers who adopt lenient approaches (Eggleton, 2001). Eggleton (2001) further argues that when disruptive learners are counseled they are able to see the benefits of the knowledge and skills that education offers. They can become motivated and comply with school norms as they are inspired to believe that education can serve as a means for them to improve their lives and help their families and community (Macnamar & Moreton, 1995).

Emmer, Evertson and Worsham (2003) emphasise that punishment reinforces undesirable behaviour rather than serving as an effective deterrent. They suggest that lenient approaches are an alternative to corporal punishment and punitive measures which teachers adopt to help learners realise that their behaviour is not acceptable and can be transformed. Teachers who adopt lenient approaches behave in caring ways and this has a positive impact on discipline management in schools. Instead of punishing learners by sending them home for fighting, teachers should show them how to resolve conflicts peacefully, as discipline should always teach a moral lesson. Learners should be treated with kindness and not by a rigid hand; they should be shown values, as once a teacher gives a child reasons to behave, they follow directions positively (Noguera, 2008).

Teachers should not always assume that the learner cannot make good choices in behaviour but, should allow them to correct their behaviour and develop their own sense of self discipline. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000) state that teachers are inculcators of self-discipline in the learners under their supervision and should therefore be consistent role models of socially acceptable behaviour. Eggleton, (2001) conjectures that effective instruction, coupled with extensive effective classroom management strategies and alternative school programmes that aim to discipline for reform, should inform the lenient disciplinary approach in schools, which may include therapeutic counseling and remedial assistance. Visser (2000) posits that lenient teachers form positive relationships with learners. He further points out that the manner in which lenient teachers manage behaviour in their classrooms conveys messages to the learners regarding their beliefs, values and attitudes, which in turn can encourage self

discipline. However, lenient approaches can have a negative impact on learner discipline, as when learners perceive a teacher to be too lenient they may take advantage of the teacher and become unruly (Eggleton, 2001).

2.7.3 Praise and Reward Systems

Praise and reward systems can facilitate a positive ethos and good discipline in schools by recognising the good behaviour and efforts of learners. The majority of South African schools have systems for managing bad behaviour and for recognising the sporting and academic achievements of learners; however few schools have systems in place that recognise good behavior (Munn, 1999). Smith (1999) concurs with Munn (1999) and suggests that if schools discuss the rationale underpinning this reward system clearly with learners, it can motivate learners to improve their behaviour and curtail discipline problems. Sonn (2002) believes that positive discipline is the dominant form of discipline as it centers on positive aspects of behaviour in the class, reinforcing good behaviour through rewards and involving learners in decision-making about rewards and punishment. He further explains that by recognising and rewarding good behaviour and punishing bad behaviour it is believed that the good behaviour will be encouraged.

This research study is primarily informed by two theories: Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline Theory and the Assertive Discipline Model. In the next section I discuss the assumptions underlying these theories.

2.8 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The research study adopted two theories: Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline Theory and the Assertive Discipline Model.

2.8.1 Rudolf Dreikurs Discipline Theory

Dreikurs (1968) a social psychologist, argues that irrespective of a teacher's schooling level, there needs to be a balance between discipline theories, the developmental characteristics of teaching and classroom practice. This is vital in today's education system which insists on teacher accountability. Dreikurs' Social Discipline model or theory is based on the four basic premises of Alfred Adler's social theory. These premises are:

- "Humans are social beings and their basic motivation is to belong.

- All behaviour has a purpose.
- Humans are decision- making organisms.
- Humans only perceive reality and this perception may be mistaken or biased”.

Dreikurs believed that it was possible to understand children’s behaviours by recognising the four main purposes or goals of the child. The four goals of misbehaviour are attention seeking, the contest for power, seeking revenge and displaying inadequacy. Dreikurs promoted the use of encouragement and logical (and natural) consequences rather than reward and punishment. Furthermore, he believes that all misbehaviour is the result of a child’s mistaken assumption about the way he/she can find a place and gain status (Dreikurs, 1968, p.36).

Adler advocates that the “central motivation of all humans is to belong and to be accepted by others” (Wolfgang, 2001, p. 115). In other words, this analysis perceives that all human interaction and behaviour is intended to attain social recognition (Burke & Gahan, 2006). Supporters of this theory claim that this leads to the practical application of ways to handle learner discipline and misbehaviour in the classroom.

As Wolfgang (2001) notes, when a learner is unproductive in attaining social acceptance, a pattern of misbehaviour commences (Burke & Gahan, 2006). He suggests that if teachers help disorderly learners realise their mistakes and offer them recognition, these learners will realistically alter their own conduct. The two components of this theory are significant and have particular application in the school classroom. Dreikurs (1968) considers that the rectification of a learner’s misconduct is the consequence of a teacher showing a learner where he/she fits in and secondly, that the idea of logical consequences replaces the idea of punishment. Logical consequences refer to the notion that when a learner behaves badly, they should not be punished but assisted in a positive manner. This theory is based on a standard of learning as a procedure for support, positive and negative corroboration and confidence building. Relatively this theory elucidates that disruptive behaviour in the classroom is a call for attention and acceptance on the part of learners (Dreikurs, 2001).

2.8.2 Assertive Discipline Model

The premises and practices of the Assertive Discipline model as a classroom management model were designed by Lee and Marlene Canter in 1976 (Canter & Canter, 1992). They

established that when expectations are clear and follow up is consistent, disruptive learners are able to choose appropriate behaviours and therefore increase their prospects for greater achievement in school. The Canters based their theory on three basic assumptions of rights and responsibilities in the classroom: Firstly, teachers have the right and responsibility to set rules and directions that clearly define acceptable and unacceptable learner behaviour. Secondly, teachers have the right and responsibility to teach learners to constantly follow these rules and directions throughout the school day and school year. Thirdly, teachers have the right and responsibility to ask for support from parents and school managers when assistance is required in handling a learner's behaviour (Canter, 1987).

These hypotheses are supported by the understanding that in order for learning to take place, which is a fundamental right of the learner, there must be efficient ways to deal with and prevent disruptive learner behaviour. This model deals with behavioural issues in recognition of the value of motivation in learning and classroom management. The use of both positive and negative recognition serves to extrinsically motivate the learner and to develop good discipline, which will advance into intrinsically motivated behaviours. The Canters developed this model considering that learners are not naturally motivated to behave in school. They also operated on the understanding that a classroom with learners that have high self-esteem will have fewer discipline problems. The aim of the Assertive Discipline model is to teach learners to select responsible behaviour, consequently increasing their self-esteem and academic success (Canter, 1987). This process is recurring, enabling learners to become successful in school and thereby empowering them with the skills that will become the basis for their self-esteem and future success. This discipline model is characterised by praise and positive recognition. Assertive Discipline is also based on choices. The learners of today must be taught how to choose responsible behaviour. This enables them to take responsibility for their actions and to develop intrinsic motivation (Canter & Canter, 1992).

The use of the Assertive Discipline model will inform my study by making it possible for teachers to teach and learners to learn. It eliminates any uncertainties on the part of both teachers and learners about how behaviours are dealt with when learners choose not to follow the classroom rules or the precise directions of an activity. It also enables learners to be rewarded when they follow the rules or directions. This form of classroom management is very different from that practiced by preceding generations, and there is a good reason for

this. The learners in today's classroom are very different from those of the past (Canter, 1987).

Learners often come from homes where the adults in their lives are disinclined or unable to motivate them to succeed at school; this may be compounded by poverty, broken homes, and emotional or physical abuse. Irrespective of learners' personal problems teachers need to inculcate a culture of teaching and learning. A learner's self-esteem may be positively developed with academic success. The Assertive Discipline model of behaviour management allows this to occur by giving each learner the same options and consequences inside the classroom. A learner may choose to follow the rules and therefore receive commendation and positive recognition, leading to greater opportunities to learn and succeed. Learners may also choose not to follow the rules; however in doing so, they are aware of the consequences (Canter, 1987). As noted above, not all parents are supportive of their children's learning; the Assertive Discipline model creates the hypothesis that teachers have the right to call on parents for support and involvement, as well as the school management (Canter & Canter, 1992).

The theories discussed above relate to classroom discipline in that they promote teachers' management of classroom discipline and at the same time empower learners to regulate their own behaviour and prevent indiscipline. Dreikurs' (1968) and Canter and Canter's (1992) discipline theories highlight that maintaining discipline in the classroom is the key to facilitating teaching and learning, which is what all teachers of today desire. Dreikurs (1968) emphasises that learners should not be punished for bad behaviour, but corrected and helped as this may be merely a way of seeking acceptance. When teachers implement Dreikurs' theory they will be able to assist learners with bad behaviour and help them fit into society. Canter and Canter (1992) explicate that when teachers' expectations of learners are clear at the very outset and regular follow up is done, disruptive learners learn to choose appropriate behaviours which lead to academic success and positive self esteem. The Canters' model intends to promote a supportive classroom that allows teachers to teach and learners to learn. Learners are taught how to behave and teachers are taught to be less punitive in their disciplining. However, this model uses extensive praise and other rewards that inhibit more intrinsic motivation (Canter & Canter, 1992). The Canters' (1992) and Dreikurs' (1968) theories both emphasise that learners should not be punished for poor discipline but rather be corrected and guided to develop good discipline techniques.

2.9 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the significance of discipline in schools by conceptualising discipline. Discipline and safety are related to any school's success and cannot be ignored. A positive school climate originates from good behaviour on the part of learners. The teachers in a disciplined school environment are liberal and able to teach without constantly being confronted by ill-discipline.

The manifestations and characteristics of learners exhibiting behavioural problems, the types and causative factors of learner misconduct and the behavioural management approach to learners' behaviour have been explored in this literature review. Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline Theory and the Assertive Discipline Model have been outlined; these contribute to the theoretical framework of this study. These theoretical models provide different perspectives on behavioural problems, resulting in a more comprehensive understanding of learners with behaviour problems.

The literature review revealed that there is a lack parental involvement both at home and school; remedying this situation could have a positive effect on learners' behaviour and discipline in the classroom and school. In essence, if schools are to be run effectively, teachers will need to undergo a paradigm shift which may involve a change in the way in which they view the world. The challenge is therefore for teachers to detach themselves from the conventional style of thinking and adopt a more holistic approach to education. A paradigm shift could be facilitated by teachers thinking more systematically and putting strategies in place that promote a systemic understanding of learners' behaviour.

Chapter Three

3.1 Research design and methodology

This chapter describes the research design, the research methods and the tasks undertaken to achieve the objectives of this study. I discuss the methods of data collection and data analysis that were employed in order to adequately answer the research questions. The design presents the various elements of the process through which the data were produced, arguing for its relevance, coherence and credibility. A rationale which integrates theoretical verification and practical application is provided for the research approach selected and the methods of data analysis employed. Issues relating to the dependability of the research instrument and the credibility of findings are discussed. This is followed by reference to ethical issues that were considered and addressed in the study. The chapter concludes with a summary highlighting the main processes outlined.

3.2 Defining Method and Methodology

Cohen *et al.*, (2007) postulate that methods are techniques and actions used in the process of data collection which, in turn, is used as a basis for inference, interpretation, explanation and prediction. Methods refer to the research techniques used in gathering information or data and may include interviews, questionnaires and participant observation. In this study the research falls within the framework of a case study, and the instruments or methods used to gather data included interviews (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 1995).

On the other hand, methodology, assists a researcher to understand that not only are the products of scientific research or inquiry vital; so is the process itself. Hughes (1990) argues that research methods apply to specific data collection techniques, compared with research methodology, which is composed of the underlying paradigm and approach employed within a research project. A paradigm defines what to study, what questions should be asked and what rules should be followed in interpreting the answers acquired. A paradigm represents an extensive element of consensus within a science and serves to differentiate one scientific sub-community or community from another. Each paradigm can be thought of as a different set of binoculars through which a researcher views and works within the research field. Each paradigm is grounded in a particular set of commonly conventional approaches regarding ontology, epistemology, human nature, and methodology (Hughes, 1990).

3.3 Qualitative Research Design

A research design is the technique which a researcher uses to methodically gather and examine the relevant data necessary to answer the research questions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2010). These included a data collection/production techniques plan, sampling, data recording and analysis, trustworthiness of data, ethical issues, the limitations of the planned research and the time-lines.

This chapter explains the design of the research study. I employed a qualitative method of collecting data as it involves a universal way of philosophy about conducting qualitative research. It illustrates, either explicitly or implicitly, the purpose of the qualitative research, the role of the researcher, the stages of research, and the method of data analysis (Lindlof and Taylor 2002).

Qualitative research is a general term for investigative methodologies described as ethnographic, naturalistic, anthropological, field, or participant observer research (Goetz & LeCompte 1984). It highlights the significance of observing variables in the natural setting in which they originate. Interaction between variables is imperative. In-depth data is gathered through open-ended questions that yield direct quotations. The interviewer is an integral part of the investigation. This differs from quantitative research, which endeavors to gather data by objective methods to provide information about relations, comparisons, and predictions and tries to remove the investigator from the investigation (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). According to Lindlof and Taylor (2002) qualitative research is a method of inquiry appropriate to many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the world of social sciences. Qualitative research is often used for policy research since it can answer certain important questions more efficiently and effectively with reference to specific topics or issues and also helps us to understand how people feel. It is concerned with collecting in-depth information. In-depth interviews or group discussions are two common methods used for collecting qualitative information. Smaller focused samples are used, as they guide and support the construction of hypotheses (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

This approach was appropriate to my research because it provided an opportunity for a problem, in this, case learner discipline problems, to be investigated in some depth within a specific period of time. It also made it possible to probe and undertake a comprehensive analysis of the various issues that needed to be investigated. According to De Vos (1998)

qualitative research may be defined as an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of enquiry to investigate social or human tribulations. This characteristic of qualitative research was relevant to my study because it provided the opportunity to explore and understand learner discipline problems.

The qualitative approach helped me as a researcher to make meaning from the data by considering the bigger picture and converting the “raw” empirical information into what is known in qualitative research as a “thick description” (Henning, 2004, p.6). A thick description gives an account of the phenomenon that is coherent and provides more than facts and empirical content; it also interprets the information in the light of other empirical information pertaining to the same study, as well as on the basis of a theoretical framework that locates the study (Henning, 2004, p.6). Qualitative research encompasses both a philosophy of knowing and numerous approaches to gathering and analysing information. As a philosophy of knowing, qualitative research focuses on understanding from the perspective of whomever or whatever is being studied. Rather than trying to establish “objective” descriptions and relationships, as quantitative research does, qualitative studies are based on the assumption that reality is subjective and context dependant. There are “multiple realities” that must be described in detail to provide a comprehensive and deep understanding of the phenomena being investigated (McMillan & Wergin, 2002, p.119).

3.4 Interpretivist Research Paradigm

I adopted a qualitative research design that is located in an interpretivist research paradigm. According to Denzin & Lincoln (2000) a paradigm may be viewed as a set of fundamental beliefs which represents a worldview. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) assert that the interpretive paradigm is characterised by a particular ontology, epistemology and methodology. The interpretivist research paradigm is illustrated by considering the social world from an extremely subjective viewpoint and is anti-positivist in nature. It places prominence on the elucidation of the subjective consciousness of the social participants instead of the objective observer (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Interpretivist paradigms study people with their various characteristics, diverse attitudes, behaviours and opinions (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2001). The interpretivist paradigm assisted me to acquire knowledge by investigating the phenomena of the world and individuals in various ways. In the interpretivist paradigm, general rules and external structures of society are non-existent and the aim of this social research was to examine the meanings and interpretation of respondents

who in this case were the social actors in particular circumstances, which is, how these teachers managed learner discipline problems and the impact of this on their teaching.

Methodologically, the interpretivist takes an ideographic approach to the study of society that entails a more comprehensive and thorough analysis of the social situation. An ideographic approach requires firsthand knowledge and a complete analysis of the subjective accounts of the actors or situation (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). Due to the highly subjective nature of interpretive research, research studies are inclined to be small scale and emphasis is placed on the validity and insight of the research, rather than the results. Interpretivists believe that human behaviour is extremely voluntarily in that we each choose the paths we take and the decisions we make. This is centered on the belief in independence and free-will; that the individual is free to act out their desires as they wish.

The advantage of employing this paradigm is that it allowed me to conduct meaningful observation of the social world. It offered opportunities to seek understanding and make sense of individual perspectives which are formed by the philosophy of social constructions (Taylor 2008). This paradigm provided a deeper understanding of meanings, reasons, and greater insight into individual behaviour (Bryman, 2001). Hence, subjectivity was an integral feature of such a research. Under the interpretive paradigm, I could observe the situation with diverse approaches to problem solving. Numerous potential solutions and interpretations emanated. Therefore, the function of epistemology in an interpretive paradigm was to obtain knowledge by investigating the phenomena in various ways, as a social context was dissimilar from a natural science context. The interpretive paradigm emphasises that, in social phenomena, the world has diverse meanings. A single factor could influence or cause a change in a social context. Therefore, different researchers could reach different conclusions from the same observations.

This qualitative research methodology employed semi-structured interviews and observations which are the epitome of interpretive research. This study aimed to understand the social world of the respondents, and therefore falls under the interpretivist paradigm. According to Esterberg (2002) researchers employing this paradigm presume that people's subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology); that we understand other people's experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology); and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology). As a researcher, I interacted with the S.M.T of the school which formed part

of my study, and in doing so, I endeavoured to interpret how the respondents gave meaning to their experiences in this case study research which employed semi-structured interviews and observations in the data collection process (Cohen *et al.*, 1995; Byrne, 2001).

Mackenzie and Knipe (2006) hypothesise that data gathered within the interpretivist research paradigm primarily seeks understanding rather than description. They add that an interpretive research design affords a researcher the opportunity of interacting closely with the respondents, in order to acquire proper insights and form clear understandings; this was pertinent to my research. Through this study I was able to access teachers' perspectives regarding learner discipline problems, how these problems may be addressed and their involvement in supporting learners with discipline problems in teaching and learning.

3.5 Case Study Research

A case study research is a qualitative approach which is characterised by a "description of context that is bound by time and place," and for the purpose of this research I explored a bounded system which was a Phoenix Primary school, over a period of time, through comprehensive, in-depth data collection encompassing a series of semi-structured interviews and observations which reports on a case study description and the themes that emerged from the study (Creswell, 2007, p.73). I explored a single entity or phenomenon being a primary school which was located in a low socio-economic area and was bound by time and activity (Creswell, 1998). He further hypothesises that a case study is a type of qualitative descriptive research which is utilised to look at small groups of participants where the end product is a rich "thick" description of the phenomenon under study (Creswell, 1998, p. 20). This is in line with (Merriam, 2002, p.8) who defines a case study, "as an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a phenomenon or a social unit such as an individual, institution, group or community within a limited time scale." Cohen *et al.*, (2007) concurs with (Merriam, 2002) by emphasising that a case study involves looking at a phenomenon in its real life context which was the teachers lived experiences, their feelings and thoughts about school and classroom discipline of learners which was portrayed at Protea primary. The inference of this was that in this study, I was not necessarily looking for the findings that may be generalised to wider populations, even though the findings may be gainfully practical to similar contexts. In this study I was interested in determining the level of discipline in this Phoenix Primary school and how the teachers of the said school managed learner discipline problems.

The increase in the diverse learner discipline problems experienced by teachers in Protea Primary and other schools in the Phoenix district prompted me to undertake this research study. It has become apparent that teachers are struggling to maintain discipline in their classrooms and in school. At Protea, school managers are inundated with learner discipline issues and are spending a great deal of time trying to solve disciplinary issues with teachers, learners and parents. In some instances, these may be trivial discipline problems, whilst sometimes there are really serious issues which persistently disturb the order of the classroom and school. At times, despite parents being called to the school in an effort to involve them in addressing a learner's behavioural problems, these problems persist. This can be frustrating and stressful for teachers and the School Management Team (S.M.T) of a school. From my own past and present experience and observations that I have conducted for this study I have come to the conclusion that learner discipline problems are very rife in this school. A case study investigation suited a study of this nature.

3.6 Sampling

I used purposive sampling technique to identify and choose the respondents, from an urban primary school in the Phoenix district. More experienced, senior teachers who had been at this school for at least ten years, and who would have a good knowledge of the school's culture, climate, policies, ethos and learners' behaviour patterns, were selected. I also tried to include teachers from various subject disciplines. Both male and female teachers were included as it is widely believed that gender plays an important role in the manner in which teachers relate to and handle learner discipline problems.

The advantage of purposive sampling is that we sample with a purpose in mind and the sample is thus selected to include people of interest; in this case, teachers. According to Ball (1990) in many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access 'knowledgeable people', that is, those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, due to their professional role, power, expertise or understanding. Best and Kahn (2001) note that another situation where the purposive sampling technique could be used is when a researcher wants to identify particular type of cases for in-depth investigation, such as in the current study. The sample size was five respondents who are teachers that are directly confronted with learner discipline problems in their daily teaching experience. The sample included teachers from diverse race groups, who were specially selected according to their typicality. Polit and Hunglar (1999) postulate that purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling. The crucial and

defining characteristic of non-probability sampling, whatever form it takes, is that the choice of people or events to be included in the sample is definitely not a random selection. I felt that it was not feasible to include a large number of examples in the study. The aim was to explore the quality rather than quantity of the data (Nachmias, 1996).

3.7 The Research Respondents

The personal identities of the five respondents were protected in this research study by assigning them pseudonyms. In this way the anonymity of respondents, their school and the responses was strictly maintained. The original name of the Phoenix school in this study was also changed to Protea Primary School to protect the identities of the school and teachers.

Respondent One: Patricia

Patricia is an Indian female teacher, who resides in the Phoenix district and is presently teaching in the Foundation Phase. She has 25 years teaching experience. She is the convenor for netball, cross-country, fun run and fund raising. She shows great concern for the well being of the learners in this school and is in charge of the welfare of indigent learners. Patricia runs and controls the daily feeding scheme at the school, which is sponsored by a religious organisation, apart from her daily teaching tasks. She is also instrumental in providing approximately 50 learners with a loaf of bread twice a week, which is sponsored by another religious organisation and is responsible for the distribution of food hampers at Easter, Diwali and Christmas to the indigent families in the community. She is actively involved in the distribution of clothing, school uniforms and school bags to indigent learners. She also distributes blankets to learners during winter, depending on sponsorships.

Respondent Two: Thandi

Thandi is a Black female teacher who has been teaching for 17 years in the Intermediate Phase. She has been at this school for five years and teaches isiZulu in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases. Thandi also coaches mini-netball, and organises Cultural Day activities to make learners aware of the diverse cultural groups at this school and the customs and beliefs that different learners follow. She is also instrumental in promoting the speaking and reading of isiZulu among the learners at Protea. She conducts after school lessons in isiZulu to non-mother tongue isiZulu learners, thereby promoting multi-lingualism within the school.

Respondent Three: Carol

Carol is an Indian female teacher who has been teaching in the Foundation Phase of this school for 19 years. She has just graduated with a Bachelor of Education degree in Educational School Leadership and Management. Her additional duties include being the staff union representative for the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU); this requires that she avail herself to deal with staff issues, when necessary. She is a staff representative on the S.M.T. She lives approximately 18 km from the school. While she is happy at this school, she would like a post at a school closer to home. She mentioned that the time that she spends traveling to and from school could be used more gainfully preparing lessons or getting more involved in extra-curricular school activities. In spite of this she is involved in coaching learners for mini-cricket tournaments. Carol goes to great lengths to secure sponsorships for the year end treat that is given to learners at Protea Primary school. She also obtains sponsorship of school bags for learners on an annual basis.

Respondent Four: Dafeni

Dafeni is an Indian female who is an Intermediate Phase teacher at this school, with 18 years teaching experience. She presently teaches four learning areas from grades 5 to 7, although her training has been in the Social Sciences. She has been the co-ordinator of the prefect induction ceremonies for the past three years as she is the current prefect mistress. She is a code convenor for volleyball and cross country and umpires the volleyball matches. She also prepares the learners for speech contests, debates and quizzes. Dafeni also serves as a judge for some inter-school contests. She has also just been placed on the excess list of Protea Primary School and feels rather disillusioned and demoralised.

Respondent Five: Marlon

Marlon is an Indian male teacher who has been teaching for 34 years in the Intermediate Phase. He has been awarded a Master teacher status at Protea Primary School by the Department of Education. He coaches cricket and soccer and promotes sport at the school and also organises inter-school matches. He is also the sports master. He is actively involved in coaching soccer to learners from the community. Marlon coaches chess at Protea Primary School and the learners have earned many accolades in tournaments both at a cluster and district level. He lives a few kilometers from the school and offers free after school tuition to learners in Mathematics and Afrikaans.

3.8 Data Production Techniques

The two main methods used were semi-structured interviews and observations.

3.8.1 Semi-Structured Interviews

An interview is a purposeful interaction between two or more people, the interviewer and interviewees, who engage in a process of communication, conversation and negotiation for specific purposes associated with an agreed subject matter (Anderson, 1990). An interview guide is a list of questions that a researcher utilises during each interview. Interview guides permitted me to use interview time effectively and allowed for interviews to be more systematic and comprehensive; they helped to maintain focused communication. Semi-structured interview schedules were utilised to gather data from five primary school teachers; this allowed me to probe and explore areas of inquiry and for the clarification of responses (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). This method was the most appropriate for the study due its flexibility and the fact that it allowed respondents to express themselves without restraint. Hughes (1990) commends semi-structured interviews for providing much more scope for discussion. These views are shared by many qualitative research scholars such as Cohen *et al.*, (1995) and Byrne (2001).

Semi-structured interviews were employed as the principal strategy for data production in this qualitative research study, which involved the oral questioning of respondents (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). I conducted two formal semi-structured interviews with each of the study respondents. Each of these interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. The first interview served to provide biographical information and to locate the respondents in the study. The second interview provided data on the causes of discipline problems and how teachers were handling or managing these problems. The second interview also provided insights into the ethos, climate and school policies regarding learning discipline. I intended to complete this research study within a year and to conduct a series of follow up interviews as means of collecting more data. Within the said year, the I engaged in follow up visits to the research site to engage the respondent in follow up interviews, to clarify previous responses, gather any new information, ascertain whether there were any changes to their previous responses or any information that may have been left out in previous interviews and to test the hypotheses.

While I utilised semi-structured interviews in this study, informal and unstructured interviews and discussions also served as an important source of data. I used regular, recorded informal discussions. Informal and unstructured interviews and observations collected from interviews served to strengthen the arguments that were made in this study. I did not use a complete and sequenced script of questions; most semi-structured interviews are designed to have a fluid and flexible structure that allows a researcher and interviewees to develop unexpected themes (Mason, 2002). The unstructured interviews, observations and the informal discussions with respondents crossed over the entire period of the study.

Face-to-face data collection methods and a detailed interrogation of ‘talk’ and ‘interaction’ were employed; as Silverman (2001) notes that this is a hallmark of qualitative interviewing (Denzin, 1970). This enabled me to obtain deep understandings of the context of discipline problems and how teachers managed these problems. In the context of this study, where the aim was to explore respondents’ individual and collective understandings, reasoning processes, social norms and so on, these techniques were appropriate (Denzin, 1970). The semi-structured interviews were conducted during the first few months of the study. The unstructured interviews and informal discussions with respondents and observations crossed over the specified research period of the study. I interviewed the stakeholders as many times as possible, covering each situation that I became aware of. In this way the interviewees’ lived experiences were immediately accessible, communicated not only in words, but by tone and voice, expressions and gestures in the natural flow of a conversation as well as observation (Kvale, 1994).

3.8.2 Observations

The idiosyncratic nature of observation as a research process provides a researcher with an opportunity to gather ‘live’ data from a naturally occurring social situation (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.396). An observation involves a researcher observing and recording behaviour without attempting to change the observed behaviour (Jim (McBurney, 1994). In selecting observation as a method of data collection, I anticipated recording and analysing the behaviour and interactions of the participants as they occurred. De Vos *et al.* (2002) concur that observation can be described as qualitative research that consists of the detailed notation of behaviours or procedures and that studies the natural and everyday setup in a particular community or school; this is in line with the observation that was carried out in this study.

The aim of observation was to gain a general impression of what was happening at this school and to observe how the teachers of this school actually managed learner discipline problems. The use of observations in this study enabled me to directly observe what was happening in the school and classrooms, rather than relying only on secondary sources, that is teachers' interpretation. In this study, I used direct observation, which Best and Kahn (1993) describe as a method in which a researcher observes and records behaviour, events, activities, tasks and duties while something is happening. During direct observation it was imperative for me to be present to observe learner behaviour and their misconduct. I made written notes regarding activities which were observed. Observation as a data collection method served to inform the study of the interactions and behaviour of the teachers in their quest to manage discipline with the aim of creating a culture of discipline and order.

During the preliminary meeting with the principal, S.M.T members and teachers, I explained the purpose of my research study, as well as how I proposed to go about conducting it at the school. Since I am also a teacher at Protea my intentions met with mixed emotions on the part of many teachers. When I addressed the teachers, I was able to observe both verbal and non-verbal gestures. Some teachers were reluctant to participate, while some refused as they feared victimisation, despite me explaining that all responses were strictly confidential. However some teachers were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about participating in this research study. I recorded these observations by making detailed notes, as well as summarising what transpired during my interview sessions. I also added to this, the participants' unique ways of responding to certain questions. At the outset, I envisaged attending either an S.M.T. meeting or observing a disciplinary meeting at the schools. However, time constraints, as well as other logistical problems prevented this from happening. My methods included observation in the classrooms, around the school and during leisure activities, regular recorded informal discussions and formal interviews.

Henning *et al.* (2004) point out, that researchers who observe a site without actual participation but are on the scene daily to explore issues will gain more data than that acquired through interviews, documents or artefacts. Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.397) offer a classification of researcher roles in observation: as complete participant; participant observer; or observe as participant. My role in observation was that of a participant observer. This means that my role was non-intrusive; I simply recorded incidents of the factors being studied. The role of the participant observer was adopted to avoid interrupting the normal

functionality of a classroom situation and interactions and to ensure a natural classroom setting.

The observations conducted allowed me to view and understand the following issues:

- The physical environment and organisation within the classroom in terms of the seating arrangements of learners; i.e., the traditional seating arrangement of rows or groups and how it affects discipline.
- The arrangement of the teacher's table and chair; whether it was placed at the front or back of the class and whether teachers were teaching standing in front of the class or moving between the rows and how each of these affected classroom discipline.
- The organisation and movement of teachers and learners; that is, whether or not they were punctual.
- Teachers' management approach and whether they were autocratic, democratic, lenient or used praise and reward systems.
- Whether teachers were male or female and its effect on discipline.
- The interactions between teachers and learners in the context of formal, informal, planned and unplanned interactions including verbal and nonverbal interactions between teachers and learners and their effect on discipline.
- Programme setting that is the availability or lack of resources, teaching media, teaching styles and the organisation of the curriculum; whether it caters for the differing intellectual levels of learners and how all these factors had different effects on classroom discipline.

An observation of learners was conducted during lesson time to help identify those who presented behavioural problems and challenges, and to ascertain how this behaviour was dealt with by the teachers. Classes that were observed included Grade RR and Grades 1 to 3 in the Foundation Phase, Grades 4 to 6 in the Intermediate phase and Grade 7 in the Senior Phase. These were randomly picked in line with whether my free time coincided with a class and whether or not class teachers were willing to be observed.

Observation as a data collection method produces different results from interviews as observation relies on what a researcher actually sees; hears and records, rather than relying on responses to questions (Best & Kahn, 1993). My role in the entire research process remained a non-intrusive one. I also remained detached from the teachers during their teaching processes. I behaved in a professional way by not participating in any way but only recording information.

3.9 Data Recording

A fundamental decision going into the interview process is how a researcher records the interview data and observations. Answers to the open-ended questions posed in my interview schedule were tape-recorded and transcribed; Patton notes that a tape recorder is "indispensable" (1990, p. 348) when recording data from interviews. A tape recorder ensures that an accurate record is made of what is said during interviews rather than relying on recall from memory. In seeking permission from participants to tape record the conversation between the researcher and the respondents, I emphasised the fact that the only reason for tape recording was to ensure that there was no misrepresentation of the interview content but that an accurate record was kept. Patton (1990) further emphasises that tape recordings have the advantage of capturing data verbatim, in contrast to hurriedly written notes; this makes it easier for a researcher to focus on the actual interview. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) while data analysis may be conducted later, notes should be immediately recorded after being in the field. These notes encompass observations about participants' nonverbal behaviour, that is, body language, facial expressions and what was occurring in the immediate environment, or what activities participants were engaging in.

I began my observation on the first day of the 2012 school year. I tried to take note of as many variables as possible, which included learner dress (school uniform, hair and shoes), learner behaviour, teachers' attitude to learners, learners' attitude to school and the procedures for the school day. All my observations were written in my journal in detail. I included as much detail as possible in order to generate enough data to render thick description during my analysis. In a similar manner, I recorded my observations of how teachers handled learners who breached the school rules.

3.10 Data Analysis

Qualitative data are considered to be the "rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying; they are the particulars that form the basis of analysis" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 106). However, verbal data, which are words, are often the raw materials that qualitative researchers analyse as analysing the words used by interviewees formed the foreground of my study, where the mass of collected data were analysed and interpreted with the purpose of bringing order and structure to information (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Most researchers advocate that one of the major hallmarks of conducting qualitative research is that data are analysed continually, throughout the study, from conceptualisation through the entire data collection phase, to the interpretation and writing phases as it was done in this study by the researcher (LeCompte & Preissle, 1983). Official documents such as the school's code of conduct and discipline policy were also subjected to analysis (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

The first step following data collection and prior to data analysis was to process and consolidate qualitative data such as the interviews. This required sorting, processing, sharpening, focusing discarding and organising data for coding in order to prepare the data for analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). To achieve quality findings and reporting in this qualitative research, I employed coding. This allowed me to manage data by labelling, storing, and retrieving it according to the codes. Miles and Huberman (1994) also advocate that data can be coded interpretively or descriptively. The codes created depend on the study, setting, participants, and research questions, because the codes are a researcher's foundation for meaningful, relevant data to enhance credibility, dependability and trustworthiness and to use the results to answer the research questions (Henning, 2004).

In this study I transcribed the texts which were coded into units of meaning in one or more sentences and then classified and organised into suitable themes (Henning, 2004). This form of coding guided the me to analyse the data systematically and judge on what grounds and in what sense readers would accept the final categorisation as satisfactory. Conclusions were drawn as to how learner discipline problems are managed, addressed and overcome in the school. A critical analysis of the interview transcripts was conducted, as well as of documents on learner discipline problems.

The data analysis process was organised according to the research questions that is, through a content analysis. My research study drew on the work of Ezzy (2002) to develop effective steps towards this content analysis.

3.11 Issues of trustworthiness

It is important for any research study that its findings and the entire research process are accepted in the research community; as Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that the trustworthiness of a research study depends on its validity and reliability. Hoepfl (1997) also endorses consistency with regards to credibility and dependability of research.

Joppe (2000, p. 1) defines dependability as: “The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be dependable”. Bogdan and Biklen (1992, p.48) hypothesised that in qualitative research dependability can be considered as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually transpires in the natural setting that is being researched, that is, the degree of accuracy and comprehensiveness of coverage. The dependability of the findings was assured by using an ‘inquiry audit’, in which reviewers examined both the process and the product of the research for consistently.

Patton (2001) observes that with regards to a researcher's ability and skill in any qualitative research, dependability is a consequence of the credibility of a study. Credibility is described as a contingent construct, inescapably grounded in the processes and intentions of particular research methodologies (Winter, 2000).

According to Vithal and Jansen (2006) credibility may be verified by comparing the findings of one instrument with those of another instrument, considering rival explanations for the same issue or question and returning draft reports to respondents, for checking. Credibility was also ensured by observing ethical practices such as voluntary participation, confidentiality and ensuring anonymity.

McMillan and Schumacher (1997) characterise reliability as the degree to which independent researchers could discover the same phenomena and where there is conformity in the description of the phenomena between a researcher and the respondents, while Cohen *et al.* (2000) define reliability as measure of consistency over a period of time. McMillan and

Schumacher (2001) concur and state that reliability in qualitative research refers to the consistency of a researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis, and interpretation of participants' meanings from the data. This is reiterated by Niemann (2000, p. 203), who expounds that reliability is also associated with the "stability, accuracy, consistency and repeatability" of the research. I upheld the principle of reliability to diminish the threats to the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research results (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001).

Best and Kahn (2001) observe that validity is part of a dynamic process that grows by accumulating evidence over time; without it, all measurement becomes meaningless. I achieved validity by ensuring that the interpretation of data was logical and untainted by personal perspectives. I ensured that the data generated through the methods applied, allowed me to produce credible, dependable and trustworthy findings. Responses to the open-ended questions were addressed through content analysis. I enhanced the trustworthiness (validity) of the research by recording each interview session, which provided an accurate account of the interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Interviews that are tape recorded can be replayed as often as necessary for complete and objective analysis at a later date to facilitate reliability checks.

Transcripts were given back to respondents for perusal and for them to check for correctness, as well as clarification of information and to add or to delete information. Babbie and Mouton (2001, p. 277) confirm that such "member checking" allows a researcher to go back to the respondents in order to verify the authenticity of information. This process contributed to the validity of this study. Respondents were also asked to comment on their interpretations. This data collection strategy enhanced the dependability of the data.

Subsequent to the transcription process; I undertook minor editing in order to increase the readability of the transcripts. The transcripts were then subjected to qualitative content analysis by identifying key substantive points and grouping them into themes, as during this process categories and sub-categories of developing themes emerged. This data was then coded and constantly reviewed for tangible interpretation in order to acquire ideas and meanings. Fundamentally coding involved breaking up the data in ways that were analytically relevant to form explicit themes for data analysis (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The actual 'voices' or verbatim responses from the interviews were included in the analysis so as to validate the interpretations and avoid any form of bias.

In an attempt to curtail bias I used the same interview schedule questions and the same venue, which was Protea Primary School, for all the interviews; and all the teachers were interviewed in their own classrooms. During the interview process I endeavoured to remain objective and neutral, not allowing my experience as a teacher or member of staff of Protea to influence the interpretations of the responses; this enhanced the dependability of the interpretations. Trustworthiness was ensured as the data was used as a primary source of information, leading to assertions and findings.

3.12 Ethical Issues

As we expand our data generation process, we needed to be mindful of ethical issues and consider whether our research procedures are likely to cause any physical or emotional harm (Patton, 1990). A letter requesting permission to conduct the study was forwarded to the Department of Education (D.O.E). Once permission was confirmed, I forwarded the said approval to the UKZN Ethics Committee. The letter granting permission was also forwarded to the Phoenix District office and the principal of the selected school; both were informed that I aimed to conduct interviews with the selected teachers. I ensured that prior arrangements and permission were sought with the selected school to interview particular teachers, so that the interviews did not affect the regular functioning of the school. Respondents were explained, the purpose of the interview, why they had been selected, the expected duration of the interview and the use of a note taker and tape recorder during the interview process. The respondents were requested to sign informed consent forms, where they acknowledged that they understand the nature of the project, the procedures that would be used and the use to which the results would be put (Chaleunvong, 2009). They were assured of the confidential nature of the information gathered during the research process and that their identities and those of their school and principal would remain anonymous (Fisher & Foreit, 2002). These respondents were further assured that no information about their participation or the interviews would be disclosed to their school principal and colleagues. In addition, no other researcher would be permitted to use the confidential information obtained from this research (Fisher & Foreit, 2002).

I respected the right of respondents to withdraw from the study at any given time. I ensured that I did not cross any lines or probe further into issues which were sensitive to respondents or which might have adverse effects. I only commenced field work once the UKZN Ethics Committee had granted ethical clearance to continue with the study.

I also needed to learn about the culture of the respondents to ensure that it was respected during the data collection process (Moser & Kalton, 1989).

Furthermore, I provided a tranquil atmosphere in which to collect information so that the respondents felt more comfortable having a conversation (Boyce *et al.*, 2006).

3.13 Limitations

In addition to evaluating the study's findings and conclusions, the potential methodological limitations which constrained this investigation must be considered. Such limitations may have consequences for the interpretation and results of the data; this should be recognised and efforts should be made by a researcher to minimise these effects wherever possible (Bell, 1993).

One limitation was that the research study was conducted using a small sample; its findings cannot therefore be generalised as representative of all Phoenix primary schools. The results of this study are specific to the sample school; it would be of interest to compare these findings with the situation in other schools in the area/region. Had there been more respondents, more rich data could have also been obtained.

The purposive selection of the interviewees that provided me with representative perspectives was somewhat complicated and did not enable me to conduct as many interviews that I desired to for the evaluation of any single change in learning and teaching, including time constraints. For example, from observation, if some learners behaved well in a certain teacher's classroom but were rather unruly in another's, the respondent was reluctant to elaborate on why this was the case. The voluntary nature of the interviews meant that the sample was biased towards those that had not become disengaged in the process of changes such as the abolition of corporal punishment. Since the respondent was dealing with people, some information from the respondents might contain bias and be loaded with emotion. Bias can be triggered by factors such as the interviewee's emotional state at the time of the interview, their ability to recall events and feelings, and their interaction with the interviewer (Chaleunvong, 2009). Bias may affect the validity and reliability of a research study, which are critical for the study to be authentic. Validity refers to the degree to which the research conclusions are sound and reliability refers to its consistency (Dane, 1990).

The research instruments that were used in this study to gather data, interviews and observation, had non-constructive repercussions. Interviews can be very resource intensive and rigorous compared to other data collection methods (Silverman, 2001). Since respondents, were aware that they were under observation, some chose to camouflage their behaviour in their classes, which negatively affected the trustworthiness of the findings (Cohen *et al.*, 2001).

The possibility of bias exacerbates the disadvantages of face-to-face interviews, as it can be very time consuming. In this study, each interview took approximately 40 - 45 minutes and I conducted a series of follow-up interviews. It is also possible that, during the interview session, the interviewer may have had misinterpreted what the interviewee was saying; to minimise this possibility, each interview was tape recorded and transcripts were given back to respondents for member checking. Face-to-face interviews are obviously limited to the spoken word and to the inferences made by the interviewer; therefore, the use of observation enhanced the research findings (Cohen *et al.*, 2001). Because interviewers are human beings there is always the risk that their manner may have an effect on the responses of respondents. Interviewing can also be a challenge because it is difficult for researchers to strike equilibrium between complete objectivity and trying to put the interviewee at ease (Bell, 1993). The fact that the respondents and other teachers' classroom management strategies were being observed by me it made the teachers more vigilant in my presence and they made obvious efforts to manage their classes in my presence.

Transcription is a costly exercise and the scale of the project and its evaluation may mean that such costs cannot be justified. Data analysis became more difficult as the data collection process became more unstructured, particularly when trying to identify and explore patterns. Data analysis was also rather tedious and time consuming (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

3.14 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a detailed account of how I gathered, organised and analysed the data in this study. I have outlined the methodologies that I selected and used to allow me to reach conclusions beyond the obvious towards the language and forms of meaning that lie below the surface. The next chapter focuses on the analysis of the data and the findings of this research study.

Chapter 4

4. Data Presentation, Analysis, Findings and Discussion

4.1 Introduction

The research design and methodology employed in this research study were discussed in the previous chapter. The data analysis, research findings and discussion are presented in this chapter. I employed the interpretative method of analysis discussed in chapter three and accumulated an array of recurring concepts, phrases, topics, patterns and themes drawn from the interviews, field notes and documents.

Verbatim quotations are employed in the data presentation in order to maintain the authenticity of the actual responses. A discussion relative to the research questions in chapter one and the theoretical frameworks outlined in chapter two is presented, as well as the findings of this research study. I then discuss the different types of learner discipline problems that the teachers at Protea are experiencing and investigate the causes of these problems. While many studies explore the broad causes of learner indiscipline, this study analyses and discusses how and why learners behave in unacceptable ways on a micro level. While the causes are numerous and varied, this chapter engages with the causes of indiscipline among learners through a lens that focuses on teachers' perspectives, and how these teachers handle and manage these problems. I argue that there is a link between teachers' perceptions of the causes and the manner in which they react to and manage these specific problems. This chapter therefore outlines what the discipline problems are, what teachers believe to be the causes of these problems and how they manage them.

I closely examined the many propositional statements that emerged from the data categorisation and developed core generalisations or ideas. Some of the propositions were more important than others in contributing to the focus of inquiry. These propositions were the major themes of the study and roughly formed its outcomes. Below I provide a discussion and analysis of the major themes of this study.

I approach this analysis in three sections. I first discuss the types of learner discipline problems that exist at Protea. While certain discipline problems may be common in many schools different ones acquire significance in different contexts. I highlight the learner discipline problems that teachers encounter at Protea. I discuss next; the causes of discipline problems. Political, socio-economic, demographic and school situational factors influence

learner discipline within the school. My analysis and discussion in the ‘Causes’ section encompasses these issues. Finally I explore how teachers manage these discipline problems.

4.2 Teachers Understanding of Learner Discipline Problems at Protea Primary School

4.2.1 Social Behaviour as factors that influence learner discipline

Learner behaviour at Protea is socially constructed within a culture in which racial and class inequalities are still deeply embedded and these are reflected in the ways in which learners behave towards one another and in what they regard as acceptable and what they oppose. Social class and race are an axis around which many learners model their behaviour and are often a focus for contestation and in some cases abuse.

Räsänen (2000) and Edwards (2004) postulate that schools are institutions where young people have little choice but to spend many hours per week together and are dependent on managing their social relations as painlessly as possible. They further claim that it is not surprising that learners produce contradictions and constraints in the possibilities open to them as well as vigilance and policing of one another.

In the interviews with teachers, many teachers mentioned that tensions between learners manifest in the ways learners interacted with each other in and out of classroom. They also mentioned that the manner in which learners communicated with each other often created conflict among them, and learners often used aggression and violence to resolve such conflicts.

For example the complex relationship that learners have with each other in terms of race relations is demonstrated in the following insightful testimony by Marlon:

“I had an incident in my class this year where I reprimanded an Indian boy and an African boy for poking each other with a pencil. At the change of the next period when Dafeni came to the class the two boys continued with their squabbling and she had to reprimand them again as the boys made threats against each other. The very same afternoon the two boys decided to take the matter in their own hands and got involved in a fight. Both these boys had formed a gang with learners of their own race to be spectators and cheer the fight. The matter was brought to our attention and we had to resolve the matter in the office and had to call the both boy’s parents to school.”

“I had another incident with a group of girls who started a name calling story with fellow class mates. Stemming from this name calling episode it became a racial conflict where the names exchanged were becoming rather discriminating and matters were getting out of hands. I intervened and reprimanded all the learners.”

As highlighted in Chapter one Phoenix was historically a predominantly Indian community. After the collapse of apartheid in 1994 many Black people moved into Phoenix and the surrounding areas and this led to schools becoming multi-racial. However not all of the existing Indian residents readily accepted their new neighbours and tension still arises between Indians and Africans in the area. The particular historical and cultural context of South Africa has created its own brand of the way in which different races interact with one another. Tensions between Indians and Blacks in the community often permeate into schools. Learners in school are continually constructing and maintaining their identities and status. Rizvi (1993) identified opposition to immigrant groups among school children in Australia which arose from a sense that these groups had fewer rights than the long term residents. At Protea these oppositions often caused conflict between Indian and Black learners. Racial tension and reactions by learners were highlighted by a number of teachers during the interviews. They claimed that they find most of the Black learners mainly befriend learners of their own race and many Indian learners also follow the same practice. In the same vein, the teachers also mentioned that when learners of these two race groups were engaged with confrontations with each other racial discrimination was explicitly shown whereby learners cheered and supported learners of their own race.

We see further evidence from Thandi’s testimony in support of Marlon, when she explicates that:

“In some instances learners even use derogatory words, like ‘amakhula and kaffir’ when they are physically fighting with each other.”

Uses of such words like “*amakhula and kaffir*,” are a clear indication that racial discrimination is rife at this school and that learners seem to maintain inequalities. This evidence highlights the prevalence of lack of democracy amongst learners (Rizvi, 1993).

4.2.2 Disruptive Behaviour as reasons for learner discipline problems in schools resulting in poor academic achievements by learners

All the teachers indicated that, one of the major challenges related to discipline problems in this school, is disruptive behaviour. They suggested that some learners' poor academic performance in class can be attributed to them displaying disruptive behaviour. From their personal experience, learners' disruptive behaviour may surface in incidents like talking and disturbing the teacher when he or she is teaching, attention seeking, speaking out of turn in the class, not paying attention to the lesson, engaging in their own casual conversations with fellow learners, disrupting and distracting fellow learners from concentrating on the lesson, repeated efforts to divert the teacher's attention to matters irrelevant to the learning content, or by exhibiting noticeable misbehaviour.

For example Carol expressed her frustration by saying:

"I simply can't teach when a learner is continuously talking when I am trying to teach. Gosh! it's so frustrating when you are busy teaching a planned lesson and you have a specified time frame and there you have a learner or two who simply can't keep quiet for a minute and incessantly disrupt your lesson. God gracious me!, how am I supposed to teach? The other very annoying factor is when a learner walks around the class aimlessly despite having a class task to complete, with the mere intention of disrupting the class or interfering with other innocent learners who are busy doing their own work. I had an incident when a learner obstinately disrupted the class when I was teaching, so I warned him about his behaviour but it persisted. I decided that I will have to manage this problem in my own way so, I didn't allow him to go for his soccer training for a whole week despite him crying and promising never to be disruptive again. After taking away this privilege from this child he mended his ways and started behaving and doing his work. This was a wake-up call to fellow perpetrators that I mean business and that I will not accept any nonsense."

Disruptive behaviour in the classroom is indeed an ongoing problem faced by teachers today. However the causes of the learner's disruptive behaviours, for example, why does one learner walk around the class during teaching to disrupt other learners' warrants attention? As I discuss later it could be a case of prior apathy by teachers to allow such behaviour or that these learners do not like to sit in one position for a long period of time which could relate to how the learner is brought up at home or could it relate to medical/physical issues of

Attention Deficit Disorder (A.D.D) and lack of stimulation. Teachers should align themselves with Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline Theory as this theory relatively expounds that disruptive behaviour in the classroom is a call for attention and acceptance on the part of learners (Dreikurs, 2001).

Disruptive behaviour occurs when a learner is uncooperative, deliberately makes a fuss and prevents themselves and other learners in a class from working and learning (Marais & Meier, 2010). A disruptive child also manages to grab a teacher's attention, thus distracting the teacher and preventing the teacher from giving the other children attention. If disruptive behaviour is persistent and goes unresolved, it can lead to serious discipline problems in a class and affect the culture of teaching and learning. Sometimes a learner can disturb the classroom so much that neither the learner concerned nor other learners can learn. Levin and Nolan (1996) identified that there are three important causes of disruptive behaviour and each are linked to some kind of unhappiness: problems at home, problems at school or in the classroom and physical or mental problems. The teachers echoed similar sentiments during the interviews.

Dafeni indicated that:

“Unstable home backgrounds such as death, divorce abandonment of young children causes disruptions in a child's life and emotional trauma which is brought to school and may manifest itself by learners being disruptive, fighting with mates and even bullying.”

Carol further articulated that:

“I find that I lose valuable teaching time when trying to deal with disruptive learners. This unnecessary disturbance affects all learners in the class since they are left idle, when I am dealing with the disruptive learners whereas these innocent learners could be engaged in constructive learning.”

Rayment (2006) and De Wet (2003) assert that continuously dealing with learners who present disruptive behaviour can be emotionally challenging for both teachers and learners. As noted above, Carol spends a substantial amount of time and energy on disruptive learners and it is very evident that she is frustrated and emotionally drained. For Carol, disruptive behaviour is a major discipline problem. While Dafeni's testament echoes, a mind shift that emotional problems of learners and their real life trials and tribulations could be a possible

cause or lending hand of learner's displaying disruptive behaviour. Evidently, Adell (2002) and Robertson (1989) concurs with the Dafeni's view, that understanding a learner's home background and considering a child's frame of mind may be possible reasons for learner's disruptive behavioural patterns. They further suggest that this will then add to the perspective of teachers that disruptive behaviours of learners has roots in all three domains, being death, divorce, abandonment and perhaps by understanding the roots of disruptive behaviours, being learner's home backgrounds, teachers can then manage disruptive behaviour through knowledge and relative or complimentary action.

4.2.3 Learner Dress and Uniform

The characteristics associated with popularity amongst most learners are 'coolness' and style of clothing. It has been argued by Brunsmma and Rockquemore (1998) that, youth subcultures are more fluid than had been previously thought. Many learners use fashion to construct their identity in terms of social class and gender (Breaux, 2008). They use the conspicuous consumption of brand name clothes in order to construct themselves as popular (Richards, 2010).

At Protea, we see evidence of this from the interviews with teachers. Thandi was particular vocal around this issue and vehemently expressed her disapproval:

"We see a clear indication of branded clothing competition on days when we have civvies day. Learners are so caught up in trying to dress to please and to show off their branded clothing when there are more significant things to a child's life than this competition for dressing. Children belittle or mock fellow classmates who cannot afford to wear branded clothes. Some of the learners compete with the each other for the type of branded clothing they wear. Each one wants to be better dressed than the other. Once learners come dressed to school in coloured clothes they are not interested in doing any schoolwork for that day, they feel it's a free day to sit around and chit-chat. Teaching on these days becomes an arduous task but we allow learners to wear coloured clothes occasionally as a means of fund raising. Well! That is why I am so grateful that we have school uniforms in place at Protea primary or our teaching would have been a really painstaking task."

Teachers support the use of a school uniform at Protea and strongly disapprove of learners dressing in clothing other than the stipulated uniform. They have found that whenever learners are not wearing uniforms, their behaviour changes in negative ways.

Breaux (2008) postulates that the reason why the majority of schools require learners to wear uniforms, is to stop teasing, generate uniformity amongst learners and create a sense of discipline. Department of Education officials, teachers and parents believe that if all the learners look the same, this would deter teasing based on clothing, competition around brand name clothing and bullying. Typically, bullying occurs around the issue of owning brand name clothing; however, this line of bullying tends to be restricted to primary schools, compared with high school settings, where bullying is based on more serious forms of discrimination and malice. Thus, school uniforms are used to create a sense of uniformity and deter bullying (Breaux, 2008).

All the respondents in this study were in agreement that all learners should come to school dressed in school uniforms, as this instills discipline in them. When learners wear uniforms their appearance is neat and tidy and this encourages learning and adherence to the school rules. When learners come to school in uniform, it inculcates a sense of identity and a child that has to conform to the rules and boundaries of the place called school, as we see in the testimony provided by Patricia below:

“I think uniforms are a must for school children, as one can identify a scholar anywhere when you see them dressed in school uniforms. When learners wear uniforms they feel a sense of belonging to a particular school and are aware that a school is a place where there are rules to follow and one of them is to wear a school uniform. If learners didn’t wear uniforms then there would be no uniformity in schools and some learners will be competing with each other for dressing. What prompted me to get sponsorships of uniforms was when I had a few learners in my class who came from a very poor and challenging socio-economic background, as many parents or caregivers were unemployed and could not afford proper school uniforms. It was then, when I decided to embark on fund raising drives and went out of my way trying to secure sponsorships of uniforms for our indigent learners so that they too can be part of the rest of the school and be attired with the respective uniforms. When learners wear uniforms it creates a sense of discipline among learners and it helps in maintaining discipline.”

Schools across the nation have debated the importance of school uniforms. Kaiser (1998) hypothesises that school uniforms are an outstanding illustration of information about the learners and the schools that they attend. He further claims that a school uniform represents the school which the learner attends, and signifies meanings about the values, beliefs, ethics,

traditions and universal image which the school maintains, as well as the discipline sustained. From the testimony above we see that teachers agree with this view and strongly promote the use of school uniforms. In spite of teachers' views and the aggressive promotion of school uniforms many learners at Protea flaunt the school policy on uniforms and do not completely comply with the school dress code. This has escalated to major learner problems that plague the teachers at Protea.

Marlon affirmed that:

“Some learners that come to school are not complying to the school code of conduct in terms of uniform policy, as some of the children come to school not properly attired with their school uniform but wear fancy, multi-coloured jackets or takkies. Learners have a propensity to compare their different clothing with their fellow mates and as a result they disrupt my lessons. They display a lack of concentration to the lesson being taught and these disruptions lead to discipline problems. Some of the learners come from poor socio-economic backgrounds and cannot afford expensive jackets and shoes as compared to the more affluent learners. These affluent learners ridicule the poor learners who can't afford it. From interactions with parents, we have also found that some learners pressurise their parents to buy branded, expensive or fancy clothing, when these parents are struggling to put food on the table, as most of the parents in this community are unemployed, single parents, grandparents and care givers. For the majority of the people in this community, the only source of income they receive is from child support grants. So buying clothing for their children is difficult; therefore buying fancy clothing is rather farfetched.”

Other studies have also shown that learners feel pressured to purchase brand name clothing as this creates a certain sense of identity. For example, Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002) highlight that clothes and fashion contribute towards the construction of hierarchies between learners. A standard uniform can reduce this jockeying for position and subsequent stress at school which can have positive implications for learner discipline. The flaunting of the school dress code is a serious discipline problem that plagues teachers at Protea and as seen above, has implications in terms of learner behaviour and progress. For example, learners may feel more comfortable if they wear school uniforms and are better able to focus on their schoolwork when they are wearing uniforms; they may also have more time for homework since they do not have to decide what they will wear each day.

4.2.4 Timekeeping and Punctuality

Most of the teachers claimed that time management is crucial for any school to function properly. When learners come to school on time it creates a sense of responsibility on their part. Proper timekeeping is a way of learners disciplining themselves; they know that they have to be in school by a particular time, when the break ends and that they need to report to the classes timeously during changes in periods.

Dafeni asserted that:

“I am very particular about time, predominantly during my instructional time. I appreciate the learners reporting to my class timeously. What is rather frustrating is when I am ready to begin with my lesson and I find one or two stragglers straggling along. At Protea Primary we have a problem of late coming by some learners, due to them travelling by public transport, lift clubs or because some learners have to walk a long distance to get to school as they cannot afford transport fees. We try to be sympathetic but this hampers our teaching time as we have to repeat or sometimes re-teach the lesson, I have a learner that is constantly late and comes to school well after 8 that is like 8.15 am, 8.30am and even at 9.00am at times. When I questioned her, her reason was that she lives very, very far from the school and leaves home at 6 o’clock to get to school. I suggested to her that why doesn’t she go to a school nearer to her home and she responded that she didn’t want to go to a Black school and wanted to attend this school so that she can learn English. She also claimed that she liked this school and teachers. She also emphasised that she has no parents - she is an orphan but lives with caregivers and they can’t afford travelling fees for her.”

From the teachers’ comments it is clear that punctuality is a serious problem among learners at this school. While teachers sympathise with particular circumstances and contextual challenges that learners experience they are still obliged to ensure that the school policy on arrival times are adhered to and that learners report timeously to lessons during the day. Not being prompt for class hampers and disrupts the flow of lessons and in many cases the teachers are unable to complete work that has been scheduled for a particular lesson. This frustrates teachers and exacerbates the burden of delivering quality education to the learners.

According to Räsänen (2000) teachers and learners have to be on time to facilitate effective teaching and learning. She notes that when teachers do not keep to the timetable, this can be a cause of poor academic performance. When learners come late to school this disrupts the

normal order of the day and habitual latecomers should be dealt with. Niemi and Sihvonen (2011) argue that no matter what stage of learning a child is at, whether in primary school or doing a degree, there is a need to learn how to manage time and have time to learn and have fun. When learners report for school assembly they need to be on time; when returning to class after lunch breaks they need to report timeously. Proper timekeeping instills a culture of responsibility and discipline. According to the teachers that I interviewed this is lacking among many learners at Protea.

4.2.5 Work ethics

Some of the respondents complained that some children do not complete their class work tasks, homework, assignments and projects timeously while others display blatant disregard and refuse to do any schoolwork at all. Some learners do not possess a proper work ethic, as highlighted by Patricia below:

Patricia complained that:

“One of the most annoying factors of teaching is when learners don’t complete their given tasks and refuse to do any school work, projects, homework and assignments. I feel as though I spent all my valuable time teaching but for only a few learners and the rest of my teaching fell on deaf ears. These children simply refuse to do any class work or complete tasks, despite me explaining again and again what they should do. They simply show disregard and some children act as if they are very busily engaged but in reality, they are busy doing everything else but their work. You will find a child cutting paper, leaving their place and walking around or interfering with other children who are busy doing their work. This type of behavior is rather disappointing and disillusioning as I question myself if I am the one who is not teaching properly or what, or whether I am in the right profession. But upon discussion with my fellow colleagues, they share the same sentiments that most learners don’t want to complete given tasks and display no work ethics. Another infuriating factor is when we appoint learners as managers for example class monitors, prefects, library prefects and litter monitors, we expect them to do their duties efficiently and display responsibility towards their expected tasks. It irks me to see that sometimes even the responsible children don’t take their duties seriously and are found shirking with regards to their duties. They need to be taught responsibility and this thus becomes the tasks of teachers, to instill good values in children and to teach them responsibility.”

It is evident from the interviews with the teachers at Protea that good work ethics are fundamental for any form of learning to take place in schools. Protea teachers claim that when children do not possess work ethics they cannot progress academically, as the learners do not perceive the importance of doing any schoolwork. Completing written tasks is an integral part of learning for any learner and when learners refuse to complete their given tasks they are disadvantaging themselves and creating situations where teachers have to spend more hours disciplining and policing, thereby compromising the didactic process. When learners complete written tasks they are displaying responsibility towards their schoolwork, respect for their teachers and a culture of discipline for themselves. Teachers should become au fait with Canter's Assertive Discipline model based on their three basic assumptions of rights and responsibilities in the classroom (Canter & Canter, 1992).

4.2.6 Bullying

Bullying occurs in most schools, sometimes taking serious forms, and at other times being more moderate. It may occur, when a child or a group of children try to overpower or take advantage of quieter children or children who are smaller in size. According to studies conducted by Smith and Shu (2000); Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, and Karstadt (2001); and Seals and Young (2003) school playgrounds are the most common setting for bullying, followed by the classroom, hallways and toilets.

Most of the respondents agreed that bullying is a major problem among many learners and creates all kinds of discipline problems. Thandi recounts an incident of bullying that she witnessed.

“Bullying is prevalent in Protea Primary School but we try to minimise or should I say keep these incidents under control. I had an incident with two grade 6 boys in my class where one was a bit big in size, Josh (not his real name) and the other was small built, Owen (not his real name). Josh was a real bully who used his size to his advantage and made other classmates do things that benefitted him. Josh used to bully Owen continuously by making him do his homework all the time. He used to physically abuse and take Owen's and other children's pocket money, lunch, cool drink, juice, chips and chocolates from them. He used to trip the boys on the playgrounds and in the classrooms and make them fall and sometimes learners would end up getting injured badly. When the learners were questioned about their injuries they merely said that they were playing with their friends and that they had fallen

down. He threatened learners that if they ever reported him he would make them pay. These poor children were so afraid of him that they never brought it to the attention of any teachers. One day Owen could no longer bear the torture of Josh and he broke down by his friend who in turn informed Owen's parents about Josh's bullying. Owen's parents came to school and the matter was taken to the office where Josh's parents were called to school as well. Upon investigation it was found that Josh's father had abandoned him when he was only a year old and he lived with his mum. Josh was counseled and he realised that his behaviour was unacceptable and he decided to reform. He turned a new leaf in his life and he changed into a well disciplined child."

Many of the respondents noted that when bullies are confronted with the consequences of their negative behaviour, bullying can in some instances be rectified after counseling and if teachers offer pastoral care to learners. These teachers unanimously agreed that some learners resort to bullying as an attention-seeking measure or as a call for help with their insecurities. The majority of the teachers interviewed felt that bullies often lack something, for example, love, have inadequacies in their lives or have poor self-esteem that makes them resort to bullying. They elaborated that, underneath the bully charade was often a child who is even more scared than the victims that he/she has bullied. But bullying can become rather serious if unresolved; in some instances, the victims are so afraid that they refuse to attend school. However as will become apparent, teachers manage these problems somewhat differently. While some are alert and sensitive to this phenomenon when handling learners' discipline problems, others do not consider such factors and reprimand learners in severe and harsh ways.

A study carried out by De Wet (2005) at a sample of Free State schools found that one-third of the children had been exposed to direct or indirect verbal abuse and many had been physically abused by fellow learners. In another study on teachers' experience of bullying, she established that teachers often witnessed bullying and that they themselves were also frequently abused by learners. Bullying can have serious repercussions for both the victim and the perpetrator. Victims often refuse to attend school or steer clear of certain areas in the school environment. They struggle with poor self-esteem and can become depressed and withdrawn. In serious cases of bullying, some victims have committed suicide or murdered their victims. Therefore it is imperative that bullying incidents are identified in the early stages so that the victims and perpetrators can be given the necessary help.

The teachers that I interviewed noted that explicit bullying often interrupted class-work, disrupted the flow of lessons when learners were pushed over or tripped and compromised the discipline of learners in class.

In the next section I examine and analyse possible explanations of the causes of discipline problems, as provided by the teachers at Protea.

4.3 Causes of learner discipline problems at Protea Primary

4.3.1 Home and Social Problems

4.3.1.1 Single Parent Homes

A learner's home life and background play a pivotal role in their life. Many Protea Primary learners come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. In many cases learners have single parent families which are often dysfunctional. Death and divorce are the primary reasons; learners are left with one parent which affects their lives in many ways and often contributes to discipline problems at school. While good school discipline is a prerequisite for learning, many learners come to school without having acquired the social and behavioural skills that they need to succeed; while they may have learned the skills they need for survival in the community, those skills are frequently at odds with the expectations regarding acceptable behaviour in the school (MacNeil, 2007).

Most of the respondents in this study described how they had to face and deal with learners from single parent homes.

Dafeni expressed her response in a rather emotional manner:

“My heart really goes out to most of these learners, as it is really sad when we listen to some of the stories our learners tell us. Many of the learners at Protea come from poor homes and broken homes where they have single parents or where some have no parents at all, some live with their siblings, aunts, uncles and grandparents. A simple quick survey in my class made me tear as most of my learners came from the backgrounds I just mentioned. Half of my class of 34 learners indicated that they have single parents and most often it was only a mother, some never saw and don't even know their fathers or their fathers were dead, while some may have only seen their dads a very long time ago or only once in their life time. Ten children indicated that both their parents had passed away and that they lived with their grandparents and some learners indicated that their parents were divorced or separated. I

had a learner who suddenly became very aggressive and disruptive in class and suddenly started acting like a bully, as well as his academic performance began to retrogress. Other teachers also noticed this change in him and brought it to my attention. This child used to bully fellow learners, where he used to push other learners if they were on his way, interfere with learners during assembly and just pull things from classmates if he needed for example a pen or book. Upon my observation and intervention I became aware that this boy's parents were going through a divorce and that he was torn between his preferences of which parent he was going to live with. This child had to also bear witness of his parent's constant quarrelling, aggression, his parents abusing each other and fighting over him. His outbursts were his way of expressing his confusion and the turmoil that he was going through. I counseled him and made him understand that it was not his fault for their divorce and that his parent's decision was in the best interest for him too and that they both loved him."

Most of respondents claimed that when parents experience divorce it is the child that suffers the worst consequences. In the case outlined by Dafeni, we see how divorce impacts on the child in terms of him resorting to aggressive and disruptive behaviour both in the class and on the playground; his bullying was a way of expressing his inner emotions.

A common factor that can be attributed to learner discipline problems and poor academic performance is the learner's socio-economic and domestic problems which in turn create a negative social environment at home. The atmosphere at home can foster or hamper a learner's success at school. Domestic quarrels between parents, especially those that are in the midst of divorce have adverse effects on learners and some exhibit discipline problems, while others may become withdrawn and their academic performance is negatively affected. McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) found that divorce causes children to display antisocial behaviour, aggression, anxiety and discipline problems in comparison with children from two-parent families. They further claim that children are more negatively affected by parental discord prior to divorce, than by living in single-parent families. Divorce is a contributory factor to learners displaying discipline problems in schools by becoming bullies or being disruptive as a way of dealing with the emotional trauma that they are experiencing; this is evident at Protea Primary. While a study of this nature does not allow for direct connections to be made between particular learner discipline problems and social causes, there is sufficient evidence to conclude that the social problems that learners experience at home and in the community have some bearing on their negative behaviour.

Marlon concurred with Dafeni and further articulated that:

“A major reason for learner discipline problems in this school is that most of the children are brought up in single parent homes and that these learner display disruptive behaviour, just to seek attention and love. I recall an incident where a learner used to constantly disrupt the class by speaking out of turn and walking around aimlessly, just to get my attention. Despite me asking her to stop she continued and I told her that I was going to call her father to school and she suddenly hugged me and began to cry. I consoled her and when she stopped crying, she told me that she had lost her father when she was only six years old. Her father had died in a tragic accident. I cried with her too and told her that I am her father and mother from now on and I showered her with all my love and attention and not forgetting my other learners too. She also told me how difficult her home life was, where her mother was trying to fulfill the roles of a mother and father. She changed her behaviour and became one of my model students.”

The majority of the respondents claimed that it is clearly evident that the home environment, especially that of single-parent homes is a contributory factor to children displaying discipline problems. It is evident from the case of the child above that her acts of misbehaviour and disruptive outbursts were a plea for love and attention due to the family crisis that she was facing, that is, the death of her father. Many of the respondents said that they discovered that many learners who displayed discipline problems such as disruptive behaviour came from single-parent families, where the death of a parent was a common factor. However, while the respondents expressed such views, this did not necessarily result in teachers adopting a pastoral and caring approach when handling learner misbehaviour. As will be seen, many teachers disregarded the cause of the learner's indiscipline and used tough measures to discipline them. A study by Karande and Kulkarni (2005) found that 85% of all children that exhibit behavioural disorders come from single-parent homes. This correlates with the fact that many of the learners that display discipline problems at Protea Primary come from single-parent homes.

Kotwal and Prabhakar (2009) support Karande and Kulkarni (2005) by asserting that the role of single parenting is a challenging one, especially when the family is headed by a woman. Single parents, especially single mothers, find it difficult to maintain discipline among their children due to the absence of a male parent; these discipline problems filter into school. This study yielded strong evidence that learners who display discipline problems might have other

problems that are not academic, such as death or divorces, which are highly emotional issues to cope with. Parents' role in the progress and educational development of their children has long been acknowledged. Family background is the most important factor determining the behaviour of learners. When learners experience the death of a parent or are raised by a single parent, this can lead to a child displaying discipline problems because of the turmoil he/she may be experiencing. Adell (2002) emphasises that it is crucial for a teacher to understand that in some instances, a learner's disruptive behaviour may be an expression of their need for love and attention or a call for help. If teachers fail to recognise their learner's plight they may inadvertently contribute to their emotional problems or make it worse by constantly reprimanding the child for his or her misbehaviour. It is important that teachers take a little time to know their learner, know where they come from and what baggage they may be carrying (Adell, 2002). Later on in this section I discuss how teachers manage the discipline problems that learners display at Protea and provide evidence that while some teachers are tuned in and use their knowledge of the learners' backgrounds to handle discipline; others pay little attention to learners' home backgrounds.

4.3.1.2 Abandonment of Children

In poor socio-economic environments many children are abandoned by their biological parents (Balcom, 1998). In the community in which Protea is located many parents abandon their children and leave them to be cared for by their grandparents or relatives. The teachers have firsthand experience of these children.

As Thandi noted:

“Here at Protea we are faced with many abandoned children, where some children claim that they don't know their parents at all or can't remember ever seeing their parents. Many of these children start off having both parents but never ever see them in their lives and these children are left most often in the care of their grandparents. In some instances these grandparents are so old to care for these children that they are left to their own devices. Due to this lack of adult supervision these minor children are ignorant of appropriate, suitable behaviour in school. In many cases they are not attired in school uniform. We see this behaviour manifesting itself in school in the form of disruptive behavior, disregard for work ethic and not having a sense of time and space. I had a few learners in my class who constantly disrupted my lessons and that of other teachers and also showed blatant disregard towards their schoolwork. They carried no schoolbags, books or pens. They hardly did any

written work and the most work that they did was to, maybe write the date only. Some of them, would thereafter walk around the class and interfere with the children who are busy and not allow them to do their written tasks. These children often also strolled into class at odd times. No matter whatever I said or tried to do, was in vain, these children had no work ethics or responsibility to their school work. During lunch breaks they would even try to run away from school. Upon investigation I became aware that this group of children lived in the same neighbourhood and all were products of abandonment by their biological parents from a very tender age, some as young as after their birth. These children were living with their grandparents, some with relatives and lacked proper supervision. They were left to roam around their neighbourhood at leisure and return home whatever time that they pleased, attend school whenever they desired to and behave in whatever way that they chose to.”

The respondents noted that it was really depressing when they conducted a survey in their class and found so many learners who have been abandoned and are orphans. Some parents abandon their children in an attempt to find employment, but never return. These children become lost souls with no proper direction (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

It is clear from the testimonies of teachers that learners who were abandoned by their parents have problems in school. Most of these problems are related to discipline. Teachers indicated that because they do not have proper guidance and direction at home these learners struggle to follow procedure and policy in school. They do not keep good time, are disruptive and often bully other learners. This, in turn, has an impact on their academic progress.

Balcom (1998) observes that research on single-parent homes and the abandonment of children by their biological parents suggests that such homes may produce more delinquents than two-parent families. Karande and Kulkarni (2005) further suggest that family disintegration resulting from the death, desertion, or divorce of parents led to discipline problems in school in the form of disruptive behavior, bullying, attention deficit problems and poor work ethics. In single-parent homes and where children have been abandoned by both parents, children tend to experience economic and psychological disadvantages such as higher absentee rates at school, lower levels of education, and higher dropout rates and more delinquent activity (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). This study found similar evidence of learner discipline problems due to the lack of or absence of parental support.

4.3.1.3 Lack of parental involvement – Parental Apathy

Epstein (1991) advocates that parental involvement implies the participation of parents in one or more of the school's activities, such as attending parent-teacher meetings, volunteering for school activities, assisting their children with homework, encouraging the child to achieve and instilling appropriate behavioral skills both in the class and on the playground. However, Lorgat (2003) argues that most parents cannot relate to their children's discipline problems due to their lack of interest in their children's work. Disinterest and ignorance among parents regarding learner's behavioural problems in schools is a serious problem that most South African schools face.

Lack of parental involvement was another burning issue that was highlighted by several of the respondents. Lack of parental involvement in primary schools is cause for concern and can no longer be ignored (Epstein, 1991). This point is demonstrated by my observations of the frustrations displayed by fellow teachers when discussing the effects of the lack of parental involvement on learner discipline. Teachers should engage themselves with Canter's theory in seeking assistance and support from parents and school managers when assistance is required in handling a learner's behaviour (Canter, 1987).

Patricia pointed out that:

“When parents support their children's learning, children are inclined to succeed not just in school academics, but also their behaviour. Their discipline tends to improve because they fear when we threaten to call on their parents.”

Dafeni further pointed out that:

“When there is adult supervision at home many of the negative effects of discipline disappear when there is ample supervision.”

Marlon also mentioned that:

Working parents do not have enough time to be involved in their children's schoolwork; as a result their children tend to manifest disruptive behavior and aggression. They know that their parents would not come to school because ... parents work away from home or they

come very late and leave very early. They don't come properly attired and often use brand name clothing."

Hanafin and Lynch (2002) postulate that parental participation is critical in a child's schooling career as it improves a learner's discipline and learning. Such participation should not only commence at the very beginning of the educational process, but should persist throughout the child's academic career.

The South African Schools Act (1996) supports parental involvement in schools by stating that parents should take an active interest in their children's school work and make it possible for the children to complete their work. When children have a culture of discipline towards their schoolwork, they also possess a culture of appropriate behavior in school. The National Education Policy Act (1996) also stresses parental choices, responsibilities and strategies that have been developed to encourage parental participation at home and at school in order to link home and school more effectively and thus eradicate learner discipline problems.

My interviews with teachers revealed very clearly that parental apathy has strong links with learner discipline. Teachers should engage with the Assertive Discipline model which creates the hypothesis that teachers have the right to call on parents for support and involvement, as well as the school management (Canter & Canter, 1992).

I did not do a comparative analysis of learners that have parental school support and those that do, in order to determine the extent of how this relates to discipline problems, but the evidence gathered and other research studies suggest that learners without parental support and guidance display more discipline problems than their peers. These learners do not conform to the school dress code and display other discipline problems as well. They are able to purchase brand name clothing because their parents work away from home and there is a lack of parental involvement in their scholastic lives. These learners display their adherence to fashion and other popular trends at school. This, as noted above, becomes a serious discipline problem for teachers to handle.

4.3.1.4 Unemployment and Poverty

As highlighted in the introduction (Chapter one) Protea is located in a poor community. The parents of many of Protea's learners are unemployed. Many of the parents and care givers have low levels of education which is a contributory factor to their unemployment (Louw,

1993). Unemployment has a direct impact on the ability of parents to provide their children with basic school necessities like uniforms and stationery. This, in turn, has a negative influence on the learner's behaviour and discipline in school. Some parents leave their children in the care of caregivers in an attempt to seek employment away from their homes (Collins, 2003).

As Carol points out:

“Here at Protea we have many children who come from very poor homes because most of their parents or caregivers are unemployed. For many parents their only sources of income are child support grants. Many children attend school but are not clad in proper school uniforms. When children are not properly attired with their school uniforms for school then automatically their discipline is on a down slide, as wearing proper uniforms creates a sense of discipline and identity with scholars.”

Marlon observed:

“Many of the parents at Protea are struggling to put food on the table because many of them are unemployed. Several learners come hungry to school and cannot concentrate on any school work as their stomachs are rumbling for food. How can we expect a child to sit still and concentrate when he/she is hungry? Definitely not! As this hunger causes some learners to be disruptive in class as they simply cannot sit still due to their hunger pangs, which are understandable to a certain extent.”

Thandi further elaborated:

“When learners come from poor, unemployed parents then they come unprepared to school. Some come without pens, books and in some cases not even a school bag. Due to their lack of resources these children can't do any schoolwork and become disruptive in class as they are idle. In some instances parents leave their homes to seek employment far away from their homes and these children are left to fend for themselves and do not have proper adult supervision. These lacks of parental involvement leads to discipline problems as these children are left unattended and truant from school whenever they desire to.”

Several of the respondents articulated that parents' unemployment affected the discipline of many learners negatively and caused discipline problems. In contrast to the learners that have economic means, in the section above, we see that learners don't have proper uniforms to

wear and sometimes wear, for example an odd coloured jersey as opposed to the blue school one, thus disturbing the uniformity of the school. It is interesting to note that learner's display the same discipline problem (school attire) brought about by different causes. This indicates that there is a highly complex mix of causes that relate to learner discipline. This has implications for how teachers should manage learner discipline in school. When learners come to school hungry, they can't function and complete given tasks and present many behavioural problems. When learners lack basic resources like stationery it inhibits them from performing their working and may sometimes leads to discipline problems.

When parents are unemployed, they find it difficult to provide adequate food, clothing, assistance and proper guidance. While some parents do provide moral support, as well as modelling acceptable behaviour, due to financial challenges some learners still exhibit behavioural problems. Due to financial hardships and deprived socio-economic backgrounds many children have nutrition deficiencies, as they do not eat a healthy diet and this affects their memory and conceptual thinking and contributes to discipline problems and unsatisfactory academic performance. Collins (2003) observes that when parents are unable to find work close to home, they have to seek employment far away and only come home at the end of the month. These parents cannot provide parental supervision and their children lack proper discipline in school and tend to be disruptive. According to the respondents, the learners' home and social life, single parents, abandonment, lack of parental involvement, parental apathy, unemployment and poverty contributed to learner discipline problems at Protea Primary School. The role of parents and their positive involvement are crucial and form the foundation of a learner's life; the absence of these lead to learners exhibiting discipline problems. They have leeway to play truant and misbehave, since they do not account to anybody.

Sometimes, the causes of learner discipline problems do not emanate from outside the school but can be ascribed to conditions and the situation within the ambit of the school.

4.4 School practices and conditions

4.4.1 Large class sizes

Large class sizes are another daunting and intimidating prospect facing teachers at Protea and this contributes to learner discipline problems (Olayemi, 2012). When class sizes increase, the occurrence of discipline and behaviour problems also increases.

As Thandi declared:

“Having a smaller class to teach would most definitely be a blessing for all teachers. It is time consuming to teach and to maintain discipline in large classes. With over 35 and up to 50 learners in a class, teaching certainly becomes an arduous task. Having more than 35 learners in a class sometimes makes it impossible to complete the syllabus. Too large classes pose too many discipline problems, for example, constant outbursts of disruptive behaviour, no work ethics and bullying.”

Patricia further indicated that:

“When you have large classes and the teacher is busy with a group of learners then other learners use this opportunity to their advantage to walk aimlessly around the class, refuse to complete given class tasks while others may sometimes interfere with fellow learners which may result in violent fights. Teaching large classes is certainly a daunting task especially when you have like 50 learners in a class, maintaining discipline is overwhelming.”

Many respondents testified that teaching large classes was demoralising and a grueling venture which further contributed to learner discipline problems. They claimed that large classes may sometimes inhibit the completion of the syllabus. They also reported continual discipline problems with learners in larger classes.

Olayemi (2012) postulates that small classes have a positive effect on learner behaviour. They note that smaller classes make it quicker and easier to complete the curriculum. Teachers can then focus on programmes to change ill-disciplined behavior. Such programmes may promote social and cognitive skills in learners which can be easily applied and can assist with the management of discipline problems in schools. Several teachers mentioned that smaller classes would make their teaching mission easier and more beneficial to all learners.

4.4.2 Lack of Supervision of Learners

Lack of supervision of learners in a class is and has been acknowledged as another factor that exacerbates learner discipline problems in schools. When learners are unsupervised they use this opportunity to become unruly. They may walk around the class, disturbing the tranquility of the rest of the learners.

Thandi expressed her dismay and disillusionment by pointing out that:

“In this school when teachers are absent or have to attend meetings, the classes are sometimes just left to their own devices for most of the time. Our school cleaners even man these classes from time to time.”

Dafeni further stated that:

“We don’t have a proper relief system in place in the absence of teacher. Learners are left unsupervised and may only have intervention by management when they consider it necessary. Our management may split certain classes at times and not others.”

I established from observations and the responses of most of the respondents, that when a teacher is absent there is much inconsistency in handling the classes. As Dafeni noted: *“We don’t have a proper relief system”*, which means that learners are often left unsupervised when teachers are away. These testimonies verify that there seems to be a lack of supervision of learners; this exacerbates the discipline problems that teachers need to manage at Protea.

Teachers mentioned that they were reluctant to go and maintain order in another class in the absence of a colleague as they then ran the risk of their own class becoming disruptive. Furthermore, there would be repercussions if a serious incident occurred in their own class while they were out trying to establish discipline in another class. However, some teachers indicated that they felt duty bound to intervene when a class becomes unruly or if there is serious misconduct. These teachers felt that ignoring the problem would foment discipline problems in the school. McDaniel (2010) notes that it is essential for the S.M.T. and teachers to constantly physically supervise learners in the classroom throughout the day in order to sustain discipline in the locus of a school environment. When learners are conscious of this constant supervision, particularly the visibility and active immediate intervention on the part of the principal, this may serve as a deterrent to perpetrators who choose to misbehave, commonly in the absence of a teacher. The evidence from the interviews with teachers in this study resonates with these findings. Teachers mentioned that when supervision is imposed, learners focus and stay on the task and maintain good discipline. They further postulated that a sound understanding and an improved relationship between the S.M.T. and teachers may assist in overcoming some discipline problems.

In the next section I focus on the management style that teachers adopt in trying to maintain order and discipline among learners.

4.5 The Management of Learner Discipline Problems

This section is structured as follows: I first discuss the management of learner discipline where teachers use a firm, strict and stringent approach. Sanctions and punishment are at the foreground of their management style. I then turn my attention to those teachers that use a more lenient, although not necessarily soft approach to managing discipline problems, which includes pastoral care and aspects of counseling.

4.5.1 Stringent Management Strategies

Several school cultures embrace lists of mindboggling rules with behaviour codes and discipline strategies that are punitive and threatening (Barth, 1990). At Protea my observations and interviews reveal that some teachers adopted an attitude of ‘zero tolerance’ towards their learners.

Carol expressed her viewpoint:

“When a child misbehaves, I generally shout him down. I do not allow the culprit to have his own way. We run a tight institution here. There is no room for delinquents. The punishment must be swift and severe, so they won’t do the crime again. I can’t let the delinquents get away irrespective of whatever problems they have at home as I don’t let this judgment get the better of me. If a learner breaks the rules he ought to be punished so that he knows he must behave.”

Carol uses words like “shout him down”, “culprit”, “institution”, “delinquents”, “punishment” and “crime”. These words all relate to prison-like talk rather than a learning institution. Carol treats the learners who digress like criminals who must be punished for their offence. There is no middle ground here. She is harsh and hard on a learner who misbehaves. She therefore adopts a mentality of zero tolerance. In all my interviews with Carol she did not mention counseling or pastoral care or speaking to the learner about why he/she is behaving badly. Her focus is on stringent punishment, instilling fear and even inflicting pain in some ways. She indicated that she sometimes punished her learners by chasing them outside, *“as these delinquents were aware that if they were chased out of the class they had double*

trouble to face as the principal would catch them outside and this would intensify their punishment". Carol mentioned in earlier interviews that many learners come from home backgrounds with all kinds of problems; however she does not consider this when disciplining learners. She has a set of strategies that she uses and is not prepared to compromise them in any way. She has a regimentary, almost militaristic attitude towards learners when managing discipline. This type of management of learner discipline by teachers such as Carol is contradictory to Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline Theory as he posits that learners should not be punished but assisted in a positive manner. Teachers should align themselves with Rudolf Dreikurs' Discipline theory as it is a foundation for support, positive and negative validation and confidence building (Dreikurs, 2001).

Patricia further elaborated by saying:

"Most of the teachers here including myself adopt a zero tolerance approach in our classes. We firmly believe that if we are not strict with the learners then they ride all over you. They wait for any chance to get up to their nonsense and take advantage of you. I discipline the learners in my class by reprimanding them when they are disruptive and warning them that their misbehaviour will not be accepted and reminding that their names will be entered in the misdemeanor file if their behaviour persists as I will not tolerate disruptive learners in my class under any circumstances."

Like Carol, Patricia adopts tough measures to ensure discipline. She casts some distance between herself and the children by using the word "they". As we will see later other teachers often referred to the learners as "my children" or "our learners". These teachers usually adopted a more supple approach to handling discipline problems by having a closer relationship with their learners. However, for Patricia, power relations are important and include supervision, authority, patterns of dominance, harassment and control over learners when she indicates that, *"they ride all over you"*; *"take advantage of you"*. She asserts her authority and attempts to maintain power by punishing learners. However we are not sure if this management style really works, as she mentions that after disciplining the learners, in some cases the negative behaviour persists and she resorts to yet another form of punishment.

Other teachers testified that they are rather stringent and espouse a zero tolerance approach toward their learners. They believe that this is the only way that they can maintain discipline. These teachers pay little attention to learners' home backgrounds when disciplining them and

ignore the personal challenges that some learners may be experiencing, for example death, divorce, and that some learners are products of abandonment, neglect, abuse and impoverished backgrounds. Patricia is aware that many learners have problems at home, but pays no heed to this when disciplining or ‘punishing’ her learners:

“We are all aware that most of our learners come from poor socio-economic homes, however since they lack learning discipline strategies at home then we as teachers have to instill a culture of discipline in them at school. So if by being stringent inculcates discipline in learners, then so be it.”

Rather than considering these issues when managing discipline problems in the classroom, Patricia sees them as even more reason to inflict stricter forms of discipline. During her interview Patricia alluded to other harsh and severe discipline strategies that she employed like depriving “the delinquents” of their lunch breaks, but allowing them to have their lunch in the class, sometimes not allowing them to go on excursions and depriving them of extra-curricular activities and sports. She believes that it is necessary to take it upon herself to provide the discipline that these learners lack at home.

Skiba and Peterson (2000) and Kohn (1996) argue that, often when teachers adopt an attitude of zero tolerance towards their learners, this type of discipline policy is not very effective, symbolically, in maintaining learner discipline. Barth (2004) concurs that this type of punitive approach has not been shown to improve learner behaviour. In fact, it has been linked to increased acts of aggression and bullying; the very behaviour that schools seek to curtail in the first place (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Kohn, 1996).

Du Plessis and Loock (2007) observe that zero tolerance on the part of teachers does not increase school safety, nor does it improve learner discipline in school but instead leads to an increase in school dropouts. They propose that positive disciplinary strategies are required to bring about change, which may entail the use of positive reinforcement, modeling, supportive teacher-learner relations, family support and assistance from a variety of educational and mental health specialists, like educational psychologists and therapists.

Marlon asserted:

“I am a true disciplinarian and cannot endure disruptions from learners. I am aware that corporal punishment is banned but at times learners are so unruly that I’m forced to punish them by reverting to.... When I punish a learner then the others get the message that I mean business and then they all behave.”

It is evident from Marlon’s response that he implicitly embraces the idea of corporal punishment despite its abolition, perhaps due to the ineffectiveness of the alternate strategies to manage discipline issues. When Marlon states; *“I am aware that corporal punishment is banned”* it is palpable that he may feel that corporal punishment is his only means of handling discipline. When he uses words like *“cannot endure disruptions”* it is apparent that he is frustrated with the management of discipline. Marlon’s militant response, when he proclaims that: *“I am a true disciplinarian”* and *“I’m forced to punish them”* concurs with Carol’s reference to using *“punitive measures”* to manage discipline. When he says *“reverting to....”* it suggests that he may still use corporal punishment to discipline his learners. Marlon also seems to detach himself from the learners by using words like *“them”* and *“they”*, thus negating the fatherly approach that teachers should exemplify.

This section focused on teachers who use a heavy handed approach to discipline. Responses like ‘true disciplinarian’ and words like ‘punish’ are harsh and punitive and camouflage the use of corporal punishment. These responses indicate that the abolition of corporal punishment has removed a strategy that many teachers relied on, in managing discipline in schools. In the next section I focus on teachers who approach discipline in a more compassionate and sensitive manner.

4.5.2 Compassionate Management Approach

In interviews and from my observations it became clear that some teachers used a more caring and sensitive approach to handling the discipline problems that they face in the school context. While I found that most teachers adopt a more hard line approach to handling learners who breach the school rules, I also found voices of resistance to this approach, who proclaimed that a concerned, more “loving” attitude is more effective in correcting learner’s misbehaviour.

Thandi proclaimed that:

“I follow the Code of Conduct policy of the school to certain degree but it is not possible to adhere to it rigidly when handling discipline problems. Personally I am of the opinion that all learners are individuals with their own individual problems that may cause them to act out their masqueraded personal life by being indisciplined. I manage learner discipline by foremost understanding the socio-economic home backgrounds that learners are coming from and handle it practically, for example if a learner is being disruptive because he/she hasn't eaten any breakfast in the morning and can't sit still and concentrate, merely due to hunger. How I can reprimand such a learner, I need to understand that with hunger pangs any normal person can't function optimally. Therefore at Protea we have a daily feeding scheme and also give our indigent learners a loaf of bread daily, so they can have bread for breakfast and then come to school. In addition to this when we have extra food; we give it to learners to take it home.”

Thandi offers a warmer, pastoral approach to her learners. The reader is reminded that Thandi lives in this community and is more sensitive and alert to the social problems that learners experience and this could explain her 'softer', more flexible and accommodating approach to managing discipline. However, when she advocates that; *“it is not possible to adhere to it rigidly when handling discipline problems,”* it is evident that she, too, manages discipline in her own way, thus supporting the argument that there are inconsistencies in the management of discipline among the teachers at Protea. It is notable that Thandi adopts a malleable, motherly, instinctive approach to her learners in comparison with other respondents like Patricia and Carol who are adamant that punitive measures are the only way to ensure the maintenance of discipline in their classes. Carol had mentioned above: *“If a learner breaks the rules he ought to be punished.”* In contrast Thandi asserts: *“I manage learner discipline by foremost understanding the socio-economic home backgrounds”*. Thandi takes cognisance of her learners' poor-socio economic home status and their personal needs when managing discipline issues. She puts the learners' personal needs first: *“learners can't sit still and concentrate, merely due to hunger”*. By critically weighing Thandi's response one can perhaps conclude that by satisfying a learner's hunger for food may be a strategy to overcome and manage some of the discipline problems of many learners at Protea. According to the South African's Schools Act (1996) the abolition of corporal punishment and the fact that teachers are no longer allowed to inflict any form of physical or verbal punishment on

learners has enhanced the challenges confronting teachers. Without this disciplinary measure which several teachers depended on and which was sanctioned by South African law, teachers have been left powerless and unable to enforce discipline (Cohen, 1996; Joubert & Prinsloo, 1999). We see evidence of this playing itself at Protea, where many teachers are grappling with alternatives to corporal punishment; this has intensified their difficulty in managing discipline problems, possibly due to their unfamiliarity with the alternatives to corporal punishment. In some instances when teachers offer learners pastoral care, it may be a turning point in reforming bad behaviour and an inspiration to fellow learners to change (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994).

4.5.3 Rewarding Accepted Behaviour

Rewarding learner's good behaviour and praising them have a significant effect on promoting good discipline. When good behaviour is recognised and rewarded this may motivate the learner in question as well as other learners to improve their behaviour (Sonn, 2002). In my discussions with teachers and from my classroom observations I found evidence of teachers using rewards as a means of managing learner discipline. Some teachers claimed that the use of rewards were very effective in handling discipline problems and in fact reduced the number of discipline problems that they had to contend with compared with their colleagues.

Carol testified that:

“While I maybe strict in the way I maintain discipline with learners but I have become aware that rewarding learners for good behaviour does encourage other learners to behave positively too. I use words of praise and good compliments like ‘Well done, I knew you could do it; I’ve noticed that you are well behaved now’ to motivate learners to reform their poor behaviour. I also sometimes reward learners by giving them a sweet or two, affixing stars for their good conduct to their behaviour chart.”

Dafeni conveyed her sentiments as follows:

“I have noticed that when you acknowledge a learner's good behaviour instead of always picking and harping on their misbehavior, then the learners become positively motivated. Some change their behaviour in an attempt to receive positive compliments like ‘You are such a good boy or girl now; I wish I had more children like you’. And some change when they are given responsible tasks to perform like class/group monitor and by affording them to perform

errands for you. Automatically you see how their face lights up, with a smile from ear to ear.”

Praise and reward systems can institute a positive ethos and good discipline in schools by recognising the good behaviour and efforts of learners. Evidently, the Canters’ discipline model also supports the use of extensive praise and other rewards which encourages intrinsic motivation amongst learners (Canter & Canter, 1992). The majority of South African schools have systems for managing bad behaviour and systems for recognising the sporting and academic achievements of learners; however few schools have systems in place for recognising good behaviour (Munn, 1999). Teachers should align themselves with Rudolf Dreikurs’ Discipline Theory as he claims that this leads to the practical application of ways to handle learner discipline and misbehaviour in the classroom (Dreikurs, 1968). Protea is no different. Many teachers do not seem to use praise and rewards effectively to manage discipline problems. Some respondents agreed that words of praise like *“your behaviour is now good or it has improved; you are a model learner now; I wish others can be as well behaved as you are,”* promote positive behaviour; however, as argued earlier, most teachers support a more rigid approach in the form of punishment. Dafeni and Carol’s testimonies above indicate that being less stringent at times and rewarding learners can have similar or even better effects on changing learner behaviour. Rewarding learners by giving them gold, silver or bronze stars, “giving them a sweet or two” or by allowing them to collect or pass out books and run errands for the teachers are some of the forms of rewards that the respondents had adopted.

The Department of Education envisaged that a school code of conduct would help guide teachers to handle discipline and at the same time protect the rights of learners. However at Protea, as in most schools, the code of conduct has not served its envisaged purpose. In the next section I explored how the code of conduct was understood and used to manage learner discipline problems at Protea.

4.5.4. Code of Conduct

Every school is governed by school policies and practices to maintain discipline and order among learners (Bray, 2005). Protea Primary School has a code of conduct and relevant school policies. However I found that there was no common understanding regarding the use of the code of conduct to manage learner discipline at Protea. The management of learner

discipline is tinged with inconsistency, as each teacher manages discipline in their own way, due to their lack of familiarity with the policy. This inconsistency is caused by the differing expectations of the discipline agents, that is, the teachers, as well as those that are disciplined, that is, the learners. Learners may sometimes perceive the way in which they are dealt for indiscipline as unfair and inconsistent simply because they are not very well acquainted with the code of conduct, with what is expected from them or what the punishment is for particular misdemeanors. The lack of a uniform system for managing discipline throughout the school exacerbates discipline problems among learners.

Patricia claimed:

“Here at Protea we try to maintain discipline to the best of our abilities and in our own ways but the learners of today simply refuse to behave appropriately. At the beginning of each academic year learners are not given copies of the school’s Code of Conduct Policy to take home, like most schools do and as a result parents and learners are unaware of the rules and regulations that govern the policy, including the measures that will be followed when rules are not adhered to and for misconduct purposes. Learners are briefed on the stipulations of the general classroom rules by some form teachers at the outset and are sometimes explained of the consequences that they will have to face, should they breach it. The one common file that all teachers at Protea are expected to keep is the learner’s misdemeanor file. However most teachers not only at Protea, but I think at most schools face the problem of learners constantly disrupting lessons and breaching the Code of Conduct Policy and classroom rules.”

Marlon maintained:

“We all attempt to have order in our classes and in the playgrounds utilising whatever discipline instruments are most suitable to our individual needs but some children have no culture of discipline. Learners sometimes physically fight with fellow learners in and out of the classroom or poke each other with a pen or pencil. Some learners bully other learners and have no work ethics whereby they refuse to do any schoolwork in a ploy to gain the attention of the teacher. I manage my discipline issues by reprimanding them and warn them that each learner will only be given three chances in which they have to improve their behaviour. If their behaviour perseveres as stated in the Code of Conduct policy then they will be given letters for their parents to report to school.”

Dafeni further articulated:

“The learners know our hands are tied and there is nothing much we can do in terms of disciplining them. They know we can no longer inflict corporal punishment on them when they misbehave. However, each teacher tries to uphold discipline in the most suitable manner using his/her discretion and their own pertinent strategy. I do try talking to them but, at times when my children really frustrate me, I send them to the Head of the Department (H.O.D) or principal.”

Very striking was the vastly differing perceptions of the respondents of the nature of learner discipline and how it is best managed. Several of the respondents noted how the code of conduct is implemented at Protea. It is evident from the responses that while the teachers claim to be familiar with the code of conduct, they use different strategies to manage discipline.

Patricia understands that the code requires teachers to keep a file in which misdemeanours are recorded; however Marlon and Dafeni do not speak of or use this system. Instead, Marlon uses a three “warnings” system, where learners are afforded three opportunities to correct their behaviour, before requesting parental intervention. Dafeni uses yet another approach, where she refers the defaulters to higher authority. The evidence suggests that the handling of discipline problems by teachers using the code of conduct as a guide is inconsistent and as a result these teachers resort to harsh disciplinary measures when handling learners who misbehave.

Bray (2005) maintains that the purpose of a code of conduct is to promote proper and appropriate behaviour and set standards for positive discipline which are essential in any school. According to the South African Schools Act of (1996) a school’s Code of conduct can maintain or improve an existing positive learning situation, if its rules and regulations are enforced consistently by all school authorities and if learners comply with it; this can reduce the need to impose tough disciplinary action or measures on misbehaving learners. Although the respondents acknowledged that Protea has a code of conduct, the evidence suggests that some teachers are rather unfamiliar with the policy and some agreed that they had never physically seen the policy. In addition this school lacks a bullying policy and bullying is not adequately addressed in the code of conduct. As a result many bullies are uncertain of the consequences or repercussions of their bullying behavior and continue with this type of behaviour. This lack of awareness may possibly be the underlying cause of learner discipline

problems and the inconsistencies among teachers in managing discipline. Many of the strategies recommended for addressing discipline problems are not widely practiced at schools. Some teachers tend to operate with a standard range of strategies when handling discipline problems, as seen above. Seeing the discipline problems in this way explains the neglect of other circumstances like home backgrounds, social problems and parental apathy among others. While many teachers are less receptive to managing discipline through counseling, pastoral care or involving other social organisations, others support and use this approach to discipline, proclaiming on its merits and intrinsic worth.

4.6 Effectiveness of Management Approaches used at Protea

While some teachers adopt a harsh and hard approach, others use a more lenient approach. Teachers using both approaches argue for their effectiveness. The teachers that adopt punitive approaches feel that although they may seem rather callous, in certain instances where learners insist on being unruly, the teachers cannot risk taking the leniency route.

Bear, Cavalier and Manning (2005) support the effectiveness of an authoritative, stringent teacher who uses punitive approaches as a tool to correct and prevent discipline problems in schools. They further suggest that when teachers set high standards, embrace high expectations and enforce rules in a fair, firm and consistent manner including involving learners in decisions regarding their behavior, punitive measures are used positively as a way of learners exhibiting appropriate behaviour willingly rather than grudgingly. Bear (2010) adds that mild forms of punishment such as verbal reprimands, physical exclusion and removing privileges are not as effective as harsher forms of punishment like suspension. Arif and Rafi (2007) maintain that punishment promptly ends negative behavior on the part of delinquents which, in turn, quickly sends a message to other learners that unacceptable behavior and disruptions will not be tolerated. This non-acceptance creates an atmosphere that permits all learners to behave appropriately and focus on completing class tasks timeously. We find evidence of this approach in the testimonies of some of the above-mentioned respondents like Carol and Marlon of Protea, who have employed punitive measures as a means of correction and a way of affording learners the opportunity to learn appropriate behaviour, self discipline and to prevent future behavioural problems. We must be careful however not to pathologise teachers who use more punitive measures to manage classrooms. We cannot equate harsh disciplinary tactics with not caring for learners. In fact many teachers indicated that they employ these strict rules simply because they care for the

child and their intention is to correct deviant behaviour and not to unduly punish learners. However, research on the management of learner discipline in the classroom suggests that a warm, receptive and pastoral approach has more merit than a stricter, more rigid approach (see Chapter two – literature review).

McLanahan and Sandefur (1994) argue that when teachers offer learners a warm, receptive and pastoral approach to discipline, this may be a turning point for learners to mend their ways. Schools can make a difference in a learner's behaviour by setting out clear rules and specifying rewards and sanctions for breaking the rules (Smith, 1999). The quintessence of the rewards systems is the belief that children can choose how to behave. When teachers recognise and reward 'good' behaviour and punish 'bad' behavior, good behaviour will be encouraged. Learners may be extrinsically rewarded in the form of stickers, stars, sweets, toys, etc; however, this may be an expensive venture. Intrinsically rewarding learners may teach them that learning and good behaviour are rewards unto themselves (Lewis, 2012). Intrinsic rewards are free and may come in the form of praise and compliments or even thumbs up which can encourage learners to rise to their teacher's expectations of good behaviour. Carol and Dafeni's testimonies above confirm the positive effects of rewards. Rewards can be very effective in a school setting where teachers may reward and praise learners for appropriate behaviour and punish undesirable behavior by withholding all rewards. Learners should be rewarded for good behaviour and good work in a fair and consistent manner, taking into account individual capabilities and aptitudes. Teachers should encourage learners to believe that good behavior is its own reward, because it offers learners self-respect, confidence, and the wonderful feeling of belonging in a classroom that needs and appreciates them. However it is important for teachers to use the reward approach carefully, as Lewis (2012) found that in some circumstances praise and rewards by teachers could have a deleterious effect; for example, if a child who is perceived by his peers as being a model child is over-praised, this could isolate him/her from the group. Other learners may become aggressive and violent to the said learner, resulting in discipline problems. Therefore teachers should be sensitive to the feelings of potentially vulnerable individuals as their reward system can encourage discipline problems. In some situations extrinsic rewards may demotivate learners when the rewards are removed and if used on a large scale, learners may fail to be motivated in the absence of a promised reward.

4.7 Conclusion

While each school may have one form of managing discipline which is dominant and which prescribes the ideal form that learner behaviour should take, there are always other approaches present within a school. These may be marginal. They may be silenced or complicit.

While I highlight the management approaches present at Protea, I am also careful to pick up on cases and instances that did not lend themselves to being explained as part of a system, in other words, the system that the school or Education Department requires the management of discipline to conform with. The management of learner discipline at Protea had a contradictory totality and this is important in explaining why some teachers did not respond to learner mis-behaviour with severe punitive measures.

Throughout this theses I sought to eschew the conception of a qualitative inquiry where I simply ‘tell it like it is’, representing social reality in an unproblematic fashion. One of the arguments I make is that learner indiscipline does not automatically lead to stringent disciplinary measures by teachers and that a particular teacher may act with severity and austerity at particular times under particular circumstances and differently in other circumstances.

The majority of the teachers at Protea, both male and female, did not publicly subscribe to harsh ways of disciplining learners. While I arrived at this conclusion from my observations as well as from the interviews with teachers, I must draw attention to the fact that some teachers, who may have subscribed to ‘softer’ forms of discipline, may occasionally use a ‘tougher’ approach. In addition, other teachers who were routinely ‘tough,’ might have a ‘soft side’ (at times). We must be careful to note that a particular teacher’s approach to discipline is not absolute. He/she may not adopt the same attitude and approach in every setting and in every situation to manage discipline. Behaviour is not rigid, but fluid and flexible. My intention in this study was not to categorise teachers into boxes of managing discipline. Labels or boxes never fit completely. However this study has found that teachers choose one approach more often than others due to their ignorance or clouded interpretation and implementation of the school’s Code of Conduct. However, some teachers maintained in the interviews that they never used corporal punishment to discipline learners, and were totally opposed to using force against learners.

The different perceptions of learner discipline and the management thereof at Protea have major implications for dealing with this issue. When the staff members engage in discussion on matters of learner discipline, there is no common understanding and consistency in managing discipline. Some staff members may perceive a lenient approach to learner discipline as unacceptable, while others do not share the same view. This depends on the importance one affixes to extenuating circumstances, such as the social ills that learners experience. Although a code of conduct and a vision and mission statement exist, it is evident from the interviews that their content has not been well communicated to staff members. My interviews and observations reveal that teachers accept that one of their functions is to maintain learner discipline, but there is no clear direction in this regard. All the respondents mentioned that they struggled with learner discipline, and some feel strongly that learner discipline has deteriorated since the abolition of corporal punishment. This deterioration has had a major, poignant impact on teachers, causing despondency and frustration.

This chapter dealt with the data analysis and findings of the research study. The objective was to explore and portray the experiences of teachers pertaining to learner discipline in school and in the classroom. The categories and themes extracted from the study were presented in the above analysis. Simultaneously, a brief literature check was undertaken in order to contextualise the findings of the study.

Chapter five will focus on the conclusions emanating from the findings and the formulation of guidelines in the form of recommendations that will assist teachers to maintain discipline in the school and the classroom. This chapter will also present recommendations for further research.

Chapter Five

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of the Research Process

The main aim of this study was to investigate the manner in which teachers at Protea Primary School contribute to the establishment and maintenance of discipline at the school. The study aimed to elicit responses to the research questions presented in Chapter one:

- To what extent do learner discipline problems affect the day-to-day functioning of the school and what is the nature and extent thereof?
- What are the causes of the learner discipline problems that the teachers in this Phoenix school face?
- How do the teachers manage these learner discipline problems?

This study also aimed to examine the diverse methods of classroom and whole-school discipline which the teachers use. In order to achieve the general aim of this research study a number of more explicit objectives were formulated:

- a) Establish what the experience of the teachers at Protea were concerning learner discipline in the school and classroom.
- b) Examine the perceptions of the teachers with regards to a disciplined school environment.
- c) Identify strategies that teachers use in managing learner discipline problems.
- d) Provide possible guidelines and recommendations pertaining to the effective involvement of teachers in school discipline.

In Chapter one (Introduction) I discussed the context and background of the study and provided a rationale for it. I highlighted the objectives of the study, its importance and the problem statement. The research questions that were formulated and the methodology that underpinned the research study were also discussed.

In Chapter two (Literature Review) I reviewed relevant literature and research on learner discipline in schools relating to the diverse types and causes of learner discipline problems that teachers encounter in their daily teaching in schools. Some contributory factors that

relate to these problems were also described. Different management approach strategies recommended by various educational researchers were identified; these included measures of punishment, the lenient approach and praise and rewards. The theoretical and conceptual frameworks that informed this study were described.

In Chapter three (Research Methodology) I provided a detailed account of the research methods and design used to generate answers to the research questions. I provided a theoretical justification for the design and indicated how the methods were applied practically in the process of conducting the research. The limitations of the study were also discussed.

In Chapter four (Analysis Chapter) the research findings based on data analysis were presented. A critical integration of findings from the literature review and the empirical research findings was presented. I analysed the interviews conducted with the teachers, which focussed on their personal experiences of learner discipline problems in Protea. This chapter analysed the diverse learner discipline problems that the teachers identified as challenges to effective teaching and the possible reasons why teachers thought that learners behaved in the manner they did. The different strategies that teachers used in managing some of these problems were also highlighted. From the findings it emerged that some teachers use stringent management approaches, while some may use a more pastoral, compassionate approach at times. By and large, it was found that teachers are finding it difficult to cope with learner behaviour that disrupts the day-to-day functioning of the teaching and learning process.

The purpose of this final chapter is to present the summary, limitations, conclusions and recommendations of the study.

This chapter will present the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study, a summary of the research process and practical recommendations for the management of learner discipline. The limitations of the study and suggestions for further research will also be discussed.

5.2 Main Conclusions of the Study

Before I embark on a discussion of the main conclusions of the research study I briefly summarise the various discipline problems that teachers experienced at Protea and their perspectives on the factors that influenced these discipline problems, as discussed in Chapter four.

Learners' disruptive behaviour, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.2.2, was a huge challenge that interrupted daily teaching and learning at Protea. Disruptions by learners wasted a lot of teaching time and were frustrating for teachers. From the interviews with teachers and my classroom observations it can be concluded that disruptive behaviour must be handled immediately it occurs and not postponed or delayed in order to prevent this problem from escalating to unmanageable proportions.

Learner dress and uniform, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.2.3, also posed a discipline problem at Protea. While many learners use fashion as a means to construct their identities in terms of social class and gender, other learners breached the school's dress code policy simply because they could not afford the full school uniform and wore certain items like coloured socks and takkies instead of the prescribed shoes and socks.

Timekeeping and punctuality, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.2.4, was also a serious problem among learners at this school. Coming to school late and not being prompt to report to class hampered and disrupted the flow of lessons and in many cases the teachers were unable to complete the work. This frustrated teachers and compromised the delivery of quality education.

The poor work ethic of learners, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.2.5, were also seen as a discipline problem at Protea. Many learners did not complete their class work tasks, homework, assignments and projects timeously while others displayed blatant disregard and refused to do any schoolwork. This was a huge challenge for teachers who in many instances simply accepted that these learners have no real aspiration for academic success.

Bullying, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.2.6, was a major problem among many learners and created a number of discipline problems. Victims often refused to attend school or steered clear of certain areas at school. They struggled with poor self-esteem and became depressed and withdrawn. Bullying also served to heighten the violence and aggression among learners.

Therefore it is imperative that bullying incidents are identified in the early stages so that the victims and perpetrators can be given the necessary help and bullying can be avoided.

The factors that influence discipline problems at school revolved mainly around home and social problems, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.3.1, which included single-parent homes, abandonment of children, parental apathy and unemployment and poverty. At Protea many learners originate from single-parent homes where death, divorce and abandonment are features of their lives. It was overwhelmingly clear that these homes and social problems contributed to a large extent to the manner in which learners behaved at school. Sadly, the findings indicate that many learners from these backgrounds act out, venting the frustrations in their personal life by being disruptive and sometimes bullying other children.

The main conclusions drawn from this study are discussed in relation to the research questions outlined in Chapter one. Three broad conclusions emerged from the analysis in Chapter four. The first, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.5, is that many teachers use a heavy handed approach to managing discipline problems among learners. The second is that other teachers used a softer, more 'gentle' approach to handling discipline problems. The third conclusion is that school policy does not seem to have the desired effect in terms of assisting teachers to handle discipline problems. There were contradictory patterns of handling discipline among learners, where teachers promulgated or supported a particular approach explicitly, but at times used an alternative approach. I discuss each of these conclusions below:

5.3. Summary of the Discipline Strategies employed by Teachers

5.3.1 Heavy Handed Approach

Despite the fact that corporal punishment is banned and its use is prohibited at Protea, some teachers resort to a heavy handed approach in an effort to manage learner discipline. Some teachers may inflict pain by giving learners a slap or two or a stroke with a ruler on the palm in the event of extreme unruliness. Some, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.5.1, resorted to unpleasant, harsh verbal reprimands and insults were also sometimes used as a ploy to encourage good behavior. Withholding privileges, like not allowing learners to participate in sporting activities or accompany fellow learners on field trips and excursions was another strategy that these teachers used to manage discipline problems. Lunch break detention and

excluding learners from the class for constantly disrupting lessons also featured. Teachers also revealed that in some instances they sent the delinquents to the H.O.D or principal to be dealt with. Some also claimed that they entered the offender's name in their misdemeanor files. They also gave learners three warnings for misbehaviour after which letters were sent summoning their parents to school to discuss their children's behavioural problems. Some teachers felt that it was important for them to maintain their power and authority in the classroom and they resorted to using the above strategies in order to keep learners in line. Other teachers believed that learners were not being properly disciplined at home and felt duty bound to fulfill this role at school. Others simply felt that learners were generally naughty and needed a firm hand in order to rectify negative behaviour. While many teachers argued that the strategies outlined above were effective in enforcing learner discipline, ill-discipline was still rampant at Protea and, by the teachers' own admission, on the increase. There were teachers however, that employed a different approach to handle learner discipline. I found no evidence of them challenging the other teachers' approaches; they simply believed that a different, softer approach was more effective.

5.3.2 Softer Approach

Some teachers, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.5.2, employed a softer approach by using pleasant, kind, motivational words as a way of getting their learners to behave. They practiced pastoral care to encourage their learners to stop misbehaving and correct their ill-discipline. These teachers tried counseling their learners in an attempt to find out why they were misbehaving. Some teachers praised learners for good behaviour to maneuver other learners to behave. They, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.5.3, also rewarded learners with tokens and sweets. Some respondents also highlighted that it was important to understand the socio-economic home backgrounds, as understanding the cause of their negative behaviour would place them in a better position to handle the problem. This often involved them offering pastoral care and encouraging good behaviour in a more lenient manner. These teachers claimed that the softer approach was effective and enabled them to manage discipline and promote self discipline.

This study also highlights that the most common strategy used by Protea's teachers is based on the assertive model of classroom management; I refer the reader to Chapter 2.8.2, this implies that the consequence of breaking the rules is punishment of some sort. However this varied from teacher to teacher; some resorted to time out, cleaning up after school, ordering

the learner to stand in a corner of the classroom, sending the learner to the H.O.D or principal among others. Fundamentally teachers use punishment to enforce discipline in their classroom and rewards to encourage good behaviour. My observations revealed that teachers that employ control-oriented strategies are not always successful in establishing discipline. Even though some teachers manage to maintain learner misbehaviour within tolerable limits, some are still finding it relatively challenging. When control-oriented strategies are used to establish classroom discipline learners engage in a range of coping mechanisms in a quest to accomplish some degree of autonomy or, adversely, adopt a ploy to make life more difficult for those attempting to coerce them. Learners who have been coerced generally exhibit diminished self-control when they are outside the influence of the control.

This study has also revealed that teachers employ diverse discipline strategies depending on their experience and discretion, which explains the inconsistencies of the management of discipline problems at Protea.

5.3.3 School Policy

In some instances the school also complicity contributed to the problem of learner discipline because of the manner in which it constructed and implemented policy.

Large classes, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.4.1, were a fertile breeding ground for learners to practice different types of deviant behavior. Teaching a large class and handling discipline issues was a problem that teachers found insurmountable.

The school attempts to control learners through rules, regulations and policies such as the code of conduct, I refer the reader to Chapter 4.5.4. Many teachers felt that there were inconsistencies in implementing the code of conduct. Both teachers and learners were unfamiliar with the policy and the consequences of violating it. It is concluded that the school code of conduct is not effectively communicated to teachers and learners and that it is at the very least, poorly implemented. This contributes to learners not behaving according to expected norms.

Several teachers at Protea are still grappling with the management of discipline after the abolition of corporal punishment and many are unaware of alternatives to corporal punishment. Many teachers indicated that they had not received any formal behaviour management training. A possibility exists that many teachers have a limited knowledge of

disciplinary strategies; this leads to disciplinary measures being punitive and sometimes humiliating rather than corrective and nurturing. Ultimately, the Protea teachers find themselves in classroom situations where they are confronted with a lack of suitable strategies to handle behavioural problems.

The teachers managed discipline by utilising different approaches; a strict, stringent approach and a more lenient, pastoral approach using praise and rewards; I refer the reader to Chapter 4.5.1 – 4.5.3. Most teachers used anomalous methods to maintain discipline as some learners choose to behave in a particular context where teachers use stringent but harsh forms of discipline. There was no fixed way that teachers used to manage discipline; rather, there is fluidity in the strategies that different teachers employ. For example, learners in a class where the teacher portrayed him/herself as stringent might behave.

Classroom discipline ought to be managed in a caring and confident manner. Judging from the results of this study these aspects appear to be lacking on the part of most teachers, who display a more punitive approach to managing discipline. Fewer teachers offer a more pastoral, lenient and caring approach. While I did not interview learners, my observations revealed that they found it difficult to cope in classroom settings when contradictory strategies and approaches were used by teachers to instill expected behaviour. Disciplining learners makes them aware that the world is an orderly place, but when certain types of behaviour are punished while others are not, this creates confusion among learners.

5.3.4 Classroom Management Models

Teachers should make attempts to understand the two models of classroom discipline management and their underlying principles. Background knowledge of the discipline management models, I refer the reader to Chapter 2.8, that is Rudolf Dreikurs' (1968) discipline and Logical Consequences Model and the Canter's (1992) Assertive Discipline Model are viewed as crucial models which can provide teachers with an understanding of the continuum highlighted by the insight of the models with regards to teacher *versus* learner control. Dreikurs' model postulates that social recognition of learners affords them the opportunity to rectify their own behavior; the idea of logical consequences replaces the idea of punishment. The logical consequences model further accentuates that there is a need to satisfy learners' intrinsic needs and to use logical consequences to reform poor learner behavior. Drawing on this model helped me to analyse teacher's management of learner discipline at Protea. It provided a better understanding of how a contextual factor like home

backgrounds influenced teacher's handling of infringement of school rules and policies. The Assertive discipline model hypothesises immense levels of teacher control in the classroom and focuses on the ideology of punishments and rewards. This theory provided insight and helped me to analyse why certain teachers adopted one approach more than the other, an argument that I make in Chapter 4, which is consistent with the models discussed above. The management of discipline within a school context goes beyond the formulae of current theory of the models discussed in this study as I have shown in the analyses chapter. Different theoretical perspectives have their own contributions to make in understanding learner discipline, however for the purposes of this study the discipline and logical consequences model and the assertive discipline model were important and helpful in analysing and explaining the dynamics of how teachers manage discipline at Protea,

A sound understanding of these models will equip teachers to formulate their own personal theories of managing discipline which will act as a guiding tool to eradicate the problems that stem from having to undertake decisions in the absence of a firm set of principles. This is imperative because an appropriate discipline system ought to be established by teachers of their own accord and engineered to satisfy their own personalities and the realities of their learners, the community and the school.

It would be naive to believe that the Dreikurs and Canter frameworks will neatly fit my work; however I used these frameworks to inform the analysis in this study. It particularly helped me to make sense of difference rather than fixed 'types' into which individuals or actions can be slotted. For example I found many instances where a teacher would react in one way to a discipline problem in one context and in a different way in another context.

As a means of explaining/exploring the management of learner discipline by teachers it was useful to adopt the models offered by Dreikers and Canter. While it is important to note the contribution of these theories to understanding management of learner discipline, it was important in this study to treat subjects in complex and fluid ways taking into account the individual's interaction, dynamisms and contradictions in handling discipline. Nonetheless intervention programmes and policies designed to handle learner discipline would benefit by drawing on the perspectives of the models discussed in the study as I outline in the recommendations section that follows.

5.4 Theses of Study

Drawing from the data analysis from chapter 4, rising out of this study it seems quite clear that teacher's understanding in learner discipline influences the management of these learner discipline problems. Furthermore these perspectives and understanding are situational and fluid thereby making it difficult to suggest any one strategy or group of strategies to manage discipline problems in school.

5.5 Recommendations

In light of the findings of this study the following recommendations are offered to help teachers alleviate some of the problems in the school and classroom situation:

1. The Code of Conduct is a fundamental document that all schools formulate to uphold discipline and order. It is recommended that Protea Primary formulate a new and revised code of conduct in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, including parents, learners, teachers, the school governing body and the management of the school. The stakeholders must ensure that the school rules and the consequences of the transgression of these rules are clearly stated. This policy should then be workshopped by the management of the school with the teachers who in turn can cascade the information to learners, so that all learners are aware of the contents of the policy and the consequences of transgressing it. This will ensure consistency on the part of all teachers in disciplining learners. All learners should also be given a copy of the Code of Conduct yearly, with an acknowledgement slip to fill and return to the school, so that their parents are also aware of the stipulations of the policy and the consequences of transgression. Since Protea has many learners who are predominantly isiZulu mother tongue speakers, the code of conduct should be translated in isiZulu to accommodate the literacy levels of all parents.

2. The Department of Education should ensure that all the schools under its jurisdiction have well-communicated discipline policies, a code of conduct and school rules, which clearly stipulate the consequences of misbehaviour.

3. The management of the school should be more actively involved in managing discipline issues. They need to offer more support and guidance to teachers. The school should make copies of the policy document, *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment* and ensure that each

teacher is given a copy. The contents of the document should be work shopped with all teachers.

4. The Department of Education should frequently host effective discipline management workshops for principals, S.M.T. members and teachers to facilitate the development of effective discipline management strategies.

5. Amongst other things, this study revealed that teachers are not consistent in applying disciplinary measures to learners. The school management, together with all the teachers and other stakeholders should agree on a common approach to responding to learners' behaviour, particularly regarding the issue of rewards and punishments. Disciplinary measures should be consistently applied by teachers to ensure that learners understand and obey the rules that govern the classroom.

6. Teachers need to work collaboratively with fellow teachers so that when they face difficulties that hinder their teaching, they can consult colleagues for advice. Teachers could meet on a weekly basis to discuss their individual problems and collaboratively brainstorm solutions to effectively manage them. Teachers should also familiarise themselves with appropriate behaviour management theories, which offer promising explanations and management strategies. The S.M.T. has an important role to play in developing initiatives such as these and ensuring their execution. This collaboration will also ensure consistency in handling discipline and any other problems confronting the school.

7. In order to address the problem of disruptive learners, teachers should be obliged to seek the guidance and support of their colleagues and managers when faced with intolerable problems. Open discussions will allow teachers to learn different discipline management techniques from one another and may facilitate consistency in managing learner problems.

8. Learners should be guided by teachers to judge their own behaviour and create plans for improving it. As an alternative to passing judgement on or punishing a delinquent's actions, teachers should pose questions that encourage learners to judge their own behaviour and come up with measures to correct it. Teachers must stay resolute and, if required, facilitate the learners to accept ownership for their own discipline problems.

9. Teachers could also ask learners to formulate alternative ways of behaving when they are confronted with analogous circumstances. They should supervise learners' plans to ensure feedback and reinforcement. Learners will feel more committed if teachers acknowledge the validity of their plans. Teachers can achieve this through eye contact, a smile, a pat on the back, words of praise or at a multifaceted, planned meeting to discuss their plans and requirements for future success. Previous mistakes should not be thrown at learners; rather, they should be taught appropriate behaviour for the future.

10. A discipline approach that authorises teachers to work cooperatively with learners, their parents and other support structures in behaviour management is needed. This would encourage more parental involvement. Partnerships with parents and other support structures in behaviour management will be reinforced and learners' behavioural problems can be dealt with in their initial stages. Teachers could also seek the support of psychologists and social workers to help develop learners into responsible adults that will make a positive contribution to South African society.

11. There is frequently no logical connection between learner misbehaviour and consequences. The application of consequences explained in Chapter two, is not considered. Adopting a points system would cause learners to receive points for various acts of misconduct, and could ultimately lead to detention. In this way detention becomes the ultimate consequence, irrespective of the type of misbehaviour.

12. Good values that develop a learner's character should be inculcated to assist them in differentiating between right and wrong. The onus is on individual teachers to inculcate good morals and values in learners and to be good role models, as without values learning appropriate discipline is impossible.

5.6 Limitations of the study

This research study suffered from the following limitations:

Although the respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, some hesitated to divulge certain information, fearing that they it might be too sensitive. While some respondents were over cautious, others may have not been completely honest and true in their responses, for fear that this would expose flaws in their school. Some were also reluctant to be interviewed because the interviews were tape recorded. The S.M.T. and some teachers were rather cautious during the research period; some displayed mixed emotions and

resistance to my undertaking of the research at this school. As I am a full time teacher, I experienced time constraints; other responsibilities led to me restricting the investigation to one public primary school, in the Phoenix district. It would be of value to broaden the scope of the research study to other public primary and high schools. While it is acknowledged that this limitation will have an impact on the scope of the research findings and the recommendations, this does not invalidate it in its entirety. As this study is also essentially confined to an urban setting, its findings and recommendations cannot be extended to the management of discipline in rural and other contexts.

5.7 Recommendations for further research

While much has been written on the management of learner discipline, I am of the opinion that further research is required. The following suggestions are made for further research:

1. An inquiry into the connection between the culture and socio-economic background of learners and their behaviour in schools.
2. Innovative ways in which the community can assist teachers and parents to promote discipline in schools.

5.8 Conclusion

This final chapter has provided an overview of the research process and the main conclusions drawn from the study. The limitations were discussed, as were the implications of this study, recommendations for interventions, and suggestions for further research.

The objective of this study was to obtain insight into how teachers managed learner discipline problems in a primary school in Phoenix. Maintaining appropriate discipline is crucial for the functionality of any school. This study employed a qualitative research design to achieve an understanding of this phenomenon. The findings of the study have answered the research questions posed in Chapter one. These confirm the conclusions reached by diverse researchers that were discussed in the literature review. Based on the Assertive model, teachers opt to implement punitive and rewarding measures. Different strategies were identified, including proactive strategies in the management of learner discipline problems. Effective and efficient teaching is not possible or practical in the absence of good discipline. Educating learners in good discipline requires that teachers help learners to develop self

discipline, self direction and control, instill a reasonable degree of social conformity and help them to achieve a happy, fulfilled, disciplined life.

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Annexure A: Letter to the Department

The Researcher Officer
Research, Strategy, Policy
Development and ECMIS Directorate,
G23 Metropolitan Building,
Pietermaritzburg
3200

Mr S. Alwar

Sir

Academic Research: Request for Permission to Conduct a Research Study in a School.

My proposed research title is:

Teachers Management of Learner Discipline in a Primary School in the Phoenix District.

I am an educator who is currently studying towards a Masters of Education Degree in the field of Educational Leadership Management Policy and Planning at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. My study involves research work that needs to be conducted in a school. In view of the fact that learner discipline problems poses as a major challenge for teachers, the focus of my study is to investigate the causes and nature thereof, as this a very relevant topic and of great concern to all in the educational field. The principle aim of this proposed research is to find possible management strategies to learner discipline problems that teachers face in the primary schools

I humbly seek permission to conduct the abovementioned research study in a Primary school in Ward 141 in the Phoenix West Region. The participating school in this ward has been randomly selected and permission will also be attained from the principal of the school before the commencement of any research takes place. In order to provide an analysis of the present situation regarding discipline in our schools I intend to conduct interviews with a sample of five post level one teachers of diversity to gain their perceptions on learner discipline problems to acquire information to complete this research study.

The school and the five teachers who partake in this study will do so, on a voluntarily basis and confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. I also hereby undertake that the name of the participating school or the teachers will not be mentioned in the subsequent thesis. I will

ensure that normal learning and teaching is not disrupted in any way whatsoever whilst conducting this research study. The interviews will take place after school hours.

The information acquired from this research study, will be accessible to the Department of Education, as well as school managers. A copy of the completed thesis will be made available to the Department. Findings and feedback would be shared with the school involved in the research.

For further information regarding this study, feel free to contact my supervisors. My supervisors are Professor Labby Ramathan and Dr Vijay Hamlall who are lecturers at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood Campus, who can be contacted on 031- 2608065. The reply could be sent to me by e-mail at: nirashasingh27@yahoo.com

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours faithfully

N. Singh

Student number: 204516733

Contact No: 031- 5058903 (Home)

Cell : 0842294852

Work : 031 5071119

Annexure B: Letter to the Principal

The Principal
Sir / Madam

Academic Research: Request For Permission To Conduct a Research Study in your School.

My proposed research title is:

Teacher's Management of Learners' Discipline in a Primary School in the Phoenix District.

I am an educator who is currently studying towards a Masters of Education Degree in the field of Educational Leadership Management Policy and Planning at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. As it is mandatory according to UKZN, that in order for me to complete this degree and my thesis it entails research work that needs to be conducted in a school. In view of the fact that learner discipline problems poses as a major challenge for teachers, the focus of my study is to investigate the causes and nature thereof, as this a very relevant topic and of great concern to all in the educational field. The principal aim of this proposed research is to find possible management strategies to learner discipline problems that teachers face in the primary schools

I humbly seek permission to conduct the abovementioned research study in your school. This dissertation involves research in the area of Management and in this case it is How Teachers Manage Learner Discipline in your school.

I would like to conduct this research from January to September. I intend to conduct interviews after school hours with a sample of five post level one teachers of diversity to gain their perceptions on learner discipline problems to acquire information to complete this research study.

The school and teachers who partake in this study will do so, on a voluntarily basis and confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. The participants have no obligation to participate in this research and may withdraw from it any point. I also hereby undertake that the name of your school or the teachers will not be mentioned in the subsequent thesis. I will

ensure that normal learning and teaching is not disrupted in any way whatsoever whilst conducting this research study.

I will to share my findings and feedback on this research with you and your staff members. The information acquired from this research study, will be accessible to the Department of Education, as well as school managers. I hope that the information gained from this research will be of great help to you and your staff and that together we might find solutions for our current discipline problem in schools in order to provide a study environment conducive to learning and teaching for all concerned.

For further information regarding this study, feel free to contact my supervisors. My supervisors are Professor Labby Ramathan and Dr Vijay Hamlall who are lecturers at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Edgewood Campus, who can be contacted on 031- 2608065.

The reply could be sent to me by e-mail at: nirashasingh27@yahoo.com

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Yours faithfully

N. Singh

Student number : 204516733

Contact No: 031- 5058903 (Home)

Cell : 0842294852

Work : 031 5071119

Annexure C: Informed Consent Form

My proposed research title is:

Teachers Management of Learner Discipline in a Primary School in the Phoenix District.

Dear Participant

You are being invited to participate in this research project that is aimed at exploring knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that are required by educators in order to examine and establish common threads of effective discipline management strategies in primary schools.

I am a teacher who is currently studying towards a Masters of Education Degree in the field of Educational Leadership Management Policy and Planning at the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. As it is mandatory according to UKZN, that in order for me to complete this degree and my thesis it entails research work that needs to be conducted in a school. In view of the fact that learner discipline problems poses as a major challenge for teachers, the focus of my study is to investigate the causes and nature thereof, as this a very relevant topic and of great concern to all in the educational field. The principal aim of this proposed research is to find possible management strategies to learner discipline problems that teachers face in the primary schools. The purpose of this study is to examine common threads of effective discipline management as perceived by educators. The study will also look at barriers to effective management of school discipline.

Your contribution, perceptions and experiences at your school will form a integral part of this research study. Your school has been randomly selected and five level one educators with a minimum of five years of teaching experience will be chosen to participate in this interview. During the interview process, the educator will be asked questions related to the learner discipline problems that they experience. There will be at least 2 formal interview sessions of 45 minutes each. With the expressed permission of each participant, the interviews will be tape-recorded. The educators who partake in this study will do so, on a voluntarily basis and confidentiality and anonymity will be ensured. No participant's name will be used, but each interview will be coded with a number in order to define categories. The participants have no obligation to participate in this research and may withdraw from it any point. I also hereby undertake that the name of your school or the educators will not be mentioned in the subsequent thesis. Please feel free to ask any questions that you might have concerning this

study. Some of the questions asked during the interview may make the participant feel uncomfortable or may be difficult to answer. Participants are free to stop the interview at any time, and may choose not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable. The tapes and transcripts will be stored in a safe place (under locked facility) for a minimum period of five years after which it would be destroyed by means of incineration. The results of this study will be published and/or presented without naming the participants. All relevant data gathered during the interview, will be discarded.

The information acquired from this research study, will be accessible to the Department of Education, as well as school managers.

Declaration by Participant

I, (Full names of participant) _____
hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in this research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

Signature of Participant

Date

Annexure D:

Interview Schedule

Teacher's Management of Learner Discipline Problems in a Primary school in the suburb of Phoenix, Durban.

Participants: Teachers

Duration: 45mins

Section A: Biographical Information - Interview One

1. What is your present occupational status? Probe: Are you in management or do you hold a senior teacher status?
2. How long have you been a teacher? How long have you been at this school?
3. Were you appointed to this school or did you volunteer to come here? Probes: How do you feel about being at this school? Are you happy at this school? What do you like/dislike about this school?
4. Besides your daily teaching tasks what other duties do you perform at this a school? Probe: Do you enjoy doing these tasks? If you had a choice would you still do these tasks?
5. Please provide some information about the home- backgrounds that the learners come from? Probe: In your opinion do you think that the learner's background affects or contributes to any learner discipline problems?
6. What is the academic performance of learners at this school? Probes: Are the learner's high achievers or do they struggle to perform academically?
7. What kind of relationship do you share with the other educators of this school?
8. How would you describe your relationship with the learners at this school?
9. What really upsets you or makes you angry about the learners at this school? Probe: If you could, how would you change things at this school to make it better for you?

Section B:**Interview Two**

1. How many learners and educators are at your school? Probes: What would you say is your learner, teacher ratio approximately in this school? Does this relate to learner discipline problems?
2. How often does the school have an assembly of the general learner population? Probes : Is the Assembly orderly? Are clear directives given to learners at the assembly?
3. How often does the school have parent teacher meetings? Probes: What are some of the issues that are discussed at these meetings? Is learner discipline problems discussed at this meeting and to what extent?
4. Do you inform the parents of the disciplinary methods and the expectations of the code of conduct? How do you go about this? Explain.
5. Do you think that there is enough parental involvement in maintaining discipline at this school? Explain.
6. Does your school have a clear code of conduct? Do the learners know the school rules and what is stated in the Code of conduct of your school? Explain.
7. How do you make the learners aware of the expectations of the code of conduct and of the consequences for not following the rules at the school?
8. How do you handle indiscipline of learners?
9. In your opinion, are transgressors handled in a uniform, consistent way by other teachers and management? Probe: Is the Code of Conduct principles followed in handling these offenders?
10. In an event when a teacher is absent what relief measures are followed in your school? Probe: Do you have a visible substitute timetable for whenever a teacher is absent, if not then explain what procedure is followed?

Section C:

Interview Three

1. How would you explain the learner's behaviour in this school? Probe: Do you experience any learner discipline problems here and are they similar to what you have previously experienced? If not how are they different? Explain.
2. What is your opinion about discipline practices in this school? Probe: What are current discipline practices in your school?
3. What discipline strategies are used in this school to establish discipline both in and out of the classroom? Mention a few strategies and explain how it is functional.
4. What are the most effective discipline practices you have used and what are the least effective discipline practices that you have used?
5. Are learners locked out if they come late to school? Explain what happens to them.
6. Does the school employ search and seize procedures? Elaborate on your school procedure.
7. Would you say that the current procedures of handling discipline in your school are efficient and effective enough? If so, Why?
8. What recommendation would you offer to fellow colleagues when handling learner discipline problems?
9. Does the staff jointly discuss how to handle discipline at this school or does each educator practice what they feel is best?
10. Does your school employ corporal punishment? If not, then how do you discipline the learners?
11. Which of the alternates to corporal punishment do you utilise from the Department of Education policy: Alternatives to corporal punishment? What would you recommend as an alternative to corporal punishment?
12. To what extent do you think handling discipline problems affect teaching time?
13. Would you say that discipline problems in your school increased or decreased during the recent years, and what would you say could be the reasons behind this?
14. Do you think there are any additional barriers to effective discipline practices that we have not discussed yet? Can you elaborate?
15. Have you or your staff ever received any training in regard of how to deal with discipline at school? How was this training conducted?
16. How do you perceive the management of discipline at your school?
17. Would you say that the teachers in your school have learner discipline under control? Explain.

18. What do you think are the challenges that teachers face when managing discipline? Name at least a few.

19. Would you say your school has sufficient measures in place to manage discipline? Motivate your answer.

20. What, according to you, should your school School Management Team (S.M.T) do about discipline?

21. How do you think teachers together with the S.M.T can manage discipline problems?

22. Personally what would you say could improve discipline at your school?

23. What type of assistance do you need in order to deal with of these problems?

Thank you for your kind cooperation. It really is appreciated

Annexure E: Approval Letter from Department



kzn education

Department:
Education
KWAZULU-NATAL

Enquiries: Sibusiso Alwar

Tel: 033 341 8610

Ref.: 2/4/8/255

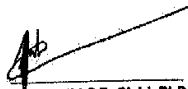
Mrs Nirasha Singh
18 Quilpalm Avenue
Palmview
Phoenix
4068

Dear Mrs Singh

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **Teachers Management of Learner Discipline in a Primary School in the Phoenix District**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 01 July 2012 to 31 December 2013.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Mr. Alwar at the contact numbers below.
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Director-Resources Planning, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to the following Schools and Institutions:


Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD
Head of Department: Education

2012/07/20
Date

...dedicated to service and performance
beyond the call of duty.

KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Annexure F:

Editor's Certificate

62 Ferguson Road

Glenwood

DURBAN 4001

Tel: 072 442 7896

Email: deanne.collins30@gmail.com

Income tax number: 0526066204

13 January 2013

This is to confirm that I have edited the thesis, "Teachers' Management of Learner Discipline in a Primary School in the suburb of Phoenix, Durban, KwaZulu-Natal", by Nirasha Singh, student number 204516733

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "D Collins".

(Ms) Deanne Collins (MA)

