

MANAGING DISCIPLINE IN A SCHOOL WITHIN A CONTEXT OF CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF A DURBAN SCHOOL

RESEARCH REPORT

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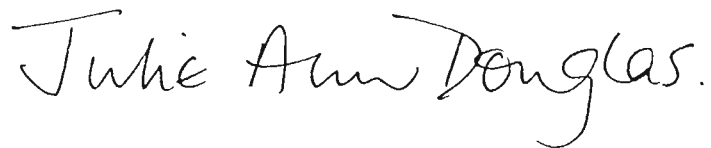
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DECLARATION

I, **Julie Ann Douglas**, declare that this dissertation is my own work, submitted in partial fulfillment of the degree of Master of Education at the University of Natal. I further declare that this dissertation has never been submitted at any other university or institution for any purpose, academic or otherwise.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Ann Douglas." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Ann Douglas

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ABSTRACT

Sociopolitical changes in South Africa have impacted on the education system in ways which have in turn affected the day-to-day running of schools. Changes in education policy such as cuts in state funding and redistribution of teachers have led to large classes and heavy timetables for the teachers at Queensville school.

Constitution-invoked legislation such as the abolishment of corporal punishment and the disallowance of either principal or governing body from expelling a learner, has placed further pressure on teachers to find alternative ways of maintaining order in the school and classroom. Set against the background of a changing school, within the context of wider educational changes both in South Africa and internationally, this research examines the management of discipline by exploring the experiences of the teachers of Queensville High. Particular focus is given to their opinions and the strategies they have adopted in order to cope.

Data was collected over a period of several months through observation, conversations, interviews discussion groups and a questionnaire. This was analysed and presentation was made in four sections. Firstly, a description was given of the school. Secondly an examination was made of types and patterns of discipline problems experienced by the teachers, and underlying and exacerbating causes. Thirdly a review was made of discipline management strategies used in the school: both individual and collective. Finally the views of the teachers about discipline were recorded. This data formed the basis for discussion of discipline management in South African schools

CHAPTER ONE

Background and Literature Review

The tide is flowing towards love instead of hate, towards understanding instead of towards bigoted moral indignation. It is a a slow tide. But even a slow tide carries a little of the contamination away and in time the tide must grow in volume.

(A. S. Neill, 1992 :50)

Introduction

Walker (1990) compared managing discipline in schools to a matter of survival and the stuff of nightmares. MacKechnie (1967) termed discipline methods and balance by teachers 'one of their most onerous professional responsibilities' (4). In the preface to a recent Education Department website publication, Kader Asmal (2000) acknowledged 'that many educators face daily struggles in their school environment with issues of discipline'. Within the prolific literature around the subject it is difficult to find a convincing response to the question 'why should this be so?'. Education is a complex and intangible institution that plays a part in all our lives and gives shape to our cultures and societies (Parker-Jenkins, 1999). Why must it also be a site of conflict between educators and learners? How can the situation be improved? Can it be changed?

Driven by such large questions and against a background of institutional authoritarianism and evolving reform in South Africa, this research proposes to study the experience and management of school discipline by a group of teachers. In this chapter a frame of reference will be provided through a synopsis of the local context, and exploration of global, national and local orientations to discipline in schools. Rationale will be offered for this paper and scope and limitations will be assessed. A review from the literature will be made of the conceptualisation and history of school discipline, including significant projects and research. Finally, consideration will be given to current thinking on the subject in South Africa and elsewhere and practical applications that might be useful in South African schools.

Background

South Africa right now is standing on the fault line between its authoritarian past and new-fledged democratic future. Stepping over is not easy and many are apprehensive, preferring to cling to known harsh old ways. In a sense too the world is stepping over to a new paradigm. Both local and global shifts are generated by a growing comprehension and criticism of the way that the world order is dominated by power and wealth, held in the hands of very few, maintained by force and expressed in exploitation and war. This comprehension is fuelling pressure to create a more equitable, democratic and peaceful world.

According to Fullan (1999)

We are at the very early stages of appreciating the nature and complexity of educational reform on a large scale. There have been attempts at large-scale reform earlier in the century, but they lacked the critical analysis we are now able to bring to bear on the problem.

South Africa and her institutions are caught up in this situation, as well as undergoing a process of rapid, radical change stemming from recent political transition in the country. The education system is particularly chronically affected in that internal restructuring and retraining challenge and undermine traditional ways of thinking about schools and what goes on in them. Authoritarian and isolationist constraints by the previous regime prevented the ingress of influence from the rest of the world. Now the floodgates have opened and South African teachers are reeling from the shock of global theories, ideologies and contrary influences. In particular Christian National Education and a colonialist frame of reference have produced a mindset among teachers, parents and society of acceptance of and reliance on centralised authority. This indicates that authoritarian patriarchy is still particularly overt, heavy handed and deeply entrenched in the cultures within this society.

Culmination of the above coupled with the pre-election situation of many schools as sites of contestation, protest and unrest, caused and validated strong perceptions among many that behaviour should be controlled through the exercise of power, that punishment is desirable and physical punishment acceptable. As far as school discipline is concerned South Africans are not finding it easy to move beyond the

debate concerning corporal punishment. On the other hand, following developments in the rest of the world, this was abolished in 1997 (Parker-Jenkins, 1999). Since then there has been controversy and media discussion giving rise to perception that abolishment has contributed to a breakdown of discipline in schools and society, and is responsible for poor matric results (Kirk, quoting Eileen Ka Nkosi Shandu, 2000).

Teachers are being forced from their comfort zones of traditional practice into the unconceived and unknown, causing uncertainty and fear. Incapacitating problems have been:

- changing conditions in many schools, not always welcome or constructive,
- unequal distribution of resources,
- poor and meagre school buildings,
- extremely large classes,
- inadequately trained, uncommitted and unprofessional teachers,
- rationalisation of resources and services to schools,
- decentralisation of responsibility onto the school community,
- retrenchment and redeployment of teachers,
- the introduction of peer assessment.

These factors have placed increasing pressure on the teaching profession, and complicated the desired move to a democratically organised education system, fitting to the needs of the South African situation. According to Robinson (1999) a teacher in South Africa now faces tremendous changes. The present teaching context is dramatically different from the one in which they were taught and trained as teachers. The speed with which new ideas, theories and global realities are entering the scenario bodes for even more radical change. The teacher stands between these factors and pressures on the one hand, and the child on the other – with the task of preparing the next generation to live and work in a world that is unknown and will be unrecognisable.

There is, moreover, a dawning recognition worldwide that education structures and practices are not working, and are in fact adding to rather than solving problems in society. Power and control used against children in education, through the exercise of 'discipline' is a violence-perpetuating practice (Galbraith, 1997). In acceptance of

this, physical punishment of children in schools has been abolished in many countries.

Two major symbols of reform towards a more humanitarian and democratic paradigm in South Africa, salient to school discipline, have been:

- the abolition of corporal punishment in schools, and
- the dissemination onto the whole school community of responsibility for producing and enforcing a code of conduct and concomitant strategies.

This has placed the management of discipline, or 'educational order' as Slee (1995) terms it, on the shoulders of school management and in the hands of the teachers.

Aims and Rationale

The broad aim of this research is to provide an audit of what is actually happening about discipline in one school by using observation, experience, and the words of teachers themselves. A base of data will be thus established from which to discuss the issue of discipline, both in this school and in the country as a whole.

As a researcher I am aware of and interested in the ways the structures and hierarchies of our schools are generally reflective of social hierarchies and power structures in general. Experience and study have led to a belief that in order to change turbulent, violent society for the better, schools should be safe havens of stability, kindness and tolerance for pupils, where there is a critical awareness of the ways of the outside world. Discipline – or educational orderliness – is a vital basis for a well functioning school, but to many the word is synonymous with a heavy hand

Underlying questions were whether teachers are coping, how are they supported, and what do they need further to enable them to deal with the management of discipline at this juncture.

Over and above the scenario outlined in the introduction, there were contemporaneous local reasons for the choice of topic which comprise:

- School discipline in South Africa has been identified as highly problematic by many researchers and practitioners.
- Routine cases of pupil indiscipline are dealt with in schools all over the world, but 'teachers in South Africa are now being asked to deal with serious

problems of violence – possession of guns, attacks with knives and open scissors, and rape – in a situation where they are also required to carry a normal teaching load’ (Harber, 2000:6).

- Historic cultural and political influences on the education system have encouraged a mindset among teachers, parents and society in general of reliance on and acceptance of centralised authority.
- In turn this has engendered a strong perception among many that behaviour must be controlled through the exercise of power, and that punishment is desirable and physical punishment acceptable.
- Together these factors have complicated and hindered moves to liberalise and reorganise the education system.
- In 1996, in line with developments in many other parts of the world, corporal punishment was abolished in South African schools (Parker-Jenkins, 1999).
- Abolition of caning in schools has given rise to the general perception of a sudden increase in discipline problems for teachers, and has been directly linked by many to recent poor matric results (Kirk, 2000).
- A vociferous heated public debate at all levels has ensued. On the one side there are many calls for the reintroduction of caning and other forms of physical punishment to maintain discipline. On the other there is a government commitment to human rights, and corporal punishment is considered by law to be ‘assault’.
- The South African Schools Act (1996) emphasises that any punishment must be lawful, fair and reasonable, and places the responsibility for management of learner conduct directly onto the whole school community, which includes teachers, parents, learners and the governing body (Department of Education, 1997).
- Guidelines have been laid down for discipline management and associated procedures such as suspension and expulsion. These are broad but limited and do not actually allow the school community the ultimate authority to expel a pupil, the final say resting with the Provincial HoD or ultimately the MEC.
- Teachers are purportedly perceiving lack of sympathy and support for their difficult professional task of maintaining educational orderliness, in comparison with a constitutional emphasis on the rights of learners and their parents.

The above factors mean that maintenance of discipline in South African schools today is controversial and fraught with problems.

It is imperative that the issue is not allowed to become part of a political battleground. Research is required to examine the experience of discipline/indiscipline in our schools. In addition, we need to explore creative ways of empowering teachers in this particular situation to deal with the kinds of undermining behaviour that they encounter in their classrooms.

By researching the case of discipline and its management in a particular school context during a limited timespan, from the point of view of the staff, this study will help the above objectives. In particular, the focus on teachers' experiences and perspectives will contribute to a base from which to provide help and to devise empowering strategies.

Scope, assumptions and limitations

Against the background of wider educational change, and within the context of a school that has experienced particularly extreme and rapid metamorphosis, this research aims to examine the management of discipline by exploring the views and experiences of teachers and the strategies they have adopted in order to cope. In particular, the focus will contribute to a base from which to provide help, challenge mindsets and devise empowering strategies.

Choice of a school as case study for the medium of exploration is considered to be appropriate in that a natural setting allows for immersion into the actuality of the situation. This in turn is more likely to give depth and texture in responses to questions posed. Furthermore the structures and hierarchies within a school, although unique to that institution, are reflective of social hierarchies and power structures in general.

It is accepted that demographic elements of this school may not be representative of most. However, according to both Stake (1988) and Vuillamy & Webb (1992), whilst not designed nor expected to provide data that is generalisable, a case study reveals the unique and individual situation with its idiosyncracies and complexity. This is more likely to give insight into the generalised reality of experience, which in turn addresses the issue of external validity. In addition Brock-Utne (1996) has identified

a component of external validity, namely ecological validity, which 'concerns the extent to which behaviour observed in one case study context can be generalisable to another' and 'penetrate the gap between words and deeds' (617).

Bearing in mind that there are many models of discipline practices in schools and many strategies which have been shown positively to influence school orderliness and children's behaviour, case studies can provide pointers for those schools seeking a way to break from the mould.

In order to provide a framework for this case study, to 'sum up and synthesize knowledge' and provide an understanding of the management of discipline, an interpretive review of literature (Schwandt, 1998:412) will be made in the next section of this chapter.

Review of Literature

This review will be organised into three sections. Firstly it is intended broadly to contextualise and conceptualise school discipline within its social history, attempting, as recommended by Schwandt (1998), to sum up and synthesise theory, clarify and resolve inconsistencies and encapsulate controversies around the subject 'so that we can enhance our capacity to solve educational problems' (412). Secondly a brief review will be made of contextual circumstances affecting discipline in South African schools. A summary will be given of the strategic direction recently provided by the Department of Education. Finally, current thinking and approaches will be considered which might be of further use in South African schools.

i. Discipline

On the one hand the very word discipline has a vicious ring – and bears connotations of coercion, either of self or someone subordinate, into doing something not particularly palatable. It calls to mind institutionalised, unassailable regimentation and denial of freedom. According to Dixon (1967:164) 'discipline involves interference with personal liberty and as such always stands in need of justification.' On the other hand education implies an opening up and leading out. There is dissonance between the two concepts which confers negativity on both (Stenhouse, 1967). Similarly the roles of educator and disciplinarian are at odds. Slee (1995) points out an uncritical acceptance of discipline as a synonym and ultimately a verb for control

including a concomitant belief that this is what teachers do. This simplification and distortion may be seen to have its roots in social history.

Parker-Jenkins (1999) examines the relationship between discipline and education in the 19th century by noting the prevailing belief in original sin, and a discourse of obedience and duty. She cites Mathew Arnold who contended that “children's disobedience stemmed from pride and sin and that corporal punishment was useful in assisting them in seeing the ‘truth’ and light” (Parker Jenkins, 1999:4). Since then indoctrination toward conformity and stoicism, using methods of control that have been called discipline, has been part of the discourse of education and fundamental to the relationship between teacher and child to a greater or lesser degree.

Freud's view of childhood also perpetuated the belief that the nature of a child is not just a diluted, simpler version of adulthood, but is driven by stronger amplified emotions which need taming, and an unconscious, powerful id which needs repressing (Winn, 1983). He did bring concepts of childhood and adulthood closer than the earlier Victorians believed them to be, although his representation of a deep and powerfully motivating inner life, active from birth, did strengthen the case for repression and discipline by punishment.

Only latterly in the 20th century has there been an escalation in the realisation that fixity in human nature is simply one polarity of the nature-nurture debate, and that human beings are, to a significant extent, products (and makers) of their world. Original sin and the deep inner life of the pre-verbal child might be debatable and comprehensible in terms of ‘in utero’ or natal experiences, but common sense is upheld by research showing that largely children are characterised by innocence (Cowen, 1994). According to Neill (1992), ‘possibly the greatest discovery we have made.....is that the child is born a sincere creature’ (46).

Neill's view of the child was of a ‘tabula rasa’, where character and behaviour are governed by upbringing – in particular by the love and acceptance of care-givers. Hate and rebellion in a child are to him quite simply symptoms of thwarted love and thwarted power. In his view punishment always involves the idea of morality and since children are uncomprehending of adult ideas of morality and acceptable behaviour, punishment is a traumatic experience for a child. Accordingly self-discipline results from freedom to do what you like so long as you don't interfere with

the freedom of others. This more contemporary view of the child is intrinsic to most current orientations toward school discipline which according to Parker-Jenkins (1999) are characterised by 'a greater emphasis on care and guidance nurtured within a non-violent context' (166).

Traditionally teachers have been regarded as 'in loco parentis' bearing the responsibility for and authority over children who were not considered to have the same rights as adults. However since the 2nd World War, in many parts of the world, principles of human rights have become politically and legally entrenched to the extent that independent rights are afforded to children. This trend culminated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, which, according to Parker-Jenkins represents 'what is currently world consensus on the status of the child' (1999: 133). Indeed this is set down in the South African Bill of Rights (1996) and entrenched in the South African Schools Act (1996).

Ramifications for school discipline have of course been the abolition of corporal punishment in many countries, but also a general void of practical advice to teachers about generating and maintaining order in the classroom. In the UK, after abolition in 1987, the Elton enquiry was commissioned in 1989 to make recommendations on discipline management 'following concern about problems facing the teaching profession' (Department of Education and Science and the Welsh office, 1989:11). In South Africa neither the 1996 Act nor subsequent government policies outlined what measures should be taken to replace corporal punishment (Morrell, 2000). However, in early October, 2000, guidelines for teachers were published on the website of the South African Education Department (Le Mottee, 2000), which along with the Elton report (1989) will be discussed later in this review.

Over and above the changing status of children, the 20th century has seen massive change in all aspects of the world and the people in it. Children were, in fact, different in the third generation of the twentieth century from children of the first generation. The last two generations 'have seen more scientific and technological achievement than all previous ones put together' (Schwartz, 1999:10). In particular, great social changes of the last two decades have exerted influence on changing relations between adults and children and redefined the child's position in society. Children are no longer protected so closely – two career and single parent families mean children have to fend for themselves, and are increasingly open to influences from outside of

the family unit. Horrors of the adult world and baser realities of human nature are being revealed to children intentionally for their own self-protection and unintentionally through exposure to television. In turn this has caused children to become more critical and independent. The respect and obedience which they have traditionally afforded adults has been dissipated; innocent and carefree childhood no longer exists; boundaries between childhood and adulthood have become blurred (Winn 1983, Postman, 1992).

A further bleak pressure is shortage of employment: a world-wide phenomenon which means that many young people leaving school will find no work. Human capital theories are pushing education toward vocational competency training which, it is believed will lead to job creation. However it is obvious to those in education, both teachers and learners, that there is little connection between what is done at school and the reality of going out and finding work in a shrinking job market. The impact of the myth of 'work for all' is divisive in a school, in that it serves to heighten the desperate sense of competition of the academic child, and disadvantage further the non-academic learners. In turn the teachers become more demoralised and cynical; the common purpose of teacher and learner becomes debased as a meaningless ritual; and the discipline power struggle becomes amplified.

Despite these factors our schooling system has changed relatively little in comparison. Traditionally institution-bound, schools were intended to impart information to the masses in an information-poor society. Teachers were invested with knowledge and their role was to impart this to children (Meighan, 1997-8). A system was shaped which was preoccupied with and aspiring to measure and grade academic aptitude. Today 'Northern', First-World societies are information-rich and the original *raison d'être* of schools and teachers no longer hold sway. However, inherent, authoritarian power structures have been consolidated and concretised.

Shipman (1976) refers to the anachronism of cooping up active adolescents in buildings that have changed little from those designed for young children beaten into submission in more brutal times. On the whole our schools are not particularly attractive or enticing places. The institutional uniformity of these compartmentalised containers for children is occasionally broken by an airy Victorian building, or the spires of a Mission. Generally though they are not particularly nice places to go into or be in. Yet children and their teachers are poured into them and expected to remain

together within their boundaries for 7 or 8 hours of every working day and move from space to space mentally and physically at the ring of a bell. That pupils rebel and teachers become irritable and stressed is not surprising. The ritualisation and organisation of schools are usually unimaginative and rigid. Inflexible timetabling and dreary routines 'are centred on managing and controlling'(MacNeil, 1988).

There is general consensus that the most troublesome types of discipline problems that teachers endure are the banal 'disruptions to lessons caused by relatively trivial but persistent behaviour' (Department of Education and Science and the Welsh Office, 1989). More serious issues such as violence and crime, the main focus of press reports and lay concern, are rare and relatively easily dealt with by the school, a counselling department or the legal system. This adds to the argument that the curriculum itself is in need of reform, and particular attention must be given to relationships between educator and learner, the learning environment, and expectations from and benefits to children in education. Tension in the classroom along with most discipline problems might be alleviated by more relevant material, an enjoyable and welcoming environment and a teacher who is a partner and facilitator rather than police officer

In terms of theory various orientations have been ascribed to discipline per se. The prevailing zeitgeist of each period with its particular view of education and childhood has thrown out its own interpretation and theoretical framework. In an overview, four main orientations have been labelled, namely, traditional, laissez faire, liberal-progressive, and socially-critical (NUE Comment, 1999). Currently, of these, after the historic tension between the traditional authoritarian and radical socially critical, the South African Department of Education is identified as advocate of a liberal-progressive approach. This is characterised by an assumption of the inherent goodness of children; emphasis on cooperation, negotiation and compromise between teacher and child; locus of power within the individual, and power-sharing between stakeholders. Whilst accepted as democratic, reasonable and humane, this approach is commonly criticised as being soft, difficult to implement, idealistic in the face of the reality of an hierarchical society, and optimistic in the light of socio-political realities (NUE Comment, 1999). Fundamentally, as no challenge is directed at the educational status quo, the approach may be seen as a political stance of stabilisation in the difficult and changing scenario described earlier, unlike a more threatening socially-critical approach.

From a theoretical point of view, Parker-Jenkins (1999) identified two broad and dichotomous contemporary meanings of discipline which are:

- negative, stemming from external control where there is manipulation of sanctions, incentives and rewards,
- positive, stemming from deliberate consideration of individual action.

Clark (1998) similarly describes two polarised and rival conceptual meanings of the term which stress the quality of order in the educational context:

- 'Order by control', implies that knowledge and authority are adult properties which justify the imposition of education on uneducated children,
- 'Order by discipline', allows the child the status of a rational free person with potential to veto or assent to whatever experience is presented.

Both Parker Jenkins (1999) and Clark (1998) characterise discipline by external or internal locus of control, or a mixture of the two. The extremes on the continuum of discipline distinguished by locus of control correspond to the NUE Comment (1999) categories of traditional authoritarian - relying on control and direction from without, and socially critical - moving away from social and cultural dictates toward a system which is democratically defined.

Slee (1995), however, rejects attempts to reduce and define discipline, and makes a case for a more subtle examination of the politics of education in general and the kind of power framework and regime that underpins both the concept of and need for educational orderliness in the classroom. Whilst many writers on the subject agree that positive self-discipline should be a desirable outcome of education, in reality the nature both of the system and of the learners coerces the teacher into a position of otherness, establishing a power relationship which, given the pull of history, the conditions of many schools and the inadequacy of much pre-service training, is difficult to neutralise. Moreover, Stenhouse (1967), describes the teacher as an intrusive leader imposed by society on a peer group or clique of children. Neill (1992) goes even further and describes teachers as tin gods, 'the centre of the picture; he commands and is obeyed; he metes out justice and does nearly all the talking' (101).

Reflexivity between traditional school discipline practice and sociopolitical authoritarianism has been identified by educationalists studying the amplifying cycle of violence. In particular implications of practices in institutions where discipline is something that has been 'done to' children are described by Galbraith (1997). She singles out corporal punishment specifically as a practice that entrenches an uncritical acceptance both of violent retribution and of bullying. According to Cherian (1990) studies reveal that children brought up in authoritarian circumstances show little curiosity, tend to lack originality and initiative....and develop excessive anxiety which hampers learning (96). Furthermore Galbraith (1997) and Slee (1995) make a direct link between the implicit and explicit curricula and organisational systems of schools, and the perpetuation of violence in society. Galbraith (1997) especially implicates 'the power structure imposed on staff and students, an emphasis on competition rather than cooperation, decision making strategies, or the decision to group students according to ability' (3).

Slee maintains that 'too frequently "discipline" provides the language and technology... to divert critical scrutiny from more fundamental issues which disturb the organisational equilibrium of schools' such as politics, unemployment or more global issues of human capital (1995: 4). His view is that school problems are not engendered by and within schools, but are manifestations of forces from without including the global problem of the power and wealth of the world being held in the hands of a controlling minority. He calls for the need to control the school climate rather than the children, pointing out 'the character and quality of educational provision are as important as the troubling behaviour of the student' (Slee, 1995:115). His voice is one of a growing volume of those who advocate a critical approach to and radical reformation of education, schools and the teaching profession. This tradition, set by reforming educationalists such as Rudolf Steiner, A.S.Neill, Ivan Illich, Paolo Freire, has proposed various models of alternative education, all of which are notable for a rejection of both conformity and the type of top-down imposed discipline practice which is part of mainstream education. Correspondingly there is an imperative for more democratic principles, which consider the rights of children to be on a par with the rights of all. In education this is expressed by giving greater significance to the wants and needs of children.

Enlightened and different models of education have been available to those who can pay, but the majority of children are educated in the state system by teachers

employed according to the terms and conditions stipulated by the government of the day. In reality rarely does a school have the will to break from the mould. Clark (1998) points out that a prior moral issue prevails about the proper way to educate children. He denounces the traditional system as disingenuous, incoherent and unworkable in favour of an alternative, reconstructed, child-centred approach. In addition Slee (1995) calls for examination of 'the changing economic and political status of young people', and makes an urgent recommendation 'that policy makers focus their attention on curriculum, pedagogy and school organisation as parts of a discipline policy settlement' (175).

However Fullan (1999) notes the inability of earlier education reformists to influence either their peers or large-scale reform. He cites Elmore (1995:20) who says 'they just create an even greater gap between themselves and others, which eventually becomes impossible to bridge' (23). Reform of hierarchy-driven schools and discipline regimes needs, it would seem, far more than implementation by policy makers of new structures and legislation. Again according to Fullan (1999) 'reculturing, which gets at the core of teaching and learning, is much more difficult than restructuring' (66). In the light of state-imposed changes to the education system in South Africa, which will be discussed in the next section of the review, Fullan's words sound a note of warning. Far more must be attended to in this country than restructuring: the hearts and minds that hold culture dear must be the focus of reform strategies before new ideas can truly take root. This is particularly so in education, where,

'the professional isolation of teachers limits access to new ideas and better solutions, drives stress inward to fester and accumulate.....isolation follows, even if it does not always produce, conservatism and a resistance to innovation in teaching' (Fullan, 1993:34)

ii. South Africa

To reiterate, South Africa is emerging from a past in which authoritarianism and patriarchy influenced the management of discipline and were accepted by most. Top-down directives from National and Regional departments dictated most aspects of school life, and the school itself was an organisation dominated by hierarchical power structures. The system was rationalised by achievement of established standards and incontestable progression or failure. Corporal punishment was widely practised, and despite legal sanctions, still is, particularly in rural, township and 'Christian'

schools. Recent court cases have however raised awareness of its evils and strengthened the case for seeking alternative ways of keeping order. A new Internet publication by the Department of Education (Le Mottee, 2000) sets out guidelines for educators of substitutes for corporal punishment which will be considered alongside other strategies that might be adopted.

With regard to education per se, Northern colonisation imposed academic criteria in a country which has uniquely different needs, rhythms and cultures. The great dichotomy between automation, technology and wealth, and rural and peri-urban abject poverty makes the examined curriculum and hierarchical structure of schools seem sadly irrelevant and wasteful. Education has been usually and symbolically given priority over improving living conditions, providing water, healthcare and functional literacy – or combating behavioural problems such as AIDS, crime and violence. The academic style of curriculum in most South African schools is out of touch with post-school outcomes on three counts: it is culturally irrelevant, anachronistic and socially inappropriate.

Nevertheless the situation is changing rapidly. Awareness of the gap of credibility between curriculum and social realities is embodied in the outcomes-based framework and a more serious approach to life-skills training. Samoff (1999) describes intense and unfair pressure on local education, globally dictated and taken up by the state to 'enable Africa to run faster as it tries to catch up with those who are ahead rather than forge new paths or transform the international community and Africa's role in it' (428). This latter objective might at first appear ambitious, but it becomes more tangible when one considers the strides South Africa has made over the past 10 years in human and social relations compared to say, Bosnia, or the Middle East. It is possible to believe, given our circumstances, that an education system in this country can be created from the debris of the past which could be a prototype for more humanitarian education systems globally.

However while the world is changing and policy makers are trying to pre-empt, keep up with, or contain information inflow, teachers on the ground have to deal with the day to day situation in schools. There is generally little doubt among educationists that the existing system is in metamorphosis, and clear visions have been presented of an educational future, not too many years ahead (Clark, 1998; Harber, Meighan & Roberts, 1984), but embattled teachers must facilitate the process. As stated by

Robinson (1999), in South Africa 'teaching is more than a job; it is a political commitment to the future of this country' (195).

Rigid, anachronistic subject areas and divisions are dissolving, but held back by conservatism and territoriality of a beleaguered profession, and the slow, ineffective way that the new outcomes based curriculum has so far been implemented. There is tension occurring between government imposed reform on education and the true needs spelt out by educationists, children and teachers. Reform is at best driven by short-term expediency at worst by political rather than educational rationale, aimed at scoring points, entrenching ideology and controlling teachers and learners. Notwithstanding, a view of education as a problem-solving exercise is pulling the enterprise into new needs-driven directions. Problems plague schools: of racial prejudice and intolerance, drugs, violence, bullying and power-abuse, sexual abuse, gender and hate crimes, lack of relevance, generation gap distance, alienation and gang hostility. These are becoming addressed in the curriculum. Seriousness of commitment is growing in the education system to tackle these problems (Asmal, 2000).

The position and rights of the child in this country reflect the Children's Charter ratified by the United Nations Convention of Children's Rights. This was supported constitutionally in the South African Bill of Rights (1996). Despite this support of children's rights we are very far from being a child-friendly society. An estimated one in four girls and one in eight boys has been sexually abused before the age of 16 years – in 80% of the cases by someone known to the family or child. Over the past five years calls to Childline reporting rape and other abuse have risen by 1600% (Ukuthula Peace Challenge, 2000). The more pastoral approach advocated by our liberal-progressive stance on discipline might cause the critical cynic to say that children are counselled in school for the beatings they receive in their families and communities.

Be that as it may, most schools do not have a counsellor or ready access to supporting psychological services to deal with problematic learners. A disturbing trend, reminiscent of the tyranny of the past and counter productive to any nurturing atmosphere, is to surround a school with security fencing and employ armed security guards to maintain order within the boundaries. In the Western Cape 83 schools were persuaded to pool the money spent on security guards in order to fund an

innovative scheme aiming to prevent crime and transform schools. A team of facilitators is at the dispensation of the schools. Its members implement projects and when necessary interventions, and strategically approach problems through promoting changes in environment and attitudes of the whole school community including teachers and parents. The scheme is partly driven by needs and operates within school clusters and families (Western Cape Education Department, 2000). It draws to attention ways in which outside agencies can support schools and teachers to improve the atmosphere and ethos of a school in more positive pro-active ways than heavy-handed military control.

School discipline in South Africa has been identified as highly problematic by many researchers and practitioners (Christie, 1999). Strong authoritarian and patriarchal cultural traditions encourage reactionary methods of enforcement and punishment (Morrell, 1999). Current heated media debates have spotlighted divisions between those who believe in physical punishment to maintain discipline, and those who do not. There is a perception by many that the reintroduction of both capital and corporal punishment will solve problems of violent crime in general and particularly anti-social behaviour by young people. Abolition of caning in schools has been linked at the highest levels with poor matric results. Earlier this year it was reported:

Kwa Zulu Natal MEC for education, Eileen Nkosi Shandu.....called for the reintroduction of corporal punishment in schools while commenting on the poor showing of KwaZulu-Natal schools in the 1999 matric exams. Shandu – a stern disciplinarian who is often named ‘big stick’ – said that since caning was outlawed in 1994 schools had been left without any effective form of disciplining children and that learning had suffered as a result of the move. ‘The removal of corporal punishment was just a political statement since it had to do with human rights,’ said Shandu (Kirk, 2000).

It is urgent that we move beyond this debate to more constructive issues and begin to explore ways of truly repairing and improving our schools.

Recent research, current thinking and strategies concentrating on discipline management in schools will be discussed in the following section. In particular attention will be paid to programmes that may be of value in the South African context, bearing in mind that practice elsewhere in the world is not necessarily appropriate for our circumstances and needs.

iii. Current Thinking and South African Schools

In general, South African education is emerging from an authoritarian past and evolving into a system driven by democratic ideals, led by the needs of the country. Fullan (1993) describes a fruitful sequence for reform of 'ready, fire, aim' (31). South Africa was ready, the reform process was fired, and at this early stage, there is scope for 'aim' in that practices may now be refined and redirected if necessary. To this end it is useful to look at what has worked and what has been learned elsewhere in the world. Large scale studies have been conducted and much published on the subject of discipline in schools. It is intended in this section to explore what might be of further use in South African schools such as the one under attention in this research.

According to Slee (1995) no one strategy can be recommended as a response to discipline problems in schools. Nor is there a blueprint which can be disseminated from central or local government which will be equally successful for all schools. For school policy to be effective, the school community must have input and ownership of a plan which is responsive to the needs and views of its members (92-3). Even so there is a spectrum of responses which might be made ranging from zero tolerance of infraction of rules to pastoral care and school ethos models. Certainly, in the past, children and even teachers and parents have had little say so far in how schools are run and what they can offer, although in South Africa this has changed to some extent over the past few years. Current government policies of decentralisation, and the promotion of Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) and School Governing Bodies (SGBs) has thrown much of the responsibility for administration and organisation onto the school community. Similarly there is no quick fix to solving the problem of disruption in school. Models have been developed and used with greater or lesser success all over the world. Also there are many levels of approach to discipline management and ways of improving the atmosphere in classrooms, which range from societal transformation to initiatives from outside of the school such as that in the Western Cape (Western Cape Education Department, 2000). However most short-term solutions are school based and focus on day to day running, as does the Education Department's new advice on alternatives to corporal punishment (Le Mottee, 2000).

The main conclusion of the benchmark British report 'Discipline in Schools' (Elton, 1989) was that, given the recent abolition of corporal punishment in state

schools 'the central problem of disruption could be significantly reduced by helping teachers to become more effective classroom managers' (12). Furthermore such skills could be taught and learned though current training provision in this area was inadequate. Six target areas for action were identified which were:

- good classroom principles and management,
- careful selection of trainee teachers,
- more specific initial training in techniques,
- more specific INSET training,
- better induction programmes for new teachers and those new to specific schools,
- regular appraisal of classroom performance.

Motivated by the 'school improvement' stress on positive exhortation rather than punitive reprisals, this report targeted teachers, classroom practice and school management for reform as opposed to reducing socio-historical pressures on schools and tackling curriculum examination. It was maintained that 'the behaviour of pupils in a school is influenced by almost every aspect of the way which it is run and how it relates to the community it serves' (Elton, 1989: 8). The report was a product of the post-Thatcher era of managerialism showing a tendency for responsibility for social problems such as unemployment, crime and poor parenting to be laid at the door of education, wherein it was expected to find the cause and the solution (Slee, 1995).

The new South African Education Department website publication on discipline management (Le Mottee, 2000) gives rationale for the abolition of corporal punishment, focuses on the exploration of viable alternatives and prescribes alternative disciplinary measures and procedures to be used in schools. Following on the heels of the dismissal in the Constitutional court of challenges to corporal punishment prohibition (Le Mottee, 2000), it may be construed as a reactive document. The tenor of recommendations is behaviouristic; in that like Elton's (1989) report, it is derived from school effectiveness principles and aimed at modifying behaviour of teachers and learners within the existing system. Teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own practices and use an educative, corrective approach based on a set of democratically developed classroom rules and a whole school code of conduct. A range of disciplinary measures and procedures is laid out, from level 1, which is the category for misconduct inside the classroom and carries a range of disciplinary actions from a verbal warning to small menial tasks or detention,

up to level 5, which is the category for 'criminal acts which not only violate school codes but also break the law' (Le Mottee, 2000: 26).

Again the initiative is placed on the individual teacher and school leader to adhere to a theoretical strategy. This is not to say that such a strategy does not have a place in schools. However, by the nature of the document, gate-keeping, containment and social control are propounded which according to Parker-Jenkins (1999) holds the danger of perpetuating over-dependence on inappropriate and unimaginative sanctions. She describes punishments such as detention systems, lines, extra work, or punitive tasks like cleaning the classroom or school as an arid set of educational techniques (Parker-Jenkins 1999). As will be seen in the analysis of data, the school under study relies heavily on such sanctions for the management of discipline. According to Elton (1989) in England 'the abolition of corporal punishment was unable in itself to effect a paradigmatic shift in the conceptualisation of school discipline' (50). Similarly in South Africa we appear to be far from the mental leap toward a new paradigm, where punishment and control have no place in pro-social, non-violent school communities (Galbraith, 1997:96).

Given ideal conditions of reasonably-sized classes, sufficient staff to allow for preparation time and self development of teachers, and adequate and congenial school buildings and grounds, these strategies proposed by the South African Education Department might be sufficient to contain, if not pre-empt disruptive behaviour by learners. However, by Northern standards South Africa is a poor nation and most schools, particularly in rural areas suffer the opposite of ideal conditions. Even in traditionally more privileged schools teachers are over-worked and under duress, due to the cuts in staff and resources (Robinson, 1999). Structural adjustment has led to decentralisation and cuts but also thrown a school onto the resources of the community. This is having the effect of widening the gap between rich and poor schools (Chisholm, 1999), and putting great financial pressure on middle of the road schools such as the one in this study. These pressures result in other problems for schools such as large classes and overloaded timetables, which in turn tend to isolate teachers from their peers, and generate increasing stress and burnout among them.

Research has shown that size of class and school has an incontrovertible detrimental effect on the behaviour of children and peace and orderliness of the school. Small

schools and classes enable the teacher to act as both academic and pastoral facilitator and allow stronger, more enduring relationships between teacher and learner. In large schools with large classes it is particularly difficult for a teacher to know all of the children in a class. This results in depersonalisation of both teacher and child.

In many ways the teacher working alone in the classroom is vulnerable and isolated. The traditional, professional isolation of the teacher in the classroom, noted earlier in this review, results in tolerance of incompetence, lack of contact with colleagues and new ideas, and a lack of recognition of success except through examination results (Fullan, 1993). This isolation and these effects are compounded when coupled with large classes, resulting in demoralised, demotivated and highly stressed teachers. Creation of short and medium-term strategies for the management of the crisis of large numbers in the classroom should be of priority to those developing policy, who must also seek a co-ordinated input from the many diverse and scattered agencies and pools of expertise in the country such as tertiary institutions and NGOs.

In South Africa, teachers are not used to working together, but there are many creative ideas stemming from school effectiveness/improvement/management work that might help unite a divided staff, create an atmosphere conducive to teamwork, and contingently alleviate the stress caused by isolation. Blandford (1998) reviews concurrent strategies for staff management and classroom organisation which alleviate stress. She evaluates alternative models which support stress-reduced discipline management and emphasizes the importance of support and development for teachers, particularly in terms of stress and anger management, conflict resolution, induction and mentoring. She also gives priority to models which encourage learners to solve problems, 'to deal positively with conflict without violence and intimidation and to improve their behaviour towards each other, the community and society' (Blandford, 1998:94). By facilitating more congenial conditions in the schools, lessening conflict among learners and enabling greater collegiality among the staff, these benefits will lead to an environment more receptive to new ideas about maintaining order (Blandford, 1998).

Over and above classroom strategies and teacher development, the whole climate of a school can be positive if there are shared views and a sense of community in the staffroom. Isolation felt by a struggling teacher can be greatly lessened by open

discussion of classroom problems and those who might be causing them; similarly, by mentoring new teachers and induction of those new to a school by those more experienced or knowledgeable. Such strategies need not be formalised beyond arranging to meet for weekly coffee, lunch or a braai after school, but they do require motivation, possibly either by an HoD, subject leader or principal. Working in pairs, groups or teams, planning and brainstorming can be empowering and transformational to teachers used to working in isolation.

Timetabling strategies can also help alleviate teacher isolation, and take the pressure from coping with a difficult class. If those teaching the same subjects to the same age groups are given complementary space and blocks of time, then cooperation, collaboration and team teaching become possible. A less formal and constrained classroom environment can become more the norm, allowing different levels of interaction, and fun and pleasure by teachers and learners. Internal collaboration is both encouraged and formalised to an increasing extent in South African schools. By official directive (Department of Education, 1997) school governing bodies include parents, learners, teachers and management. This is the first step in encouraging more collaborative practice and breaking down barriers within schools and between schools and communities.

The attitudes of teachers to the learners is, according to Davidoff & Lazarus (1997), of prime importance. The respect and trust that teachers expect from learners must be reciprocated. They make the point that 'the heavy-handed disciplinarian approach which was one of the hall-marks of the apartheid regime' (3) is still with us, and is responsible for a cynical and humiliating way of dealing with learners. This is counter-productive to dignity, confidence, self-respect and assertiveness. In particular they indict the 'authoritarian mode of operation and communication... with laws made to be obeyed unquestioningly' which has taught us to become a passive and obedient society, 'not challenging commands from the top, accepting and fearing those who had the authority to tell us what to do' (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997:9). According to Cherian (1990) there is clear evidence of the correlation between punishment, parental disciplinary styles and academic achievement. His findings show that:

Punitive measures as evidenced in corporal punishment, ridicule and criticism are injurious to the emotional adjustment of children and can result in poor academic performance. A tension-ridden atmosphere is not conducive to learning, respect of authority and the development of an integrated

personality. It may well cause the child to develop negative attitudes to learning (99)

Coutts (1992), points out that in this country, 'many parents will reveal remarkably severe and authoritarian views on discipline' (63) and it is up to the school to rehabilitate a brutalised child from a subject-subject stance as opposed to the old subject-object relationship (Lemmer & Badenhorst, 1997). Also the mismatch between home and school discipline can only be remedied by the school itself. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) point to the importance of schools as socialising agents, particularly within the context of a the development of a humane society. They visualise future South African schools as 'rich and warm centres of creative energy' (177) that have a positive effect on society and call for a radical 'rethink in the way that schools are structured and operate' (8).

Thrupp (1999) called the pastoral system of a school 'the glue that holds everything together, the only strategy to create an environment where kids feel good about themselves and are encouraged to give their best' (109). Most contemporary writers on school discipline stress the importance of counselling and other support for learners and a recognition of the problems faced by today's children. Schools that have counsellors on their staff are able to intervene and help children with problems and when necessary, their families. Otherwise traditionally parents have not been encouraged to become involved in their children's schooling.

The recent Tirisano of the Education Department for school improvement (Asmal, 1999) places schools firmly within their district with the objective that they become the hub of community and family life. However the barriers between schools and parents have been researched, indicating a subliminal-level resistance by parents against re-engaging with schools associated with authoritarianism and knowledge superiority of teachers. When it comes to discipline, the parents are made to feel accountable for the misdemeanours of their children, rather than being offered help (Cullingford & Morrison, 1999). Heystek & Louw (1999) investigated this problem in South African schools where parental involvement was low, and found a seeming insurmountable barrier between parents who might not be literate and have a low sense of self-esteem, and teachers who have been trained to dominate and control.

Cullingford and Morrison (1999) also indicted the current formal businesslike reports given by governing bodies to the parents, which hold little interest or appeal, and

have taken the place of more informal parent-teacher meetings. Imaginative ways of getting parents into schools and creating links and relationships have been scarcely explored, if at all, in this country.

An open and democratic school community is, according to Davidoff & Lazarus (1997) essential for the flow and interweaving necessary for health and growth. As far as discipline is concerned, input and consensus from the whole community about a code of conduct is vital if there is to be an avoidance of the traditional 'us' and 'them' barriers between teachers, parents and learners endemic in South African schools. The recommendation of the Education Department (Le Mottee, 2000) is that a code of conduct should be a working document, open to challenge and discussion rather than 'cast in stone'.

Democracy within the classroom is also a barrier breaking strategy. Nelsen, Lott & Glenn (2000) advocate the creation of 'an atmosphere of caring based on kindness and firmness, dignity and mutual respect' (23). They propose a strategy of class meetings, scheduled and held regularly to discuss discipline issues and inculcate life-skills such as conflict resolution and problem solving among learners. They call the technique 'positive discipline' as there is a stress on solutions to problems rather than punishment. Responsibility and solutions are sought from all involved rather than just the teacher.

A number of models and strategies place the responsibility and solution for behaviour on the learners themselves. Examples are 'peer mediation', where children themselves are trained in conflict resolution, and the 'no blame' approach where bullying is isolated as a problem which all are invoked to solve, including the bullies. At this stage in South African schools, few teachers have the skills or time to implement such strategies, though some outside organisations and NGOs are becoming more active in training these skills.

Multi-cultural and multi-lingual schools demand however, something more than text book solutions. Lemmer & Badenhorst (1998) point out the need for teachers in training to know at least one African language in order to cope, as 'schools have to contend with large proportions of students who do not speak English, which is the language of learning in the schools mostly chosen by these learners' (30). Inevitably communication and culture misunderstandings must underly many problems and

issues of behaviour in such schools. Lemmer and Badenhorst (1998) advocate the introduction of multi-cultural and multi-lingual education training in teacher education. Pre and in-service education has the potential to penetrate and change the mindset of teachers, enabling them to influence pupils, and in turn their parents, to enable this country to move away rapidly from the inherited authoritarian mindset.

In the next chapter of this study, the research design, methodology and actual processes used to collect data from the school under study will be described and assessed.

CHAPTER TWO

Research Design and Methodology

The aim of the study has been firstly to provide an audit of what is actually happening with regard to discipline by examining the strategies, experiences and opinions from the teachers involved in a particular school. The objective will, it is believed, give some insight into the prevailing management of discipline in South Africa's schools, since, whilst a case study is not designed or expected to provide data that is generalisable, it is the study of the unique and individual situation with its idiosyncracies and complexity that is more likely to give us understanding of the generalised reality of experience (Vuillamy & Webb, 1992; Stake, 1988). Qualitative research methods underpin this case study design and comprise:

- content analysis of documentary data,
- observation,
- informal and unstructured discussions and interviews (appendix 1),
- questionnaire eliciting narrative information from the respondents (appendix 2),

(Burgess 1994).

These methods were considered appropriate since a natural setting allows for immersion into the actuality of the situation. This in turn is more likely to give depth and texture in the answers to questions posed. In addition to the strong external validity of a qualitative study, a further validity, namely ecological, is identified by Brock-Utne (1996). This concerns 'the extent to which behaviour observed in one context may be generalised to another' and 'penetrate the gap between words and deeds' (617). She argues that an autobiographical approach will increase this. It involves narration of events, initially by the teachers to the researcher and, secondly by the researcher to the reader, through organisation and interpretation. To this end an interactive, reflexive process was established between researcher, teachers, other members of the school community, and data collected

In this study the teachers themselves, by their autobiographical and narrative input and discussions, actually provided the direction taken in the enquiry through:

- consultation with them and acceptance of any information they cared to give,
- issues raised in information exchange during the duration of the study which provided direction for the questions posed in the final questionnaire.

Preference was given to the kind of debate allowed by group discussions and broad topic-based questions, both in interviews and the questionnaire. The rationale was to avoid preconception of issues by the researcher and pre-emption of the responses through the use of narrowly-focussed questions.

Bell (1999) maintains that the relevance and usefulness of a case study lies in its 'reliability' to the institution studied, since well-prepared and small-scale studies may inform, illuminate and provide a basis for policy decisions within the institution. In this case through feedback to the staff a further objective of the research was to provide catalytic validity (Brock-Utne: 1996), intending a 'reality altering impact of the enquiry process' directed towards a 'gain in self-understanding and self-direction of those under study' (616). A problem-identifying/addressing component was expressed through feedback to the staff by

- making the research project available,
- an information dissemination session to the staff on the new government guidelines for alternatives to corporal punishment (Department of Education, 2000) (appendix 6),
- a whole staff development day guided by needs expressed from the school.

These all have the objective of staff support and development.

The interactive approach of the study was further justified by the belief that it is impossible for the researcher to adopt an entirely impersonal and value-free approach, as one is necessarily prejudiced, interested and evaluative (Hite, 1993)

Accordingly steps in the story of the research procedure were as follows:

- Verbal permission was granted by the principal for free access to the school, its community and documents during the duration of the study. A proviso for this was that staff should have access to all aspects of the work during

collection of data and that there be a report back when the study was complete.

- A 'gate-keeper' was provided who could explain the workings and routines of the school and generally smooth the path. In addition access was given to the school's board room where it was possible to carry out interviews and discussions in private.
- During a staff meeting I was able to present my objective to the staff, answer any of their questions and provide a copy of my research proposal.
- For the first four visits to the school, stretches of time between two and five hours were spent informally meeting various members of staff, exploring the school, examining pertinent records and documentation both of the school and education department and identifying support resources and organisations available to the school. By being there it was possible to make the research project known in the school, and initiate communication with the teachers.
- In order to prepare an interview schedule (appendix 4) for the following few weeks the staff were canvassed via a simple questionnaire. This asked who would be prepared to participate in group discussion and when they had free time to do so. In addition times were given when I would position myself in the board room, offering to talk to any teacher who wished to discuss anything.
- After completing interviews and discussions a questionnaire was compiled for the staff which had been piloted to teachers from another school. After some slight changes and additions it was presented to teachers in this school as the final data collection exercise.
- In addition, a time was arranged before the end of the final term for a report back to the staff on the recent Education Department guidelines and suggestions regarding the management of discipline (Le Mottee, 2000) (appendix 6).
- Finally a time was made early in the first term of 2001 for a staff development day which would entail:
 - i. a report back on the research,
 - ii. a workshop on current approaches to discipline management
 - iii. Collaboration with my supervisor to initiate school improvement strategies among the staff and within the school.

Data Gathering Methods

By combining different sources of data and research methods it was intended to both provide triangulation, so as to transcend individualistic analysis, and also to attempt to penetrate what Stake (1988) termed the multi-layered complexity of reality within a bounded context. Reality is a subjective construction but, by considering the reality of as many respondents as possible within a particular school, and using different methods of data collection, it was hoped to reduce researcher subjectivity. In addition it was felt that the different types of data collection would both aid interpretation and enhance the credibility of the study. These include:

Document analysis

Provincial and government gazettes and directives were examined to discover the legal positions of schools and teachers and what recommendations and advice were supplied with regard to discipline. The underlying questions were what support was being given by the state and the provincial department and what deficiencies were there in official documentation. The information gained was intended to serve as a backdrop to what was actually happening, to what extent documented disciplinary practice reflected that which was prescribed, and to what extent they reflected the actual experiences and problems encountered by the teachers.

The school's code of conduct provided an initial pointer to behaviour considered desirable and important in this particular school. Records were examined of disciplinary referral to HODs and subsequent punishment of learners in order to get some idea of types of misbehaviour encountered, and how these were handled. In addition, as a disciplinary tribunal was held during the course of the research, departmental guidelines for this procedure were studied.

Observation

Spending time in the school, visiting classrooms, attending staff meetings, school functions and working in the staffroom, all allowed a fly on the wall view of:

- the day to day running of the school,
- its layout and physical condition,

- routines and organisation,
- the general constitution, disposition and politics of the staff.

Much information, not otherwise easily accessed, was gleaned by simply being there. In addition attendance was possible at the disciplinary tribunals of two of the learners at the school, an open meeting of the Community Alliance of Safe Schools (CASS) and a workshop at the Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP). Assistance was given at a school HIV/AIDS day, and the Miss and Mr Rossburgh competition. By invitation from a teacher a lesson was given to her group. Such involvement was valuable: through these experiences, a stronger position is established from which to provide the reader with 'a vicarious, cognitive experience' (Stake, 1988: 260). By becoming involved in the life of the school through attending, observing and participating, it was possible to interpret and transmit the school as an organisation in a fuller, richer way so that that the reader might approach the experience of the researcher and draw her or his own conclusions.

Conversations

During the first few visits to the school informal conversations took place. A number of members of staff had opinions to give, feelings to vent and stories to tell of incidents and methods of coping with classroom discipline. These informal conversations were most important ways of gaining data. Offering a listening ear and empathetic stance made it possible to pick up useful information about the school, its ethos and the disposition of the staff.

As most of these conversations were unsolicited and all were willingly given, potential sources of error such as respondents' suspicion, indifference, and unawareness were avoided, and researcher expectations and discomfort lessened. Within the framework of the broad research topic, such conversations allowed the respondents freedom to talk about what was of central significance to them (Bell, 1999). An added advantage gained from these times of informal interaction with the staff was that in more formal interviews and discussions both interviewer and interviewee were known to each other, so that a measure of mutual confidence had already been established. These conversations were not tape-recorded, as were the prearranged interviews and discussions. However all were described soon after the event either as part of a journal entry

or in notes. Over and above these, conversations were held with the staff, parents on the governing body and representatives from CASS and CRISP - both outside organisations providing some support to the school.

Interviews

Several of the staff preferred an individual interview rather than participation in a group discussion. Largely, these were informal, in that, although lightly steered and prompted, the direction was provided by the interviewee (Bell, 1999). As the framework and focus of the research were established beforehand by fostering awareness among the staff, facilitation gave no problem. These individual interviews were taped and later transcribed. In addition the CRISP facilitator who spent a part of most days in the school was interviewed. In all 7 staff interviews were conducted.

Discussions

Through their response to a small questionnaire (appendix5) it was possible to pre-plan an interview schedule and organise some groups by criteria, namely: beginners, counselling teachers and Heads of Department. Twenty three of the 27 teachers expressed willingness to participate. Of those with whom interviews were arranged, two did not show up. In addition, at the request of their organising Hod, I held a discussion with a group of prefects.

A broad framework was formulated. The steps in this framework were:

- Why do we, as teachers, have to cope with discipline?
- Is this problematic? When, and how does it affect us both as teachers and personally?
- What types of misbehavior are most difficult to deal with and why?
- Are there changes in frequency, nature and those who perpetrate and why?
- What support systems are available for teachers?
- What might improve matters?

The framework for the prefects was different, and this was:

- How are prefects chosen?
- What is their role in discipline management?
- What are their powers?

- Are they satisfied with the way things are organised and why?
- What is felt about punishment per se?
- How might matters be improved?

These frameworks were constructed so that the process could be steered. In actuality the discussions were allowed to flow freely, the researcher playing the role more of a facilitating participant offering a salient comment or anecdote rather than an overly directive question. The aim to avoid pre-emption and narrowness of focus at this stage meant that debate and discussion were preferred. In total 5 group discussions were held.

The questionnaire (appendix2)

Unlike the more conventional procedure in which a questionnaire is followed by interviews or discussions, it was decided that the questionnaire (appendix 2) should be the final means of garnering data. Two main factors influenced this:

1. Discipline management is one way in which the effectiveness of a teacher is often judged. There is worldwide controversy around the issue of classroom control which, in this country, is encapsulated in the debates around authority and democracy and corporal punishment. Given the sensitivity and contentiousness of the topic, the opinion was that having stimulated thought through personal communication in conversations/ interviews/ discussion it would be more effective and fruitful to proceed from the general to the personal narrative accounts required by the questionnaire.
2. The questionnaire was intended both to flesh out and give focus to the issues thrown out by the discussions.

Care was taken to present a questionnaire that was clear and straightforward, with simple instructions and clearly phrased open-ended questions which neither 'presumed' any viewpoint, nor 'led' to any desired response (Hite,1993; Bell, 1999). The questionnaire was piloted using six teachers from other schools, and based on their comments and recommendations, several modifications were made to facilitate simplicity and access more information. Originally the teachers were asked in question 1 how discipline was maintained only in their classrooms. A further question was added asking how discipline

was maintained in the school. Also another question was added to number 5, which was 'what could be done at this stage to supplement your skills in discipline management'.

Of the 26 questionnaires distributed, 17 were recovered. As confidentiality had been considered important so teachers could communicate without inhibition, it was impossible to trace those not returned. More time was given and further requests were made but no more questionnaires were forthcoming. According to Bell (1999) there are differences between people who return questionnaires and those who do not, but one can never calculate or characterise such bias or distortion. In the end it was decided, due to constraints of time, to work with what was available. Also the non-responses were not considered to be of major importance in such a qualitative, narrative type of questionnaire. Trends rather than facts and statistics were being sought.

Respondents were asked to supply details of gender, age, length of time in teaching and period of time in this school. The questionnaire was divided into 6 sections, each of which carried several related questions. The sections comprised:

1. Discipline management within the classroom and the school itself
2. Problematic behaviour of learners
3. Serious discipline problems encountered
4. Changes in learner behaviour
5. Nature of training to manage discipline
6. Further comments on the subject of discipline in schools

Data organisation and analysis

In order to make a start the collection of data was organised according to 'first thoughts categories' (Bell,1999:173). Documents and early conversations and observations served to sketch in a background and context, and to answer questions regarding the nature of the school, its role players and mode of function. These were consolidated as one introductory section and dealt with in this light.

Interviews and discussions were transcribed. Categories of data were identified and organised partly according to the guiding framework but also including recurring or notable themes that had not been pre-identified.

Questionnaires were categorised and collated according to section, and analysed for consensus, similarities and unexpected responses.

Problems and shortcomings

A number of problems and difficulties were encountered relating to the design of the study. This research was very time consuming, and necessitated many visits to the school. Fortunately the school was quite accessible to the researcher both in terms of distance and freedom of access, so it was possible to weave in visits with other commitments. The teachers themselves were hard-stretched due to heavy timetables, and the school had already been the focus of a number of research projects, so initially there was slight resistance from the principal and some of the staff. However there were three facilitating factors within the research project itself:

- the subject and focus of the research were of concern and interest to the school,
- feedback, documents, materials and a listening ear were made freely available to the teachers,
- teachers were given the opportunity to talk freely and openly in a confidential, non-threatening climate.

Further problems were presented by the nature of the data presented. Again these were time related. Firstly the transcription of the group discussions in particular took many hours. Some teachers spoke more clearly and slowly than others, but in rapid, excited or heated debate, it was at times difficult to decipher what was said against the background noise of the school, particularly as many of the discussions took place during breaktimes. Also the quantity of data generated demanded much time spent analysing, sifting, categorising, and sorting. In retrospect, it might have been possible to be more disciplined about length of recordings and to have made limits on the number of people spoken to, but at the time it was preferred to allow conversations and discussions to run naturally, rather than impose a strict framework and time-limit, particularly as it was considered a privilege to receive the information and material given. In

addition the wealth of data collected made it very difficult to focus the analysis and select examples. Much of interest to the researcher was omitted in the battle to 'tame' the results and analysis.

A further aspect of the research design caused some misgivings to the researcher. It became obvious that the decision to follow interviews with questionnaire was the opposite of the usual research design. The original purpose had seemed reasonable at the time: of gaining amplification of issues due to increased awareness among the staff following interviews and discussions. However this was based on supposition and instinct by the researcher. Whether or not this was effective might only be measured against a similar future project, where the questionnaire is the first data-gathering exercise followed by interviews and discussions. The responses to the questionnaire, were in fact thoughtful, well-phrased and expressed strong opinions that had not been articulated in discussion. However it may be awareness raised by the questionnaire might have influenced directions taken in discussions.

The next chapter provides an analysis of the data collected by the above means.

CHAPTER THREE

Results and Analysis

In this chapter the data obtained from the various methods of collection will be analysed. The objective is, using the narratives of the teachers themselves, to provide a reflection of the ethos and atmosphere of the school and its role-players with especial focus on their individual and collective management of discipline. The chapter will be arranged in four sections:

1. Firstly, observations made about the school on the initial visits will be related. In addition, a description will be given of the physical and academic conditions within the school, its ethos and the social relations among the school community.
2. Secondly an examination will be made of the types and patterns of discipline problems occurring in the school. A division will be made between the day-to-day surface events, and some of the underlying and exacerbating causes.
3. In the third section a review will be made of discipline management strategies in the school. Organisational policy and procedures will be described, and teachers' responses to and techniques of discipline management will be related.
4. Fourthly, the views of teachers will be recorded on:
 - their preparation and training,
 - support given to them for discipline management problems,
 - failings of and problems with discipline management within the system,
 - potential solutions.

i. Background and Context

Having read a report about the school (available on request) and enquired about it from several sources, I was unprepared for the antithesis presented by first impressions. As I approached I was able to see beyond the boundaries to a number of well-maintained sports fields in large, pleasantly-treed grounds. The first jarring factor was the locked gate to the entrance, policed by an armed guard who demanded details and identification before the gate was opened. Once inside I was struck by the silence and seeming absence of anyone around. As state high schools go this presented well, albeit slightly down-at-

heel. But I was unable to find any way into the locked administrative building until I discovered an intercom which connected me to the secretary.

The principal immediately passed me on to my teacher/gatekeeper, who gave detailed information about the school and its workings, and introduced me to some of the other teachers. The offices and staffroom were pleasant, spacious and comfortable, containing a snooker table and bar. There was an access-controlled security gate between the administrative block and the rest of the school, giving a clear impression of one well-contained, secure environment separated from something far from that.

The school itself was spacious, in large grounds and appeared well-equipped with a resource centre, workshops for woodwork, metal work and car maintenance, computer room, and other specialised facilities such as a home economics department, and science laboratories. According to the principal it has changed to meet the challenges presented by a more democratic education dispensation and ethos. Initially an Afrikaans-medium primary faced with closure due to dwindling numbers, it had been opened in 1993 as a model D school, designed to cater for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Many came from nearby squatter camps and townships. As the academic standards of the school have been seen to rise, this catchment has changed. Now a significant proportion of learners come from a professional background (28% of pupils in grade 8 have teacher parents) and are generally sent to the school from surrounding townships or even further afield. Whilst lower than those of a normal ex-model C school, the fees are higher than most township or rural schools. At the moment the body of learners is composed of 96% black, with a small number of coloured and white. The school is in a white residential area, bordering a main highway, and close to a suburban shopping centre

A threefold problem is presented by most learners being outsiders in the area.

- There is some hostility from the surrounding residents and local shopowners.
- Many of the learners travel long distances by public transport to and from school, therefore sometimes arrive late and are reluctant or unable to stay for after-school activities.

- It is difficult for the school to maintain a relationship with the parents.

My gatekeeper identified a further problem related to public transport. Learners use the local station at the same time as those from neighbouring schools. It is a site of gang conflict and learners are allegedly not safe. Previously teachers had taken turns to be on duty at the station, but this had recently fallen away when a previous deputy head had left. The station is reputedly now monitored by the police, albeit not regularly. Consequently, once learners leave the school premises, they are faced with a lack of supervision and protection both at the station and on the journey home.

A further problem noted by several teachers is the ongoing change in the learner catchment and profile. Those from a higher socio-economic bracket, including those from other race groups, are being attracted by the low fees and good results produced in the school. The racial mix is expected to become more diverse. Embryonic race and culture-based problems noted were expected to worsen.

However the school, in common with many others also faces problems which relate to reform of the system. The changes in education policy, such as equity-related cuts in funding and redistribution of teachers, have led to large numbers in classes (75 in some classes in 1999, though in 2000 classes have been maintained at below 50). The introduction of the OBE framework has been a further stress factor to teachers. In addition bullying, sexual harassment and sexism have been identified as problems among learners. Among teachers lack of common and shared vision have been noted, especially in relation to discipline and enforcement of school and classroom rules.

The staff is relatively young and is composed of roughly 1/3 each of black, white, and coloured/indian teachers and, until this year, was fairly stable in the school. Of the questionnaire respondents, 10 were under 35, a further 4 were under 45 and three were under 55. Six of the respondents were male and 11 female. Thirteen of them had been in the school for five years or more. Several teachers commented on the general idealism of the staff, initially drawn to the school by its original catchment of squatter camp children. If measured by matric results in its first few years (96% pass rate in 1999) it has been exceptionally successful. However this year, according to one teacher, has

been a 'break' year. Six of the long established teachers have left, and this number may be increased by the end of the year. Two of the four HoD's have recently handed in their notice.

I was given a pile of record files to read detailing misdemeanours of various learners, and disciplinary steps taken against them. All were under investigation for serious incidents, such as theft, being drunk or drugged at school, assault, sexual assault, breaking and entering, and having possession of a knife or firearm on school premises. Without exception they had a record of complaints against them of a more minor nature, such as insolence to a teacher, unexplained absences from school, poor work ethic and so on. According to one teacher:

These are problem learners who were never dealt with from the start...the system is unworkable. They've been allowed to get away with murder... absenteeism, not doing homework, rudeness to teachers... ongoing trouble...these are often ones up to no good.

My gatekeeper gave more information about the types of problems faced by the school, such as gangs, drinking and drug-taking on the premises, weapons at school, gender violence and racial problems. Though the school has a very strict uniform code, gang members identify each other by their Rolex watches and expensive shoes. Substance abuse and petty crime are offshoots of the gang problem, similarly learners who carry guns and knives.

On my second visit to the school a meeting had been prearranged but the teacher was absent. The principal was about to take assembly, so it was possible to accompany him and get a first real view of the learners. Assembly was very formal. The teachers filed into the hall onto the stage. Learners stood, with the smallest most junior pupils at the front and the seniors at the back. The general neatness of the school uniforms, and some of the beautiful and elaborate hairstyles of the girls were striking. Apart from a few shuffles and meaningful looks, all behaved impeccably, listening respectfully and applauding when expected. A copy of the school Code of Conduct (appendix 3) was collected: quite a lengthy and detailed document, not particularly user-friendly. This will be discussed in the third section of this chapter.

On the next visit the research proposal was presented at the morning staff meeting, and explanation given of the plan of operation. The atmosphere at the meeting was very tense, and angry words were exchanged between several of the teachers. The cause was later found to be that one teacher was objecting to being appraised by one of the HOD's. The teacher claimed that, as she was leaving, she could afford to speak out and that many of the other teachers were equally unhappy about the whole appraisal process which necessitated being assessed by teachers they did not respect or who had little experience. This incident was the tip of an iceberg of deep unrest and dissatisfaction felt by the staff, and in the following days it became obvious that there were serious divisions and much frustration and unhappiness. It was difficult at that stage and even later to pinpoint tangible reasons, however the recent history of the school, and government and department-imposed changes discussed in Chapter 1 had certainly placed the teachers under unprecedented stress.

During these early visits, several teachers approached me some wanting to talk about frustrations and problems, and others to discuss matters relating to classroom discipline. I was told:

You'll find a lot of unhappiness at the school...things have changed for the worse over the last couple of years... the strain is starting to tell...all the teachers want to leave...there've been nervous breakdowns and staff who've left...things are falling apart and people are at each others throats

I've been here since the school started... it was wonderful...we all adored the head...we worked so hard...til 9 at night...I love the children here but I hate the school now.

Management and some factions of the staff were criticised for various reasons, and during the first few visits it became obvious that this was a very troubled body of teachers. There was a tense atmosphere in the staffroom and as an outsider I felt disturbed and ill at ease.

However apart from the vented frustration and complaints, a sense was also gained of staff who were well qualified, committed and idealistic. A significant number were studying at post-graduate level. There was some boisterous nonsense and laughter in the staffroom when two of the female teachers taped

one of the male teachers to his chair and a deep-down camaraderie among the staff belied the current mood of the school.

Subsequently some of the causes of tension in the staffroom were revealed. Two major episodes occurred at this time. The first was a tribunal of two boys who, after previously holding up and robbing a learner from another school, had been discovered in possession of a gun and knife on Queensville premises. The parents of one of the boys had been threatening to the school and were allegedly bringing lawyers to the tribunal. Both the principal and the HOD who was acting as proctor were very apprehensive. I asked if I could attend and the principal said categorically not as it was to be held 'in camera'. I referred to the relevant authority and discovered this was not necessary: witnesses could attend (Lotter, 2000). As most of the tribunal were not familiar with the procedure and I was, they accepted my presence.

The second cause of unease was an extraordinary general staff meeting held several days earlier with Department of Education and Culture representatives which had been an attempt to resolve grievances, disputes and perspectives of various staff members. These were many and serious, the meeting was allegedly very emotional, and ultimately some staff felt that issues had been glossed over and not resolved. Reference has previously been made to the dissatisfaction and unhappiness of the staff at the commencement of this study. Three have had 'nervous breakdowns' and many of them are suffering from extreme stress. According to one teacher who was leaving to take another post;

I think if you go to every teacher in this school and tell them if they can get a job at another school...a reasonable other school...will they go...I tell you 85%...even teachers now...they are looking to do another trade...they are looking to be retrained in a different way...not to be teachers any more.

Without exception the leaving teachers gave reasons of internal politics and dissatisfaction with management of the school. Several blamed leadership. Previous principals were cited as more successful and charismatic. When asked in what way, the response was that they had been stricter, more tightly organised and authoritarian. In the words of one teacher....

There is a part of the staff...they are trying to undermine the head and find any small reason to criticise....but he is now trying...hard to please everybody...some members of staff are caught between wanting to

progress the school and old loyalties and grievances...many of the staff are unhappy with the appointment ...they wanted a black male teacher in the school for the job...some of the older teachers with much to offer in the way of experience and ability were passed over when promotions were decided...

One teacher blamed departmental policies in the wake of the new political dispensation, which he felt had debilitated and undermined the teaching profession:

It's been an academic policy which was left for years...so everybody was in an acting capacity and never got paid...and the bitterness that caused...you've got these upstarts who moved in...you've got this whole redeployment thing...and the bitterness it's caused...so at the end of the day you're looking at these suppurating wounds

The principal himself is highly sensitive to the situation within the school. He stands between the demands and bureaucracy of a troubled, changing department (Mathews, 1999), and an insecure, highly pressured body of teachers, while trying to bring the school onto a different level as a self managing, democratic organisation. He made the comparison between management in industry and management of a school:

If we're going to go the self-managing route...you've then got to look at the school as a business...besides your educators you're dealing with another 825 customers...their parents...you're delivering them a service...you're taking money for that service and so you've now got a budget to work on...you've got to provide service...you don't have the management structure...it's too small...you don't have a full reception, accounting... human resources, labour relations...that sort of thing...you're finding educators doing jobs that a company would have a small elite clique doing.

The children in the school were felt to be the same as children everywhere, and any problems they gave and perceptions of change in their nature were seen as due to socio-economic factors that were shocking and unexpected to the teachers. Disrupted families and difficult home circumstances were common. One teacher described:

I go into the files to get phone numbers and things like that and it's guardians..where some of the kids are living with people..it's actually the residence of the people that their mothers work for as maids and things like that...and that person's also responsible for checking up on them and paying their fees and things like that...I wouldn't exactly know what the proportion would be of real parents and even where the parents would be involved....it's a broken home...it's a single mum situation... so the family unit as a whole...I don't know what percentage...but it's very small...that is a normal fully functioning family...totally secure...good job...staying in a normal house...

Another of the teachers reiterated the problem of split and broken families as one of the exacerbating factors to discipline problems:

These kids...or 90% of them...they don't live with their parents...they live with their grandparents who are old and who cannot instill the discipline that a young mother, father or family situation could actually do...where you get older brothers and sisters...so we're actually faced with a child sitting in a class and have this situation at home...so we send out letters and we send out disciplinary notes and things like that and it actually goes nowhere and it gets totally lost...how do you as a teacher go forward from there...what is the next step and what do I have in front of me...I don't have the support of the child's parents...the mother is in Ulundi and the father is on the South Coast...the grandmother is like sixty and seventy and in the middle...she can barely even read the disciplinary note or the fact that the child was detained or anything like that....and the teachers look at the next thing and say ok what do we have...I must deal with this myself...I've sent letters...I've tried to phone...the phone numbers are incorrect...I cannot deal with this child any more but he is forced to be...I am forced to teach him...

A number of teachers commented on the change of values among learners, in particular a desire and reverence for material things. One teacher recounted an incident that had struck her as symbolic and indicated the dire need for training in values and life-skills:

I was speaking to this grade 8 child and I was saying to him that no matter what happens there are two things that nobody can strip off you and that is your dignity and respect as a human being...and he said...yes...I have

respect and I have dignity because I have DSTV and a Sony playstation and my own computer...and I was absolutely taken aback...

Another teacher remarked on changes to young people in general

the calibre of child is changing in terms of....the children are more assertive...are more aware of the kinds of rights that they have...the learners now have problems that are equivalent to problems adults encounter in terms of sexuality...in terms of relationships...I would put it down to the kind of exposure these learners are...that are becoming within their realms of experience...I would also put it down to the change in the value system...the values in their home are changing...undoubtedly television plays a great role in that respect...many of these learners go to empty homes...and assume the responsibility of their parents in so far as taking care of younger brothers and sisters...household chores...you know parents just not being there...they are delving into situations that you wouldn't thought of suitable for a child of that age.

Lack of parental participation in the school has been identified as a major problem. The elusiveness of parents and caregivers, and difficulty in communicating with them was a recurring frustration to the teachers. School notices went unread and often caregivers were unable to read. The principal and staff see poor family access as one of the prime difficulties in the school and attribute this largely to the fragmented catchment:

I think our impact as far as the home environment goes from here as a teacher itself is fairly limited...it's far flung...certainly when teachers can get to those households they will do it...but we'd rather have the parents here...where we are situated where you've parents at all four corners of the country...it's not that easy to get them here in sufficient numbers so when you hold meetings here ...they've got to come in...so either they don't have transport or it's at an inconvenient time or whatever it might be ..or they can't make it...

The school has been trying to form a viable governing body that would be able to deal with some of the required functions, however there has been a major problem getting members initially, and then getting those members to meetings.

A move is proposed to establish fund-raising sub-committees in the two main catchment areas of Lamontville/Umlazi and Kwa Mashu/Ntuzuma.

The staff at the school sees itself beset with many problems, but at the end of the day consensus was that many schools face worse situations.

In the following section the sorts of discipline problem experienced by teachers at the school will be examined.

ii. Discipline problems in the school

Teachers were asked which types of discipline problem they encountered in the school. On the whole general agreement by the interviewees, consolidated by the questionnaire respondents, was that the most troublesome and common problems were low grade irritants such as noise, attention-seeking and poor work ethic. In the questionnaire, 11 of the teachers mentioned noise as a major problem. In addition 6 cited poor work ethic as one of the most troublesome types of behaviour: a topic which also figured largely in discussion. Two of the teachers elaborated on this;

Noise...that's the problem...even with matrices they can't be quiet...and it's chatting...it's private conversations.

Eeh...I don't know...but I think the problem in my class...they don't have what we call work ethic...they have to be pushed all the time...so they don't see it necessary to keep quiet and do their work...once you're not looking at them they leave their eyes from the board..they start talking.

One teacher in discussion summed up the most troublesome types of discipline problems which were:

Very minor things...like arriving late at class...noise...talking...lack of concentration...poor work ethic...not having done homework etcetera... other aspects would be littering and stuff like that...there'd be vandalism...we have smoking...we have incidents of drinking every now and again...we don't I think get a lot of learners being absolutely cheeky...I mean there's the odd little incident and stuff but I mean it's not a regular feature...problems that any teacher is facing in any school possibly just exacerbated by the numbers and perhaps the language as well.

Several teachers mentioned a culture of entitlement. This together with lack of responsibility and work ethic were generally felt to make teaching young people in this context demanding and wearying. According to one group of teachers:

These are teenagers with a strange culture of entitlement and there's no responsibility and non-accountability...you know I could do whatever and nothing's going to be done to me and you must give me every single thing....they're so happy to get 20%, they're ever so happy to scrape the 40's...if you say what happened to these fifties and sixties they say...ah...at least we've passed.

And it's calculated like that...you know they don't look at the end mark in the report...they look at the class average...so if it's 34% and they've got 35...sharp.

Then they're above average...it doesn't matter if the average is just 20%...if they're 21 they're above the average...so...yah...the work ethic isn't there and the discipline of any kind isn't there either...and it actually drags you down as teachers.

✕ Theft was given as a troublesome and disturbing type of behaviour by six of the questionnaire respondents. One teacher related a recent incident which left him feeling bemused and despondent: ✕

Yesterday for example a student had a cd cassette stolen from his bag...alright...now you can adopt the one approach where you're stupid...you shouldn't have brought it...or you can take the other position that something must be done ...and that leads to a conflict between realism and management...it wasn't a case of finding the thief...it was a case of finding out who wasn't the thief...it was much easier...even though if just one person took the thing and handed it to his cronies etcetera...the whole group of them knew who had the cassette...I went searching bags...and they knew...and when I confronted them afterwards...we got the thieves...and over half the class you know were quite cheerful about it...admitted to being thieves.

Another teacher in despair related her experience of petty theft:

I have stacks of rulers, pencils and pens from the stock room every time and do you know if I'm absent for one day...the next day I come back...I'm lucky if I have one left there...I mean it's for them to use ...but it's stolen...it's just a no-win battle at the moment really.

Attention-seeking among the learners was identified as a source of challenge to the teacher, and strong peer pressure to condone this and conform with group behaviour often made one trouble-maker more difficult to manage. This type of behaviour was considered to be largely gendered in nature, bearing an underlying threat of masculine aggression. According to one teacher:

If they can't get attention in a positive manner by contributing positively to the lesson or by shining out in an intellectual capacity...then they must do something bad... something wrong...something negative in order to get... draw attention... and when they get this attention they feel all macho... now all eyes are on them and then you correct them... and then when all eyes are on them and it's not taken in a very positive manner their male egos are slighted...they become offended...they can become offensive in their response to you.

x Nine of the questionnaire respondents gave incidents, involving a standoff, of being challenged/ threatened/ argued with as the most serious they had experienced. Of these one teacher was threatened with bodily harm by a learner wielding a stick and another female teacher was sworn at in Zulu. The most serious problem with which one HoD had to deal was total defiance and disruption among a large group, causing the teacher to cry. ✓

x Whilst this research was in process a gun was found in the possession of a learner. One of the teachers smelt gun oil and this led him to search the suspected learner. The gun had been earlier used to commit robbery on the way to the school. Another teacher recounted how she dealt with a fight in her classroom, x

I had like a full-on fight punch-up with blood and everything...we've had that quite a few times...but the kids help you with that...I mean I've had...the kids will separate the fight and you march them down...I mean I've marched kids holding them by their ties...down...dumped them on the bench and the...it's amazing how strong you get when the adrenaline kicks in...but you

do...you march them down to the HoD...or else you sit and send a kid...go call so and so.

Other than that three teachers cited theft and two cited serious fighting between learners as the most serious behaviour problem they had encountered. Most teachers agreed that, apart from theft which has become an ongoing nuisance, serious incidents are not numerous and often repercussions of something that happened off school premises. In line with this one teacher appraised:

There's only about 20 kids in the whole school that are bad kids...The children are more sexually aware...and probably as sexually active...but I don't think it's changing them as children...maybe there's more pregnancies in schools than there were ten years ago and things like that...but I don't think it's changing their behaviour in class...

Three underlying, exacerbating problems of numbers, language and gender cropped up again and again in discussion. The first of these, already noted, was the problem of large numbers in classes, which hinders any attempts by the teacher to discover what might be at the root of poor behaviour. One teacher reflected on this:

When you sit down and say tell me what's the problem... why don't you want to do it ... is it me... is it the subject or are you having some kind of problems... sitting down talking to them does seem to work but quite practically how much time do you have to sit down with a class of forty children and discuss their problems... umm... however there have been some positive things come out of it... you do get some learners who I learn to have a better relationship with that are normally problematic children... because I'm speaking about a one-on-one and I do get somewhere... but still that's time-consuming as well.

Many teachers rated class size as one of their most problematic factors. One teacher described this graphically:

Seventy two..that was the greatest...no we couldn't cope with that at all...we couldn't...when you knew you had to teach in that class you immediately start to boil...because you're busy here...people at the back can't see the board and then everyone's making a noise here...it was a nightmare...an absolute nightmare...I can't think of one teacher...only one who's left now who taught in an autocratic way.

On the other hand, one specialist teacher explained how her small groups enabled her to have a more normal relationship with her classes,

I have like maybe 15-18 students in a class which makes discipline handling very easy...because of that I don't have the normal pupil-teacher relationship...I have a very friendly environment and it helps to facilitate it in coping with the discipline...

A repercussion of the numbers problem and the heavy load carried by teachers was high absenteeism of staff caused by in the main health problems and teachers attending meetings, courses, or dealing with counselling or discipline matters. This put extra strain on the staff who were at school and expected to lose free periods to bat (substitute) for those absent. Already overloaded timetables made this an impossible burden. At the beginning of the year an attempt was made to solve the problem by sending all unattended learners to the cricket pavillion. This story was recounted by one teacher:

The pavillion was initially an area where they could go and a teacher would be there... around the field... then because of stresses and pressures and everything ... it wouldn't... people were very anti-batting and so it was just kids going there and of course we all know if there's kids there... strange happenings... and kids bunk to be with their friends there and so it was decided...well fine...if the English teacher isn't there report to the English teacher's venue... you'd be allowed to sit in and the teachers on either side would monitor the noise level... but it doesn't work either because you'd be getting a teacher to walk in all the time and that really creates more stress... and then we had a staff development on it where we looked at causes ...what causes teachers to be absent all the time... and then what could the teachers then do if they know they're absent to try and help out the school, in terms of administration and discipline... so we came up with ideas such as leaving work for the kids and bla bla bla... but that's very well in theory but it doesn't happen in practice.

The second underlying problem was that of language. The majority of the learners are Zulu-speaking second or third-language English-speakers. Some teachers who do not understand Zulu have found themselves at a disadvantage. One teacher explained:

I wouldn't say I have discipline problems so far as bad behaviour... bad respect...I would think it's more a communication problem... it's problem of the language barrier and I'm not able to speak Zulu myself and many of the children are not able to comprehend English and so I think most of the discipline problems stem from language...that's my basic problem.

Another teacher described her difficulties:

It makes a difference if you understand Zulu...you understand the comments...but like for me they'll pass a comment in Zulu and I won't know what was said and I'm wondering are they swearing at me or are they commenting about something totally different and then you're more humiliated.

One white teacher felt that good behaviour in her classroom was a result of speaking Zulu:

Speaking Zulu to the seniors earns a great deal of respect as well, because they don't allow juniors to be cheeky to me... they become very protective of the teacher.

The third exacerbating problem noted by female teachers was their own gender. It was felt that they demanded less respect from learners. According to the principal,

I think quite a few of them do take...are under a lot of stress... particularly some of the ladies... yes I think they do.

One teacher related how a learner had asked her for a date:

A grade 11 child told me that he wanted to date me... it was very awkward and it was very sensitive and at the same time very cheeky... and so I had to deal with all three of those... I had to quickly think about how to answer and my first reaction was to be very very angry...I think he was very put out because I told him rather firmly that he was out of place... out of order... and I asked him would you ask someone who was... who played a mother figure in your life out on a date and he said no ...of course not.

During one group session of mainly female teachers the issue was discussed:

Another discipline thing is what you are... whether you're a male or female... it makes a big difference to these children... you know these first impressions of walking into a classroom... if you're a lovely petite little lady who's really beautifully made up and presenting yourself very well...you're a walkover.

If you walk in there with army boots which is what I've done in the past..

If you walk in there with this macho attitude and you know for the Rambo...the Rambo effect.

Actually what you're saying is so true... I think that female teachers particularly in a place like this get taken out... I think there's definitely sense to be made in attitudes but I think it's also a threat of physical violence situation... people do not expect female teachers to make a good uppercut...whereas they know that you can only push a male teacher only so far and then you are going to be decked.

Women teachers in the school consider that they have to be aggressive in a stereotypical, polarised masculine way in order to gain attention and compliance from the learners. The recognition of the gendered nature of power in the school with the underlying threat of male violence cropped up many times, though it was not always recognised as such. The teacher who was asked for a date felt awkward and uncomfortable as well as angry, but did not really see the incident as confrontational. Kenway & Fitzclarence (1997) point out that 'there is overwhelming evidence to show that verbal and physical harassment, teasing and taunting relating to sexuality or gender against girls and women is rife in schools' (123). It is apparent that the gender regime in the school facilitates certain types of anti-female indiscipline.

The actual discipline policy and strategies used in the school will be detailed in the next section of this analysis.

iii. Discipline Management Strategies

In this section of the analysis an examination will be made of the structures and procedures for discipline management and other helping strategies both in the school and in the classroom.

The school code of conduct (appendix 3) accords with the 1995 South African Schools Act and in theory governs the expected behaviour from learners and underpins sanctions against and repercussions of misbehaviour. It is a somewhat legalistic document which follows guidelines supplied by the provincial department

(KZN Department of Education and Culture, 1997), with rights balanced against responsibilities, and school rules about:

- uniforms and appearance,
- attendance,
- academics, homework and classwork,
- conduct in and out of school.

This is followed by 3-4 pages of 'regulations relating to disciplinary procedures and action': clearly written but long and detailed. A list of 'corrective measures' are set out for minor offences, namely,

- i. verbal warning or written reprimand by an educator,
- ii. supervised school work that will contribute to the learner's progress at school, the improvement of the school environment, provided the parents are timeously informed and the security of the child is assured,
- iii. performing tasks that would assist the offended person,
- iv. agreed affordable compensation,
- v. replacement of damaged property,
- vi. suspension from some school activities, e.g sport, cultural activities.

A page of behaviour that can lead to suspension is also set out, along with the due process that may lead to expulsion (appendix 3).

The modus for managing discipline in the school is as follows.

- Prefects are elected from among Grade 12 learners, and effectively form the police force of the school. They may punish by giving detention and chores.
- Learners are expected to adhere to the code of conduct.
- In theory individual teachers are responsible for dealing with their own minor discipline problems and if necessary may send learners out of the class or to the 'sin-bin' outside the administrative block. Otherwise they may give detention or school cleaning tasks.
- The first point of reference for a subject teacher who has a problem with a learner or group is the registration teacher, who is also expected to check school uniform and deal with learners' minor problems. Problems will, if thought necessary, be referred to the counselling department.
- The four HOD's are the next line of defence. They are also academic heads of department but are supposed theoretically to deal with more

serious or ongoing misdemeanours. They may send learners home to fetch their parents or, with governing body approval, suspend them for a week. Thereafter a tribunal must be held, and if recommendation is made by the governing body for expulsion, this must be ratified by the provincial HOD who then has responsibility to find alternative schooling for the learner.

Questions 1a AND 1c of the questionnaire (appendix 2) asked how discipline was maintained in the school and whether discipline management was a problem. Of the 17 respondents to the questionnaire, 11 described the discipline regime of the school in terms of the code of conduct. One teacher said that the discipline was good and 7 commented pejoratively. Criticisms included a lack of standard procedure, inconsistency, lack of control and ineffectiveness. Of the critics, two claimed there was no discipline at all in the school. Responses to question 1c were largely in agreement that discipline management was a problem in the school. Only four teachers answered that it was not. Of these one commented that effective measures were in place, the children were generally from decent stable homes but the difference in cultures caused some teachers to perceive the learners as being noisier than expected, as few were delinquent but many immature. Three teachers cited inconsistency and lack of unity among the teaching body as a problem and three felt that the management was to blame. Two of the HoD's mentioned new regulations which:

Require personnel, time and co-operation...too many students have to be dealt with on a daily basis

And:

Too many minor infringements take up too much management time... the follow up is exhausting and takes time from academics.

When asked who was their point of reference for discipline problems and what support was obtained (questions 1e and 1f) only three teachers responded that they did not refer to anyone, dealing with problems themselves. The remainder referred problems to the HOD's and then the principal. One teacher responded that in addition to the HoD's learners were referred to the registration teacher.

Eleven of the teachers were satisfied by follow-up on referrals. Some qualified their response by pointing out lack of time and insufficient senior staff. One teacher had no need of support and another pointed out that colleagues help each other.

Questions 1b and 1d asked how teachers maintained discipline in the classroom and whether they found it a problem. Seven of the teachers said they maintained discipline through punishment and one through withdrawal of privileges. The remaining 9 teachers used a combination of self-discipline as an example to learners, fairness towards all and firmness in establishing classroom codes of conduct. Two mentioned having high expectations, three focussed on making lessons interesting, one had a radio playing as background to practical work and two made lessons fun and used humour. One teacher used a whistle to gain learners attention and another relied on tough love theory which she described as:

Behave...work hard... we will be friends.

Another teacher claimed to use :

Fun and fear... good relations developed... but scream and shout a lot.

Three of the teachers acknowledged that they had a discipline management problem with learners in their classroom. Reasons given were:

- no discipline at home,
- need for constant monitoring of noise,
- a war of attrition between learners and teachers.

The remainder of the teachers (14) said they had no discipline problems, though several qualified their responses by mentioning a lack of work ethic among the children and the effort needed to maintain a peaceful classroom.

One HoD described the routine for discipline referral:

Suspension...expulsion you're not allowed to do...we send kids home to fetch their parents...and they're not allowed to come back until their parents come with them...then you negotiate with the parent depending on the nature of the offence...then you can either put this child on a control form ..which they walk around with to all subjects and to all teachers...and you get to monitor it day by day...normally over a period of two weeks...and then when there's a problem you intervene...if I see that the child has done something wrong on that day then I immediately put them on detention.

In line with the South African Schools Act of 1996 the school does not have the power to suspend for long periods or to expel learners (Shaba, 1998). During

the course of this research three learners were found in possession on school premises of a gun and knife that had been earlier used in the robbery of two boys from a nearby school. The suspects were suspended and according to the due process stipulated in the Schools Act, whereby both the school and the learner or his or her representative are allowed to give their story, a tribunal was held. It was an interesting and impressively fair way of dealing with serious misdemeanours, taken very seriously by all concerned. One boy failed to attend. It was recommended of the other two by the governing body that one be expelled, and the other make a public apology and give appropriate retribution. The Provincial Department however required that the procedure be repeated. Letters of suspension had been signed for the boys by a school HoD, instead of the governing body. It was felt by the department that, should any legal action be taken against the school, they would be found at fault since the correct procedure had not been followed. The process was repeated and the previous recommendations were upheld.

Punishments regularly given to learners included the following:

Detention

This is widely used, and is given by prefects as well as teachers. Learners are given 24 hours notice that they are to remain behind after school and complete work. This is supervised by prefects, in theory supported by staff. Some teachers hold their own detention.

Cleaning

Again both teachers and prefects use this punishment. Some teachers require the cleaning to be done in their classrooms or adjacent areas. Otherwise learners clean public areas around the school supervised by prefects.

The 'sin-bin'

This is a pressure-valve sanction used by some teachers to evict a troublesome learner or group from the classroom. It is located in a key position outside the offices and HoD rooms. The learners are expected to complete class or homework and be noted by the management hierarchy.

Behaviour Forms

This is considered a form of control for more serious and repeated misbehaviour. A learner must ensure that a form is signed by the teacher at the end of each lesson. This is checked daily by the HoD for any adverse comments which incur immediate detention.

Suspension

Strictly speaking suspension may only be given as a sanction by the governing body. However if appropriate, a learner may be sent home and told not to return without a parent or guardian. In the event of a governing body suspension, the maximum time is one week, unless a tribunal is pending.

Expulsion

Expulsion is no longer a sanction that can be given at the discretion of the principal. Should a learner be suspected of a serious crime, a tribunal must be held following the guidelines set down by the Education Department. In line with the constitutional requirement that a child is afforded the same rights as an adult, provision must be made for learners to give their side of the story. If the governing body recommends expulsion, this must be, but is not automatically ratified by the Departmental HOD.

Discipline management in the school is supported in two further ways One is through a body of prefects and the second through a school counsellor, assisted by six other teachers.

Prefects

The school policy of using prefects is aimed at preventing and solving discipline problems that might occur both out of the classroom and in the classroom before the teacher arrives. There are normally between 30 and 35 prefects in the school in any one year. One teacher called them 'the police force of the school'. According to another teacher,

They're very zealous..they help us a lot...they're our ears as well...they let you know when there's a major problem...they do things...they run the detention...they let you know who's smoking, where etcetera so at least you've got an idea of what's happening... I know there's a huge criticism about having prefect systems etc...but the kids like it...it works

In order to become a prefect, a learner must volunteer. Staff and existing prefects vote for candidates. Those appointed are sent on a course to learn leadership skills and be trained in conflict resolution, self-awareness and counselling skills. In the words of one prefect:

What I normally do..I don't just give punishment...I network...I have a meeting with them seriously...I have a meeting alone...to try and figure out what is your problem and did you really mean what you said...if you said

something nasty and I would like to talk to you first than give you punishment.

Counsellors

As a more proactive strategy to manage learner problems the school has an active counselling department of six teachers, bolstered by a social worker and a trainee psychologist. Both of the latter are from the University of Natal Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP) and spend some time at the school every day. The school counsellors themselves, because of the demands of the timetable, at this stage have no free time to do this work, and their facilitator has one free period. However according to the principal they give much of their time. In a crisis situation counselling may come before teaching.

A number of teachers had formulated their own ways of dealing with discipline: individually, with neighbours or in subject groups. In the next section of the analysis they will be described, through the words of the teachers. Their views on the role of training toward discipline management skills and suggested solutions to the discipline crisis will also be reviewed.

iv. The Teachers

A main objective of this research has been to establish what teachers themselves are thinking, saying and doing about discipline. School management strategies have been reviewed, but the experience of teaching today and underlying belief systems and commitment are equally important to the management of discipline. Teachers in South Africa are being forced to move from authoritative, hierarchical Christian National Education to a system where they have more freedom but equally more responsibility in the classroom, and are expected to participate democratically in planning and running their school. In addition today's teacher must deal with many other changes and pressures: of curriculum, material and new methods, of class size, of cultural differences, of rightsizing and redeployment, of blame for youth misbehaviour and public scrutiny of their practices. The opinions and feelings of teachers came across very forcefully in this study, which by its nature seemed to touch on many raw nerves and unloosen much pent-up emotion.

When asked how he felt the staff were coping the principal's response was,

I would say that on the whole they cope extremely well...I think quite a few of them do take...are under a lot of stress.

This stress and pressure was obvious and manifested itself in the atmosphere of the school in various ways. The tension in the staffroom has already been noted in the study, as has the fooling around which defuses the tension. One of the teachers expressed the frustration felt by those in the profession:

I mean it's not a normal environment where you... I mean sometimes we're as bad as the kids... we scream and we rant and we rave you know...we shout... I mean that's not normal adult behaviour...sometimes you're full of beans and you take on the world and sometimes you just think...oh god... life's a drag.

On the whole, though, it is agreed among the staff that,

We don't have major discipline problems compared to other schools that I've seen...we do have problems but not as bad as the other schools.

But the staff are stretched. This, coupled with the nature of the system and a school layout not conducive to collegiality, means that mutual support from colleagues is low key and crisis-driven rather a key component of the ethos of the school. From analysis of their comments about the efficacy of the discipline regime in the school, it became obvious that some teachers were struggling and found their work onerous almost beyond toleration. A number of teachers described the desperate circumstances leading to confrontations in the classroom. One recounted:

I just couldn't take it any more ... I found myself grabbing someone and really holding him in order to get some action out of him... and the whole afternoon I was upset with myself for allowing the kid to make me feel that way and then I thought ... oh my god.. this is a child who's got so much development happening at the moment and I adding fuel onto the whole thing...so it's quite a tough thing to... I haven't found a discipline thing that's working for me and that's what's killing me at the moment.

Young teachers entering the profession are particularly vulnerable to the pressure of discipline management. One teacher who had recently entered the profession lamented:

I've never had any children... I've never been in a position where I've had to discipline somebody...now you're put in a situation where you have to discipline 40 children... different groups of children coming in all the time

and you never know what you can and what you can't do... sort of follow the norm... what the person's doing next door... copy them and sometimes you make a mistake... and there's never like formal guidance... or you come new into the school and they show you the millions and millions of paperwork which you've got to do...half of it you've got to find out for yourself... I just find that there actually hasn't been very much support... and that people take it for granted that you come out of college... you know what you're supposed to do.

Another young teacher bemoaned,

In your training you were taught to be a friend and you were taught to be a guide to the child... in the classroom if you're a friend and a guide to the child it doesn't work but if you're heavy handed... if you're somebody cruel and makes rude remarks to them... and you look comfortable with it... then they actually fear that... but if you're friends with them... let's try and cover this section and then we can see what we can do thereafter... oh no... but if I say now you keep your mouth shut and listen to what I've got to say... yes then you're getting somewhere... so the whole idea at university was you're a friend to the child... you're a guide to the child... well it doesn't work.

The lack of consistency among the teachers and unwillingness to handle their own trivial problems was also lamented:

You've got teachers who've got no discipline problem...you've got teachers who just don't do anything about discipline...you've got teachers who give you a headache because they...send kids the whole time and...you start taking pictures of who these people are...the one is super efficient...you don't know whether they actually do any work... you've got the others who think but don't do anything...they're just oxygen thieves and then you've got the ones who need to be on prozac...because they're sending kids all the time...they over react and they say get out and never come back again...and you think well really...the child just sneezed.

I mean this morning a teacher sent a kid to me with a piece of paper cut from the corner of a page with two names on...these kids were sleeping in my classroom...and you think...hang on...so what am I supposed to do...without being rude I said to those kids please go back to that teacher and tell them to please sort you out...but you really want to tell them to go

and jump off...because you just don't know why you should be dealing with this.

A significant number of teachers referred to the problems caused by the banning of corporal punishment, particularly as this was the method of discipline used in the children's homes.

There's this big ra ra about you're not allowed to touch me and if you touch me I'm going to get a lawyer and I'm going to sue you and ...on the one hand... and then you have the parents on the other hand saying don't waste my time... don't phone me.. don't make me take a day off work and lose a day's pay... HIT..MY..CHILD.. and they request it ... and they say because if I have to come in and hit my child I'm going to make a very good job of it ... is there something that could replace corporal punishment that could be as effective... to date I haven't found anything..

Many of the teachers said that they didn't want to go back to corporal punishment, but it had been a deterrent that had left a vacuum:

Now there's willy nilly this...a little bit of detention and that's it...there's no consistency...there's no support as a system...I think that's the main problem we have here...now there is no method that is immediate... effective and un-time-consuming as corporal punishment was.

The recommended alternative methods of punishment are in many eyes ineffectual when compared to the heavy punishment used at home

Gating...locking you in your room and definitely hidings are number one I'd say...If I get a naughty child and I say to them right ...now if I were your mother what would I do to discipline you...you'd hit me...you know what else would be done...the father would hit me and I say you know what about making you wash the floors go outside wash the windows you know scrubbing cupboards ...you know...that's part of the job anyway...that's not punishment that's home routine anyway.

Remarks were made by some teachers about the actual school curriculum as the underlying cause of discipline problems:

Most classes and lessons that they endure are a painful boring waste of time... although I attempt most times to make them interesting... a lot of this stuff is just dry boring waste-of-time information that they will never use

again and I mean any type of human being that's got any type of a brain will get bored in a lesson like that unless there's something fantastic going on... and when you're bored you're going to start fidgeting, playing, causing nonsense... I think that's just a natural thing.

This idea about boredom... yes... I think a lot of our children are bored and I think a lot of our discipline problems... certainly the minor discipline problems come about because... nothing else is interesting... lets make the teacher into entertainment and I think that's been going on for many many years.

A critique of the standard type of delivered or written-word based lesson intrinsic to an exam driven education system was unwittingly provided by the teacher of a practical subject:

They do enjoy because it breaks up the stereotype pattern for the day... because they're sitting in classes... English, Geography, History, Science, Maths... all books, books, books so when they come to my class it's like you know what... I'm just taking my books to follow because I never write notes or I've got to answer the teacher's twenty five questions or something.

A boring and irrelevant curriculum was an issue which cropped up several times in one form or another throughout the research, and although it was commented that Outcomes-Based Education was designed to remedy ensuing problems, the system is still exam-driven. It was believed that this would not change overnight, nor were there resources nor time available to effectively train and support staff in new ways.

The teachers' views on the actual discipline strategies used, with the exception of suspension and expulsion, were on the whole derogatory. The **code of conduct** itself (appendix3) has been critiqued in the previous section of this analysis. One teacher told the story of how it was compiled:

It was one of those things we put together in an emergency...it had not been done properly for a long time and so the time came when we needed one ...so it had to be done under pressure...it became a one man show and then that person appointed a few learners...very few...but it was certainly not in theory what it should be when you get stages of developing

a code of conduct with your teachers...then your LRC...then your parent body...no...it didn't go through those stages...it's just a piece of paper really and then at the end of the day it also doesn't say much...so to me it's just a piece of writing...it's got no life at all...and one of the things we need to do is put life in it.

With regard to **line of referral** one of the prefects stated,

In this school...you see somebody smoking ...even like you catch somebody smoking...you take them down to the office...they get yelled at...so its kind of useless...so what are you going to do with me...take me to the office...I'd get yelled at...so its kind of useless... fine...I'll do it and then send me to the office over and over.

Detention was also felt to be unproductive:

It's pathetic to hold detention...it becomes this master system where it also becomes a dump hall...the entire class goes down...that's when the system breaks down because you don't know who's bunking and who is supposed to do the follow-up the next day...so a lot of kids really learn that they can get away with bunking detention which causes more hassles because you know you've got to go hunting those kids...so.

Behaviour forms were considered effective for their duration, however:

You give at least ten final warnings...you send them to HOD's...we put them on behaviour form ...for the week they're on behaviour form it's fantastic...Monday following...the behaviour goes back to normal...they just know how to manipulate the whole system.

Cleaning is another widely used form of punishment in the school, however one must question whether this is actually a type of punishment, or part of school routine that would be better shared by all in a democratic system. Cleaning is trivialised as an activity when relegated to punishment.

Here we're trying all these nice little things like sweeping corridors and...you know...cleaning up classrooms...picking up litter for late-coming...or detention...but if you have a look not only at the late coming or detention it hasn't really made a significant change or difference.

The sense that discipline sanctions are pointless and inappropriate is exacerbated by a strong feeling among the teachers for the well-being of the children and awareness of their problems. Many teachers feel helpless in the

wake of difficult home circumstances and lifestyles of their learners. According to one:

A lot of the teachers I know are finding that what some of these children are subjected to is affecting them emotionally and that's coming into the classroom with them...it's not a discipline thing...it's an additional aspect of the stress.

One teacher recounted an incident:

We had a girl haemorrhaging one day...I'll never forget that...she actually had a miscarriage and she was haemorrhaging...we called an ambulance...we couldn't get an ambulance to come here and eventually I took her to King Edward...but we couldn't contact her parents or anyone...she was actually living on her own with her baby sister...so we had to send a message home via a friend who knew the neighbour to tell the little seven year old sister...your sister's not coming home...she's actually in hospital... it frustrates you...and you look in the file to contact the parents and all the phone numbers are outdated...and it's scary because if it's something serious we're going to battle to find parents and discipline-wise...to discipline a child you need the parents to be brought into it.

Question 5 of the questionnaire asked how training had prepared the teachers to maintain classroom order and handle misbehaviour, how might it be improved and what could be done at this stage to improve skills in this area. Eleven teachers said that training was non-existent, and two said they had been well prepared. Of the former, one said that theories were too simplistic and another that they were aimed at revolutionising practice, such as the theories of Paolo Friere. Three teachers said that nothing could have prepared them for the reality but experience. One qualified this by saying the training was good, but the situation in schools had changed, and methods learnt were no longer valid. Another said the training was outdated. Of the latter, one said learning about classroom dynamics had helped and the other that cognitive and emotional developmental theories had been of value.

Ideas as to how initial training might be improved included the following:

- a course on practical classroom management,
- a school improvement exercise within the school,

- simulations and case studies,
- a clear vision of reality and techniques to deal with this,
- more and longer teaching practice,
- mentoring and help from experienced teachers,
- exploration of as many constructive methods and strategies as possible,
- a dedicated course – Discipline Management in Schools.

When asked what might be done at this stage to supplement discipline management skills, a number of constructive ideas were proposed, some reliant on input from outside of the school, but several were for improvements within the school. Of these, four teachers suggested that vision and policy of management be reviewed and reinforced, another that a system of peer visits and team teaching be initiated, and yet another that the school be run as a business, employing more personnel, and a different kind of management structure, with managers for academics, finance and pastoral care/discipline. Outside help might include in-service workshops or skills training sessions, more departmental support, and training for all staff in counselling skills and stress management.

Teachers, in interviews and discussions, explained other ways in which they themselves had solved discipline problems, or suggested approaches which the school could adopt. Some solutions reverted to more authoritarian solutions, but others were innovative and appropriate to a more enlightened system.

In the initial stages of the research, two teachers gave me stories of how they had overcome personal discipline problems. The first teacher had experienced serious problems in his early years at this school. He reached the end of his tether with a really badly behaved class of grade 10 learners. He closed his classroom door and told them they were to stay in and work over break. One very large boy walked up to him and said, I'm leaving, you can't stop me. The teacher glared at him and it became a staring match. After a short while the boy dropped his gaze, deflated and went back to his place. The rest of the group worked for a few minutes and then he let them go. He said that since then, several years ago he has never had another discipline problem. The underlying reason was, it was believed, the boy, the son of a chief, had very powerful ancestors, but those of the teacher proved

even stronger. This incident is characteristic of the stand-off situation described by many teachers as a way of dealing with troublesome learners.

Confrontation was found to be widely accepted in the school. For this particular teacher it had fortuitous results, but this was not generally the case and a number of teachers cited it as their worst experience in the classroom. It is a particularly reactive and threatening way of dealing with learners which is not in line with democratic principles, and is likely to escalate rather than defuse conflict and violence within a school (Galbraith, 1997).

The second teacher had also suffered terrible discipline problems in his department. He'd changed his classroom from a space which was very cramped and boxlike to a very open part of his workshop, with windows on both sides and plenty of space between desks. This had made a tremendous difference to the behaviour of the learners. He further attributed his peaceful classroom to working alongside the learners – telling them he expected them only to do half of what he did – and they invariably took up the challenge and tried to equal if not better his work.

Several teachers advocated a more professional, committed approach to the job with well-prepared, structured interesting lessons and a firm code of conduct for the classroom. As far as the curriculum is concerned one English teacher said that she was,

Incorporating relevant issues into my learning areas because I feel that learning is not just about formal matters... it's about the life-skills that you go away with and those are the things that you are going to remember for a long long more time than the formal issues.

Another of the teachers commented :

One of the things we've still failed to do is to inspire a sense of awe... education...at least one aspect should be to excite the kids that we've got this amazing world out there and there's so much about it to learn... and rather than get the kids awe-stricken... wow... rather than get them really excited about it we force them to learn the periodic table or whatever it may be.

Two of the teachers suggested ways that improvements could be made within the school itself. One idea was that there should be more support for new teachers in the form of mentorship and another that there should be a buddy system among all the teachers, with more openness between classrooms:

In every school the teachers need to support new teachers... you've got to have a relationship with your neighbours as well... if you hear a teacher losing it ... shouting... you go and you say are you alright and let the teacher have a cigarette and you go in and you moan at their class or whatever...you see in a school you should have all the classrooms together...you're free to walk around and you can check on each other and work more together... it's good for our relationship... teachers need to have that friendship with each other.

A further suggestion was that jobs should be shared out, and there be portfolios for each teacher over and above their teaching commitment:

Each and every staff member has a second portfolio... a management portfolio... it could be a grades discipline for one teacher and another one would be doing stock.. but all have got a certain aspect of managerial responsibility and all then report to one person.

Other solutions seen by teachers as ways of underpinning and improving learner behaviour included:

- finding ways to involve the parents to a greater extent,
- new ways of assessing learners,
- a different style of leadership,

To conclude, ideas were given to suggest ways in which both learners and teachers could be helped towards better practice in schools. A comment was made by one of the teachers about instilling values and work ethic among the learners:

One of the important things is to try and teach the child how to be able to work effectively by themselves and take that responsibility... and discover some sort of work ethic for themselves... I think if that can be done then half our discipline and numbers problem is dissolved immediately... so that we can in fact take a group out somewhere else and leave... you know... the rest of the class to carry on on their own without tearing the place apart.

A final comment was made about the practice of teaching:

If your demands are high.. but realistic... not too high... and you see the kids as human beings and realise you mustn't ask too much... forget about homework... give them time at school for that... and don't expect them to behave like machines... encourage participation... but try to interest them... and let them see that you're human as well and have feelings but try to be consistent and fair... if you establish that rapport and you've got a lesson prepared... it's all important...

In the next chapter the issues raised by the data presented in this section will be discussed within the context of South African education and against the background of wider theory.

CHAPTER FOUR

Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this research has been to study the experience and management of discipline by the teachers at Queensville High School in order to provide a base of data from which to discuss the issue of discipline, both in the school and in South Africa.

In the previous chapter an audit was made of what was happening about discipline at Queensville High, and what the teachers were doing and thinking. The data for this was obtained in the school by observation, experience and through the words of the teachers themselves, expressed during interviews, discussions and through responses to a questionnaire. In the presentation of the data, various dominant issues and recurring themes were highlighted and brought to the fore.

These will be discussed and gauged against the changing local and international background and theory. The intention will be to understand the school within this framework and explore constructive workable solutions to problems noted.

This chapter will briefly examine the meaning of discipline to the teachers of Queensville High. Further comment will be organised in three sections, namely:

- the physical and social environment of the school,
- the types and patterns of discipline problems, and underlying causes,
- the discipline management strategy, its policy and procedures.

Running through the discussion are the threads of exacerbating factors within the school which make the maintenance of order so onerous to all concerned. In the main these have been identified as:

- large numbers in classes,
- insufficient staff and posts of responsibility,
- difficulty communicating with parents/ care-givers,
- inadequate democratic input into the code of conduct and other school matters by the school community,
- lack of ownership by school community of problems and solutions,

- mismatch between the language of tuition and the mother tongue of the learners,
- gender dynamics within the the culture of the school, the staff and the learners,
- other undercurrents and divisions among the staff,
- boring, delivered, written-word based, exam-driven curriculum.

I. Discipline: the solution or the problem

According to Blandford (1998) 'discipline is a whole school responsibility, based on shared beliefs and values, clear expectations and boundaries and consistency as reflected in collaborative policies, procedures and practices' (166). However Slee (1995) views it as an 'educational issue of democratic schooling' (3), a problem framed by politics, in an attempt to rationalise and blame classroom disruption for the failure of schools to contain and control marginalised youth. In his view, indiscipline may not be viewed as a student-centred problem, explicable by 'victim-blaming'(4). A strong undercurrent running through the discourse of the teachers at Queensville is that learners are seen as victims, of poverty, of uncaring parents, of an arid and irrelevant curriculum, of stressed and inept teaching, and an unkind materialistic social fabric. But on the other hand children and their parents are also blamed when they rebel against the system. As was illustrated in chapter 1 this dichotomy can be traced to a growing undercurrent of social unrest caused by that marginalisation between powerful and powerless, and symbolised within the historically rooted relationship between education and discipline (Parker-Jenkins, 1999). Traditionally teachers are powerful in that they are on the upper echelons of the school hierarchy, but in wider society they are themselves powerless as they are controlled by politics and bureaucracy. Hence they are trapped in their role as agents of social control, rather than educational facilitators (Stenhouse, 1967; Neill, 1992; Barber, 1994).

Blandford and Slee represent the two prevailing discourses of discipline current today. Blandford's (1998) view is that discipline can be encouraged and managed within the system whereas Slee's views (1995) add to the case for radical education reform towards a system involving review and reform of school organisation, the curriculum, the role of the teacher and methods of instruction where democracy replaces hierarchy, and mutual concern and objectives replace power issues. The management stance might be seen as preparatory to the democratic stance. In order

to prepare for reform, techniques, methods and structures must be fine-tuned and oiled. In these terms Queensville High school is moving along the continuum of progress from an authoritarian towards a democratic establishment.

Ritchie and Ritchie (1981) sum up popular understanding of discipline as involving 'two ideas: on the one hand, control and on the other, punishment' (70). Both punishment and control are shown as a significant part of the education process at Queensville High which in times of stress is regarded by its teachers as 'a kindergarten-cum-prison'. The system as it stands at present, exacerbated by the pressure of change, new ideas, large numbers etcetera, is overshadowed by the need to control and punish. As one teacher stated, 'five lessons working with absolute nonsense...absolute babysitting issues... we need at least to be given the opportunity to do what we are supposed to do or studied to do'.

The need to change the relationship between teachers and learners is recognised, so that teachers can accomplish their real mission. However a barrier exists between the two sides that prevents them from approaching the learning experience together and in harmony. That barrier is in part attributable to firstly the teacher's need to be and feel in control, and secondly to resentment among learners forced to conform and toe the line. As one teacher put it, this leaves no room for the 'wow' experience of learning which gives pleasure and excitement to teachers and learners.

A number of orientations to discipline have been illustrated by the data, but in particular the traditional authoritarian (NUE Comment, 1999), both in discussion and questionnaire has come through very strongly as part of the school culture. There is a preoccupation with controlling learners. Though the question was never asked, four of the teachers made a further comment proposing a reintroduction of corporal punishment, and several more called for strict consequences – an effective means of discipline – instant and visible – that can be easily administered and which learners perceive as real punishment that they fear. Also it was obvious, from the interest generated by the research and strong feelings invoked in discussion, that there was a conviction that discipline is a concept woven into the fabric of education, the action of discipline is fundamental to teaching, and the quality of discipline is an essential part of the frame of mind of a teacher.

II. The Physical and Social Environment of the School

Queensville is relatively typical of urban South African schools, functional for its prime purpose, better than most, in treed grounds, looking out over playing fields, with fairly large and spacious classrooms and specialist areas. Verandahs, corridors and stairwells are sufficiently wide to enable reasonable ease of movement from classroom to classroom, with generous accommodation and facilities for staff, reminiscent of a more privileged and less stressful era for the professionals in the school. However Queensville is full of boundaries and compartments. It is not welcoming to a visitor and the armed guard at the gate is positively daunting, as are the locked doors, access control and heavily curtained reception area meaning that nothing inside is visible or accessible from the outside. The general impression to an outsider is of an inward looking and defensive institution.

Barriers between the school and the outside world are symbolised by the armed guard, and between the staff and the students by the security gate, engendering a feeling of apprehension and tension as either one is approached. While cognisance is taken of the safety reasons behind the security access etcetera, the cost of these, both financially and in terms of human relations, is high. While the staff might feel safe in their section of the school one must question the effects of the division of 'us from them' on the learners and their parents.

Skelton (1996) studied a school that was heavily fortified, and where the gates and doors were locked once the learners were inside. The power relations that the school attempted to promote were explicitly confirmed, giving an unequivocal message to the surrounding community that school boundaries demarcated 'privacy, personal space, and territoriality' (188). The effect of this on relationships between the school and the community, parents and learners could be seen as disastrous. It was perceived as a gendered and hegemonic prison-cum-fortress.

As part of the University of Natal's Crime Reduction in Schools Project (CRISP) the architecture department has been involved in making an inventory and analysis of the building and its high density areas, and proposals for minor alterations and large scale changes are to be presented. Unfortunately funding for this aspect of the CRISP project has been suspended, but it is well worth resurrecting for the contribution that can be made to making Queensville a more user-friendly school. As

one of the underlying problems of the school is contact with the parents – parental contact is vital to a well functioning school – this is one area that might be relatively easily ameliorated. There are many barriers, perceptual as well as physical, that deter parents from coming willingly into schools – not least the physical barrier of a closed unwelcoming institution (Watts, 1980; Heystek & Louw, 1999; Cullingford & Morrison, 1999)

The Western Cape's Safe Schools Project (2000) demonstrates other ways of investing in a secure environment. Funds spent on security might be more creatively used. Possible options could be to employ an outreach/ welfare/ social worker, a daily gatekeeper rather than an armed security policeman, to put large windows, with clear visibility in reception areas looking out over the school's entrance and to place one of the secretaries as a receptionist closer to the door and more accessible to visitors. This concept of openness could be taken further, to the classrooms, where the occasional window might be put in facing on to the corridor to allow vision both in and out of the classroom. Some of the teachers kept their classroom doors open for the express purpose of connection.

The situation of the school in an area where few of the learners are resident, makes community relations more difficult. Fullan (1999) has recently stressed that for survival, schools should establish a unity with their communities... which is two-way, inside-outside reciprocity (61-2). Experimental projects have included ones in which schools have evolved to become multi-functional resource centres offering facilities such as healthcare, a library or sports facilities. Watts (1980) describes a project in which a school was placed around a skating rink. Locally Durban Girls High School has a thriving community outreach program whereby the school is made available for various adult education courses. Queensville might possibly become linked to the community by opening up facilities to clubs, organisations, and church groups in the area. This might also generate much needed income at for the school.

Future education scenarios share the philosophy that schools should aim to prepare children for all eventualities in life, provide a vastly more experiential training ground than at present and be open and broadly connected to the neighbourhood and community in symbiotic ways. Barber (1994) describes a hypothetical future school that lets space to local small businesses or

representatives from larger organisations and provides services, including research and technology to the surrounding community. Postman (1996) narrates the fable of a cash-strapped New York, where school children have to earn the privilege of education by maintaining otherwise unaffordable public amenities. They keep the city clean, maintained and beautiful, repair buildings including their own school, direct traffic, deliver mail, mind babies, teach younger children to read and write – publish local papers, organise street parties, and so on. The college students see the fun and join in – they give parking and littering tickets to free the police to fight crime – counsel drug addicts, run evening classes, etcetera. One of the messages of the fable to educationists is that 'listlessness, ennui and even violence in schools are related to the fact that students have no role to play in society' (Postman, 1996: 102). Whilst Postman's fable is fantasy it does throw into relief the starkness and closedness of South African secondary education institutions and suggests lines of thought and creativity which can break them open.

In addition, social boundaries have been noted inside the school. The staffroom is a no-go area and administrative areas are approached tentatively. Parents visiting the school have been seen waiting on wooden benches outside the offices for long periods of time and the security gate between the teachers area and the rest of the school has already been noted. Part of the school's vision and mission might be to examine these psychic barriers and what they represent.

Rigidity of patterns and habits might also be considered and softened. In particular, the siren sounding at the end of lessons is strident, jarring and imperative. A more gentle way of marking the rhythms of the day might be more effective. The hierarchical barriers among the staff and between staff factions and power cliques can be directly related to 'lack of fairness and equity in relation to service conditions' (Davidoff & Lazarus, 1997:31). These issues might be brought to the fore through skilful facilitative leadership, openly discussed and, where possible, ameliorated and healed rather than allowed to 'fester'

III. Discipline problems

Most staff found low key irritants such as noise, attention-seeking and poor work-ethic the most troublesome types of behaviour they encountered. As confirmed by research, such behaviour appears to be fairly universal in schools (Blandford, 1998,

Parker-Jenkins, 1999). This finding negates attempts to generally over-dramatise the level and incidence of indiscipline in schools, either through the media or elsewhere. Serious incidents happened infrequently and were usually traced back to a problem or trauma facing the learner. The catchment of the school predicts the relatively low incidence of serious indiscipline. Since parents from far afield make an effort to enrol their children in the school on the strength of its good reputation, a reasonable level of concern and aspiration in both learners and their families might be assumed.

During the time of this research, encounters and experiences with the learners showed them generally to be charming, sincere and respectful. One suspects that this is the base and the norm in most schools. Several of the teachers expressed care, affection and love for the learners, pejorative comments were rare and delivered from a position of duress or frustration. Evidence is strong among the teachers – their words support this – of what Fullan (1999) termed the micro-level moral purpose of education ‘making a difference in the life-chances of all the students’ (1). So the question has to be asked – what causes teachers and learners to be put in opposition together in this grinding and debilitating ritual referred to and described so graphically by the teachers of Queensville. The answer to this is also partly found in the words of the teachers: the shortage of staff, absenteeism by teachers, large classes exacerbated by staff absenteeism, language mismatch between teachers and learners, and dismissive socio-cultural attitudes to women teachers.

Absenteeism among the staff created extra pressure for those present in the school. Out of 27 staff, not one day when I was at the school were there less than three absent teachers. That meant three classes for most of the time were unsupervised. This is symptomatic of demotivation within a system operating under extreme duress, but the solution of sending learners to the cricket pavillion has been identified as unsatisfactory. The proposed system of using the hall, with a battery of resources and music playing is seen as an improved tactic, but is still motivated by desperation and need to control. This problem might be workshopped more seriously among the staff and learners – it affects them all and is their problem – until a solution is arrived at that is satisfactory to all and fair to the learners and teachers.

The language issue, particularly between the white English-speaking teachers and the Zulu speaking learners will only be addressed when the teachers become more

proficient in understanding and speaking the language of the majority of the learners. The solution is in the hands of the teachers themselves. It may be that the Zulu language teachers can be recompensed to lead conversation groups with their colleagues.

Lemmer & Badenhorst (1997) describe the 'we-them mindset' where teachers tend to see themselves pitted against their own students... obsessed with maintaining discipline in the classroom' (283). This is characteristic of an authoritarian hierarchy where 'we' are usually on the same echelon or above, but 'they' are below, inferior and subject to the dictates of those above. It is notable that all of the teachers couched their comments in terms of 'us' and 'them', indicating a culture of division within the school. Democratic methods of communication and acceptance of joint purpose are needed, in addition to apportioning responsibility in the classroom, the staffroom and the school as a whole. This might be done along the lines of the 'school improvement rethink' in the way that schools are structured and operated as advocated by Davidoff & Lazarus (1997).

A common experience of discipline problems among the teachers was the 'stand-off' or confrontational challenge to the teacher's authority and characteristic of a system where the teacher is pack leader and control is by intimidation and fear. According to Skelton (1996), this is a particularly masculine/paternalistic way of dealing with conflict, but in order to survive the women teachers feel that they have to adopt the 'Rambo' approach.

Both the 'fortification' of the school and conflictual way of dealing with learners indicates a male hegemonic gender order within the school that is undermining to the female teachers and learners. Characteristic of these is the incident where a female teacher, new to the school, was asked for a date by one of the learners. This incident, which confused and disturbed her can only be explained in terms of sexual intimidation. While this is endemic to our cultures, awareness-raising is essential among staff and learners of the evils of the prevailing gender order and the dangers and results of hegemonic masculinity, while at the same time different forms of gender relations should be promoted (Morrell, 1999).

Galbraith (1997) suggests that male teachers in the school are trained to be aware of and take seriously their position as male role-models and father-figures, in

particularly for boys from fatherless families. She cites Biddulph (1995) who also 'advocates the use of male-female teaching teams so that students see men and women working successfully together,' and the introduction of gender equity programmes for boys as well as girls (Galbraith, 1997: 37-8).

iv . Strategy, Policy and Procedures

The discipline management strategies within the school are on the whole punitive, retributive and hierarchical. Though in line with departmental policy, the sense is given that they are over-used. The code of conduct follows the recommended format, as do corrective measures for the offences (appendix 3). However the system is seen by the teachers as dysfunctional and results in pressure and time-consuming red tape for the HoDs, who have to handle discipline issues, as well as being subject leaders. Most of the staff agree that discipline management is problematic, though most are satisfied that within the parameters of the system, management are coping satisfactorily and the lines of communication and referral work well.

Parker-Jenkins (1999) however warns of an 'over-dependence on inappropriate or unimaginative sanctions... and the danger of over-using, mis-using or potentially abusing a particular sanction' (91). The HODs at Queensville lament the overuse of detention and the inconsistencies among teachers. Teachers questioned the use of cleaning, while prefects questioned the point of referring misdemeanours to management who will do nothing, and feel that they are generally unsupported and taken for granted by the teachers. These things point again to the need for a more negotiated discipline policy which is supported by all members of the school community

Elton (1989) mentions the 'feel or atmosphere' of a school, contrasting schools with a negative atmosphere to those with a positive feeling, concluding that pupil's behaviour is fundamentally affected by the morale of a school which is reflected in the way it is physically presented. This aspect of environment has been discussed in relation to the divisions and military security of the school, but Elton identifies factors such as tidiness and pleasantness of surroundings, both in and out of the school, displays of learners' work and general friendliness and conviviality among the staff. Galbraith (1997) goes further and advocates that schools and classes should see themselves primarily as communities, 'where students have a part to play in decision-making processes and feel connected to each other and adults' (40).

Given that things are changing, albeit slowly towards a more democratic learner-centred system, short term solutions will not easily be achieved through long term strategies. Modes of survival and amelioration must be sought and devised. Morrell (1999) advocates a change of attitudes towards small scale infringements/misconducts, no longer regarding them as 'issues of punishment but rather viewing them as problems concerning human relationships, abuse, neglect and so forth'(16). A strategy of positive reinforcement may be effective whereby learners are encouraged to be on time, work purposefully and powerfully, and respect the teachers and their peers. Many examples of such schemes are available and imagination can provide more. Henderson & Milstein (1996) advocate merit slips or awards for learners - a collection of which might be exchanged for a small gift or privilege – a hamburger, chocolate bar, pen or some such token. A selection of popular magazines might be made available to learners who complete work well and on time. Group privileges might be awarded for cooperation which could include music being played during work, a picnic on the sportsfields, a video or some other entertainment for learners who complete work well and on time. Rather than, or in addition to prizes for academic effort, merit, and achievement, other qualities such as kindness, responsibility, creativity and community involvement might be more seriously recognised and applauded in the school.

Nelsen et al. (2000) advocate a type of positive discipline which incorporates a system of class meetings, regularly scheduled, where learners decide the topics and all are free to comment and contribute in a democratic way. A few prior guidelines and skills are established such as the formation of a circle, positive endorsements and compliments given to all in the group, acquisition of listening and communication skills, and adoption of a problem-solving orientation. In this way class and school problems are debated and democratic solutions produced, but also communication and life-skills, citizenship, caring and confidence are inculcated. Whilst class meetings become more difficult to hold as classes become larger, this perhaps signals the need for class or registration teacher to become a more pastoral function. For class teachers to really know the learners and have better continuity of contact, the Waldorf system might be adopted, of keeping the same grouping and class teacher for the duration of time spent in a school (Blunt, 1995).

While such techniques might go against the grain for an education reformist approach as they perpetuate the system albeit in a gentler way, they can help make

the classroom experience more tolerable and therefore more productive for learners and teachers and pave the way for more meaningful curriculum reform. In addition to such approaches, of which there are many, Blandford (1998) offers a number of suggestions that are helpful to classroom management. In particular she promotes mechanisms that are supportive to the actual teacher such as stress and anger management techniques, 'a supportive school environment which legitimises failure and is tolerant of mistakes' (68), which encourages, even formalises peer support such as mentoring and induction. She advocates a caring, positive discipline policy and code of conduct, and a general team approach to the work which must ensure that isolation does not occur, and where problems of one teacher can be professionally worked out by several (Blandford, 1998).

A professional approach, and aptitude and affection for the work are advocated as a prerequisite for anyone entering the profession. In addition various traits and behaviours are emphasised that may not be conducive to a congenial and orderly classroom such as:

- unnecessary exertion of power,
- treating pupils impersonally,
- softness and inconsistency,
- lack of goals,
- bartering or bargaining for order,
- unfairness and unreasonable demands,
- insensitivity to those with learning problems, weaknesses and other disadvantages,
- grudge bearing,
- not being prepared to listen.

(Blandford, 1998).

Most of the teachers had an awareness of classroom management techniques, though these were not necessarily actively used. But in some way all of the teachers in the study had developed their own formal or informal classroom code of conduct through common sense and experience. A more concerted team/whole school approach however could prove helpful, for those less familiar with or less experienced in management techniques. Information dissemination meetings and workshops might be held formally or informally both school-wide and in subject groups.

The sanctions and punishments used were on the whole not believed to be effective and were generally found to be retributive as opposed to rehabilitative. However the mechanisms in place worked and support needed was forthcoming when it came to dealing with more serious problems. A number of complaints were made about the onerous amount of red tape, form filling, and complex procedures in connection with suspension and tribunal formalities. The Constitution and 1996 Education Act (Shaba, 1998) have, in a way, placed schools in a more vulnerable position, by granting rights to children which place them in a position of equity with adults and the school. Careful records must now be kept to ensure that no irregularities occur that might weaken the case of the school should a learner legally contest tribunal findings and decisions.

In conclusion, arising from the teachers' responses, a major question posed was of how to inculcate a common purpose and mutually supportive type of practice which might decrease the need for management of discipline. A number of areas presented themselves for attention. In summary these have been mainly problems relating to large numbers, the language mismatch, contact with parents and the underlying gender order in the school. Other issues raised were:

- support for prefects from staff
- pragmatism in the face of minor discipline issues
- greater involvement of staff, parents and learners in school decision making and policy creation.

Evans (1998) was not writing about South Africa but might well have been as she describes British teachers as 'demoralised and angry at being forced to carry out unpopular government policies, while being constantly blamed for society's ills.... Fed up with having to teach children in ever larger classes, working in schools which are dillapidated, underfunded and overstretched' (vii). The view from the ground there is that teachers are society's scapegoats. According to Kenway and Wills (1998), in Australia schools have come 'increasingly under siege as a result of government cutbacks, the tightening of government controls, the narrowing view of the purposes of education, the intensification and trivialisation of teachers' work, the push of market forces and the retreat from social justice policies' (209).

The undermining of South African teachers is reflected in the discourse of those at Queensville High showing their desperate need for support and remedies. Their intense feeling of being abandoned and cut adrift without support from the State, the Province, or the parents comes across forcefully. Investigation into their experience and management of discipline has served as a catalyst and medium for that feeling.

In the following conclusion a summary will be made of major issues arising from this research. Exploration will be made of practical ways in which issues might be addressed through further research, school improvement and staff development.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

As evidenced in the research, discipline is taken very seriously by the teachers in this particular school. It is not an over-riding, out-of-control problem, allegedly the situation in some schools, however it is an on-going interference to lessons and a stress factor for most teachers. Also, although there are within the staff, many orientations to discipline, in general the teachers believe that 'discipline' is part of educational practice rather than integral to self. This is an inevitable reflection of the changing paradigm from authoritarian practices where power is hierarchical and discipline imposed, as opposed to democratic practices where power is shared and discipline is both a personal and joint responsibility.

Queensville teachers do not have or make the time to reflect on their praxis either singly or in groups. This is a necessary part of coming to terms with the major changes expected to take place in our schools, and is vital to strengthen the moral purpose needed to support them in their work (Fullan, 1999). Instead crisis, contingency and expediency are the order of the day. The undercurrents in the staffroom and high rate of ill-health and absenteeism among staff bear this out. These adverse pressures undermine the morale of the teachers and the ethos of the school which in turn erode any satisfaction and moral purpose that is a reward of the profession. The result is an uneasy school with uneasy children.

In this study theory-based suggestions have been discussed which might improve the physical and social environment of the school, address underlying causes of discipline problems and discipline management strategy, policy and procedures (Blandford, 1998; Blunt, 1995; Henderson & Milstein, 1996; Morrell, 1999; Nelsen et al, 2000). Preparatory to implementation of suggestions, further research is needed to examine ways that teaching conditions and morale of staff impact on relationships between teachers and learners, as well as among teachers themselves, and how conditions and morale might be improved by coaching teachers in democratic principles, different methods of practice and enlightened management techniques. To this end development of an in-service package of staff development / school improvement workshops for teachers would be a useful way of ameliorating the situation.

Follow up to this research project will have two phases which could form the basis for such a package:

1. The new government guidelines on discipline management will be communicated to the staff in the form of a workshop (appendix 6)
2. In collaboration with school improvement experts a workshop will be held to explore training needs of the teachers and analyse operational needs of the management of the school. This would be intended to provide the basis for future staff development in the school.

The recent Education Department guidelines for alternatives to corporal punishment (Le Mottee, 2000) go some way to remedying the situation, but what is needed now is dissemination of these guidelines, and support and facilitation for the teachers expected to implement them. This support should not only be for the management of discipline, but for the process and techniques of school improvement needed to promote the unity of school and the resourcefulness and confidence to 'mobilise the will and skill of teachers' and carry out the reform process 'towards a new way of doing things in schools' (Asmal, 2000:3).

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APPENDIX 1

Informal and Unstructured Interviews: Hypothetical Framework for Questions

TEACHERS

1. What puts us as teachers in a situation where we have to cope with discipline?
2. What is the worst kind of classroom problem to deal with?
3. How does it affect you?
4. How do you cope ?
5. Have you notice any changes in the nature and frequency of discipline problems/
6. Have you noticed any changes in the behaviour of the children?
7. Were you prepared in your training to to handle discipline problems?
8. How can one be prepared ?
9. What causes discipline problems?
10. What aspects of this school or the children affect discipline management?

HODs

1. What are the officially sanctioned punishments?
2. What are most used ?
3. How effective are they?

4. What are the most common problems?
5. What have been the recent most serious problems ?
6. What is your role in discipline management ?
7. What factors in the school most affect discipline management?
8. How might things be improved?

THE PREFECTS

1. What is your role in discipline management ?
2. What powers do you have ?
3. What should you have?
4. What are your thoughts about punishment?
5. How were you chosen?

QUESTIONNAIRE

In the interest of confidentiality you are not required to supply your name to this questionnaire. However a few personal and professional details will be most useful. Please give a frank answer to each question. Add extra paper if you run out of space.

PLEASE TICK THE APPROPRIATE BOX: MALE ☐ FEMALE ☐

AGE : 20-25 ☐ 25-35 ☐ 35-45 ☐ 45-55 ☐ 55-65 ☐ 65+ ☐

STATE NUMBER OF YEARS IN TEACHING.....

NUMBER OF YEARS AT THIS SCHOOL.....

QUESTION 1

a) How is discipline maintained in your school?.....

.....
.....
.....

b) How do you maintain discipline in your classroom ?.....

.....
.....
.....

c) Is discipline management a problem in your school? Why?.....

.....
.....
.....

d)Is discipline management a problem in your classroom? Why?.....

.....
.....
.....

e) Who do you refer to if you have a case of indiscipline? Next-door teacher ☐ HOD ☐

Deputy Principal ☐ Principal ☐ Other.....

.....

f)What support do you receive?.....
.....
.....
.....

QUESTION 2

a) What types of misbehaviour do you find most troublesome?.....
.....
.....
.....
b) How do you deal with them?.....
.....
.....
.....

QUESTION 3

a) What is the most serious discipline problem you personally have encountered as a teacher?.....
.....
.....
.....
b)How did you deal with it ?.....
.....
.....
.....

QUESTION 4

a) What changes, if any, have you noticed in types of misbehaviour during your career?
.....
.....
.....
.....
b) If any, what do you think are the underlying causes?.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

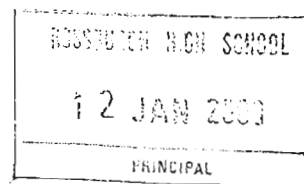
QUESTION 5

a) How did your training as a teacher prepare you to maintain classroom order and handle misbehaviour ?.....

b) How could you have been better prepared ?.....

c) What could be done at this stage to supplement your skills in discipline management?.....

DO YOU HAVE ANY FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE SUBJECT OF DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS ?.....



CODE OF CONDUCT

1. Preamble.
2. Rights and responsibilities of learners
3. School rules:
 - 3.1 Uniform and appearance
 - 3.2 Attendance
 - 3.3 Academics, homework and classwork
 - 3.4 Conduct in and out of school
4. Regulations relating to disciplinary procedures and action.
 - 4.1 Minor offences (teachers)
 - 4.2 Suspension (H.O.D's)
 - 4.3 Expulsion (Deputy-/Principal)
 - 4.4 Due process.

1. PREAMBLE:

The code of conduct of Rossburgh High is governed by the South African Schools Act and the Governing Body of Rossburgh High.

2. RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF LEARNERS

All learners attending the school are obliged to uphold the school's Mission Statement and Code of Conduct.

- 2.1 **Each learner has the right:**
to be educated in an orderly and disciplined environment
and the responsibility:
 to be co-operative and attentive and to ensure that he/she does not disrupt lessons or distract his/her fellow learners from their work. He/she should exercise self-discipline and be committed to the achievement of academic progress.
- 2.2 **Each learner has the right:**
to be treated with kindness and fairness
and the responsibility:
 to behave at all times in a courteous manner, to refrain from any form of aggressive or abusive behaviour, so that he/she is a credit to the school.
- 2.3 **Each learner has the right:**
to be treated with respect by the members of the school community, irrespective of personal, cultural, racial and religious differences
and the responsibility:
 to respect the rights, and feelings of others; to display understanding and consideration towards others. He/she should not intimidate or ridicule others.
- 2.4 **Each learner has the right:**
to have school activities and lessons commence punctually
and the responsibility:
 to arrive at school and at lessons on time.
- 2.5 **Each learner has the right:**
to benefit from the good reputation of the school and the variety of facilities which it offers
and the responsibility:
 to respect and maintain these facilities, to uphold the values of the school and to behave in such a way that no discredit will be brought to the school. This applies to any situation where a learner is wearing a school uniform or can in any way be identified as being a learner of the school.

- 2.6 **Each learner has the right:**
to security of person and property
and the responsibility:
 to uphold honest behaviour and security in the school, to show respect of other's property and not damage, deface, steal or in any way interfere with any property which is not his/her own.
- 2.7 **Each learner has the right:**
to work in a healthy and litter-free environment
and the responsibility:
 to ensure that the school premises are kept clean and hygienic, and that no littering, graffiti or deliberate despoiling of any areas occurs.
- 2.8 **Each learner has the right:**
to have his/her work assessed and returned to her within a reasonable period
and the responsibility:
 to ensure that homework and assignments set for him/her, are completed and handed in on time.

3. SCHOOL RULES

3.1 Uniform and appearance

The uniform consists of the following:

GIRLS:

Skirts	:	Must be NAVY blue. No pleats on skirts. Skirt length must be 4 fingers above knee. Skirt must NOT be rolled at waist.
Shirts	:	White short sleeve or long sleeve. Shirts must be tucked in skirt. Long sleeve shirt with a tie. Tie broad tip must reach waist of skirt. Short sleeve shirt must have school badge on pocket. No tie.
Stockings/socks:		Short white socks or blackmail stockings may be worn. Socks must be folded twice NOT rolled.
Shoes	:	Black lace-up or with one strap 'tear' drop over shoe. Flat heels.
Hair bands	:	Navy blue or Red bands Brown, black and silver clips. No fancy grips allowed.
Earrings	:	Gold or silver small studs only. No hoops etc.

GIRLS (CONT.)

Hair	:	Hair must be natural colour at all times. No hair dyes allowed. No wool locks or dreadlocks. Hair on the collar must be tied - this includes all extensions.
Jewellery	:	NO jewellery of any kind allowed with exception of wrist watch. Any jewellery found will be confiscated.
Nails	:	Nails must not extend past the fingertips. No nail polish allowed.
Make-up	:	No make-up to be worn. This includes lip gloss, mascara and eye liner etc. Eye brows must NOT be shaven.
Underwear	:	Only white/brown/black bra's are to be worn. Full panties must be worn.

BOYS:

Shirts	:	White long sleeve or short sleeve shirt. Long sleeve can be rolled neatly to elbows. Shirts must be tucked into trouser. School tie must be worn or school badge must be worn. Tie tip must meet the waist of trouser.
Trousers	:	Regulation grey school trousers.
Socks	:	Grey
Shoes	:	Black leather lace ups.
Belt	:	Plain black belt.
Jewellery	:	NO jewellery.
Hair	:	Hair must be short (off the ears, eyes & collar) in natural colour only; no exotic styles.

GIRLS AND BOYS:

Blazer	:	Navy blue with official badge on pocket. Blazer must be worn at ALL official functions.
Tracksuit	:	School tracksuit. Tracksuit top may be worn in place of blazer/jersey. Full tracksuit to be worn at official school sports functions.
Jersey	:	Navy blue V-neck. No button on jerseys allowed.
Raincoat	:	Navy blue plastic type.
Name badges	:	This must be worn at all times in a clearly visible position on the lapel or top shirt pocket.

*Traditional cloth; animal skin; string must be accompanied by a letter from parents guardians -
for the registration teacher.

Our official stockist is:

1. GEM SCHOOLWEAR

3.2 Attendance

1. The school day starts at 7.45 and ends at 14.30. Learners are requested to be on the premises by 7.40.
2. Absentees must produce a letter from their parents stating the reason why they were absent. The following information must be on the letter: Name of pupil; class; date(s) of absence; reason; signature of parent/guardian.
3. Learners absent on days that tests or examinations are written, must produce a Doctor's Certificate otherwise they will receive a zero mark.
4. Disciplinary action will be taken against pupils who absentee themselves from registration, classes or any other official school functions. (This includes sport and cultural activities, detention...)
5. Learners who wish to leave early must produce a letter from their Parent or Guardian stating the reason. The letter must be signed by the Reg. teacher and relevant HOD before 8:00, otherwise early leave will not be considered.

3.3 Academics, homework and classwork

1. Learners should strive towards becoming proactive, independent, critical, disciplined and creative thinkers.
2. Learners must actively support the effective learning process.
3. School books must be cared for.
4. Learners must not disrupt the learning process in any way.
5. A positive attitude towards the school rules and studies must be displayed by the learners.
6. Learners must complete to the best of their ability the work assigned to them by educators.
7. All learners are required to carry a homework book with them: In front there must be a timetable and at the back a pupil's information form.

3.4 Conduct in and out of the school

1. Learners must behave with courtesy, tolerance and consideration towards others.
2. Learners must refrain from aggressive and abusive behaviour. Any form of intimidation, bullying, victimisation, physical or verbal abuse is unacceptable.

3. Due respect must be shown to all persons in positions of authority.
4. Learners must not absent themselves from school without valid reasons.
5. Learners must be punctual.
6. Learners must adhere to the school rules and departmental regulations.
7. All learners shall leave the school premises at a time stipulated by the Governing Body.
8. Learners must not absent themselves from the class without permission.
9. Learners must be dressed in accordance with the school rules.
10. Learners must be well mannered and respectful.
11. Learners must comply with all safety and security measures which have been devised by the school to protect life and property.
12. Learners must avoid doing anything that will bring themselves or their school into disrepute.
13. Learners are to avoid antisocial behaviour.
14. Wherever possible learners must be involved in school activities.

4. Regulations relating to disciplinary procedures and action.

4.1 Minor offences

In case of minor offences corrective measures may be applied. These measures could include one or more of the following:

1. verbal warning or written reprimand by an educator,
2. supervised school work that will contribute to the learner's progress at school, the improvement of the school environment, provided that the parents are timeously informed and the security of the child is assured;
3. performing tasks that would assist the offended person.
4. agreed affordable compensation;

5. replacement of damaged property; and
6. suspension from some school activities, e.g. sport, cultural activities.

Suspension should only be considered after every effort has been made to correct the behaviour of the learner.

4.2 Suspension

Provincial regulations must be consulted in the compilation of a list of offences which may lead to suspension of a learner. Offences that may lead to such suspension include, but are not limited to the following:

1. conduct which endangers the safety and violates the rights of others;
2. possession, threat or use of a dangerous weapon;
3. possession, use, transmission or visible evidence of narcotic or unauthorised drugs, alcohol or intoxicants of any kind;
4. fighting, assault or battery;
5. immoral behaviour or profanity;
6. falsely identifying oneself;
7. harmful graffiti, hate speech, sexism, racism;
8. theft or possession of stolen property including test or examination papers prior to the writing of tests or examinations;
9. unlawful action, vandalism, or destroying or defacing school property;
10. disrespect, objectionable behaviour and verbal abuse directed at educators or other school employees or learners;
11. repeated violations of school rules or the Code of Conduct;
12. criminal and oppressive behaviour such as rape and gender based harassment;
13. victimisation, bullying and intimidation of other learners;
14. infringement of examination rules; and
15. knowingly and wilfully supplying false information or falsifying documentation to gain an unfair advantage at school.

4.3 Expulsion

A governing body may, after a fair hearing, suspend any learner who has been found guilty of contravening stipulations of the Code of Conduct:

for a period of one week; or

for a reasonable period pending a decision by the Head of Department on the recommendation of the governing body as to whether or not the learner is to be expelled from the school.

A learner who has been expelled, or his/her parent, may appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the Member of the Executive Council, within seven days of the decision so to expel him/her.

In cases of disciplinary transfer, the Head of Department must find a school place for a learner until the learner is beyond compulsory school-going age, as the right of a learner to basic education cannot be violated.

All decisions leading to suspension or expulsion must take cognisance of applicable laws, e.g. a learner whose parent is unable to pay the school fees determined by the governing body may not be suspended from classes or expelled from the school.

4.4 Due Process

The South African Schools Act makes provision for due process including a fair hearing before a learner may be suspended from the school by the governing body. Due process guarantees a learner a fair hearing before a learner may be suspended for a period of one week or be expelled from the school by the Head of the Department.

Any learner alleged to have violated any rule that may require suspension or expulsion, must be brought to the principal. The principal shall hear the evidence and then decide on the action to be taken. Such action must include that the principal must inform the parents in writing of the proposed action and arrange for a fair hearing by a small disciplinary committee (tribunal) consisting of members designated by the governing body. This tribunal must not be intimidating to the learner. In the case of very young learners special arrangements must be made for the hearing and the parents or guardians could represent the learners.

The disciplinary committee so appointed must conduct the hearing in accordance with the provincial regulations laid down by the Member of the Executive Council.

For the hearing the learner must-

be informed of and understand the charges as which written notice should be given at least five days before the time also indicating the date, time and place of the hearing;

receive such particulars on the charges as he/she may be entitled to according to law, if he/she so requests;

get the opportunity to be heard and tell his/her side of the story and to present the relevant facts;

not be prohibited from being represented by legal counsel, in which case written explanation of the charges must be given, or, in less serious cases the learner may be represented by a member of the LRC, parent, guardian or educator;

be heard by an impartial person(s);

be treated with dignity during the process;

be informed in writing of the decision of the governing body on whether or not he/she is guilty of misconduct, and the penalty to be imposed in the case of suspension or expulsion; and

have the right to appeal to the MEC if he/she is aggrieved by the decision of the governing body

The governing body must keep a record of the proceedings of the hearing, and

may inform, in writing, the Head of Department of its decision to suspend a learner; or

must inform the Head of Department within twenty-four hours of its recommendation for expulsion of the learner.

Subject to any provincial law a learner may only be expelled by the Head of Department.

SERIOUS MISCONDUCT AND THE LAW

Serious misconduct which may include offences according to the law, must be investigated by the police and referred to the Court if necessary. Serious misconduct must be handled in terms of the government notice and regulations promulgated by the Member of Executive Council in the Provincial Gazette of the province concerned.

Should the governing body experience difficulty in interpreting these guidelines they are to be guided by the Head of Department of the province in which the school is situated.

Appendix 4

Interview Schedule

1. Heads of Department
2. Counselling teachers
3. Maths teachers
4. Principal
5. English teacher
6. Religious education teacher
7. Zulu teacher
8. 8 Prefects

Appendix 5

DISCIPLINE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH

NAME _____ TEL. NO. _____.

1. Are you willing to participate in a small group discussion? YES ☐
NO ☐

2. Are you willing to give a brief individual interview? YES ☐ NO ☐

3. Do you have a point of view/ idea/ experience about discipline that you would be prepared to describe and discuss? YES ☐ NO ☐

4. Are you available: WEDS 10.15-11 ☐ WEDS 2.30-3.15 ☐
other days after school MON ☐ TUES ☐ THURS ☐

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE SEMINAR

1. BACKGROUND: Why education? Why discipline?

- i. The child
- ii. Power/Control/Discipline
- iii. Psychology and Developmental Theories
- iv. Innocence and Early Experience
- v. Change in the world
- vi. Children in South Africa

2. CHILDREN'S RIGHTS: Do men really own women and children? Why?

- i. The Authoritarian State
- ii. Indoctrination and Ideology and 'In Loco Parentis'
- iii. Power, Gender and Children

3. PUNISHMENT: Violence begets violence – adult-child, child-child, adult-adult, group-group, state-state.

- i. Control from without or self-discipline
- ii. The role of the Teacher: Intrusive Leader or Facilitator
- iii. Negative : Positive Discipline
- iv. Care, Guidance and Nurturing within a Non-Violent Context

4. SCHOOL PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

School problems are not engendered by and within schools, but are manifestations of forces from without – politics, unemployment, capitalism, globalisation, structural adjustment.

- i. Democracy and order
- ii. Positive discipline
- iii. Ownership by all of problem and solution

5. THE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SOLUTION

In a society like ours with a long history of violence and abuse of human rights, it is not easy to make the transition to peace, tolerance and respect for human rights.

- i. Constitutional challenge
- ii. Clear and agreed limits and simple remedies
- iii. Code of conduct
- iv. Tolerance and compassion