An exploration of educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline in a primary school for boys in the south of Durban, KwaZulu-Natal

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DECLARATION

I, _____ , do hereby declare that this dissertation to the university for the Master of Education degree has not been previously submitted by me for a degree at any other university, and all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of a complete reference.

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SEV John (Researcher)

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Dr S Singh (Supervisor)

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to all learners in our beloved country for whom the quest for a better quality of education remains a challenge

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Poor learner discipline, a problem for both educators and learners at South African public schools, ranges from violence to issues with classroom management. As a result of learner-on-learner violence, learners generally feel that schools are unsafe places to be in (Premdev, 2008). Schools have become challenging contexts for effective teaching and learning to take place in, owing to the presence of bullying, disobedience, drug addiction, vandalism, rape, assault, use of obscene language and disrespect for teachers (Anderson, 2009). With examination results on a downward spiral, De Lange and Mbanjwa (2008) report that poor learner discipline in schools is strongly implicated in learner underachievement.

This study, which is an exploration of educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline, is underpinned by research in the construction of masculinities, which submits that masculine identity is a gendered social construction, and as such, is subject to transformation. The research project suggests that whilst schools, by virtue of the ways in which they tend to be organised, condone and perpetuate the formation of hegemonic masculinities in boys, they are also able to effect meaningful change and usher in emancipation to this locale.

Some of the key findings include:-

- Poor learner discipline in boys reflected their own constructions of dominant male gender identities, formed as a result of their life experiences in a world embedded with notions and practices of patriarchal hegemony;
- Poor learner discipline and the ineffective management thereof contributed to a poor teaching and learning environment that disadvantaged all learners;
- Female educators relinquish their agency to successfully deal with poor learner discipline when they choose to let male educators handle their disciplinary problems, thereby becoming complicit in entrenching notions of male superiority;
- Male educators tend to resort to the use of corporal punishment;
- Violence in the home and wider community is reproduced in learners at school.

The study discusses approaches that may be employed in achieving a more just and empowering teaching and learning context for educators, as well as learners at schools.

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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1   INTRODUCTION

Discipline in schools is a problem for both teachers and learners. This ranges in form from violence (learner-on-learner, teacher-on-learner, as well as learner-on-teacher) to issues with classroom management. Learner-on-learner violence has reached such alarming proportions in South African public schools to the extent that learners feel that schools are unsafe places to be in (Premdev, 2008). In 2008 the Department of Education (DoE) put forward a suggestion to introduce the following pledge (to be recited by learners at schools) in the hope that, if accepted, it would establish among learners sound values which, in turn, would help promote good behaviour and stem the tide of violence and misbehaviour present in schools:

We, the youth of South Africa, recognising the injustices of the past, honour those who suffered and sacrificed for justice and freedom.

We will respect and protect the dignity of each person, and stand up for justice.

We sincerely declare that we shall uphold the rights and values of our Constitution and promise to act in accordance with the duties and responsibilities that flow from these rights.

The fact that the National Department of Education saw it fit to try to promote good discipline among learners and stem the tide of poor behaviour from escalating beyond control points to the prevalence of misbehaviour and violence amongst learners. The proposed pledge may be viewed as a backdrop to this study.

1.2   STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In recent years violence in schools has been escalating at a phenomenal rate in South Africa. The media is rife with reports relating to criminal behavior stemming from learners. Many schools have become ungovernable due to the incidence of poor discipline amongst learners, and the inability of educators in dealing effectively with the problem. Schools have become stressful and unsafe for effective teaching and learning to take place in the presence of bullying, disobedience, drug addiction, vandalism, rape, assault, use of obscene language, and disrespect for educators.

As a principal, I have observed that educators remain constrained in terms of successfully attaining their teaching objectives amid the climate of poor learner discipline. The stresses and tensions brought on by ill-disciplined learners have exacted a heavy toll on the quality of teaching and learning, resulting in decreasing levels of education. Porteus, Vally and Le Mottee (2001) emphasise that the absence of discipline amongst learners has made it virtually impossible to teach successfully. They also report that the use of corporal punishment by educators as a means of correcting poor learner discipline continues to exacerbate the problem.

The increasing levels of poor learner discipline at schools in South Africa form the backdrop against which has emerged the proposed national school pledge. The pledge clearly is an attempt by the South African government to establish a better code of discipline in schools. Whilst media reports (Dorasamy, 2008; Naidoo, 2008) suggest that the school pledge is surrounded by controversy, they however focus our attention on the exceeding levels of poor discipline that plague many of our schools.

1.3   AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of this study is to explore educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline in a primary school for boys. In particular, it explores how educators handle issues pertaining to poor discipline amongst learners.

Originally, it was intended that a major part of the focus of the study would be the actual pledge (cited above), and whether it could work towards establishing good discipline at a school. However, in the time since its use was mooted by the South African government in 2007, no formal instruction to implement the pledge in South African schools has been made. Further, public discourse over the pledge, reflected in the media as being high on the agenda during the period 2007 – 2008, has now somewhat faded from view. Accordingly, the study focuses on the perceptions of educators and learners about what constitutes poor learner discipline. The research project, nevertheless, engages with these perceptions with the former proposed pledge as a backdrop to the enquiry.

1.4   RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding poor learner discipline at school?
- What are the perceptions of learners regarding poor learner discipline at school?

1.5   THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LEARNER DISCIPLINE AND CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

'Discipline', as used in the context of this study, refers to the conduct of learners at a primary school for boys in the south of Durban. In my experience as principal of this school, some of the more common occurrences of poor learner discipline include disobeying educators' instructions, not completing homework, disruption of lessons, taunting fellow learners and non-compliance with class rules, whilst some of the more serious offences include bullying, fighting, truancy and stealing.

The study is underpinned by research in the construction of masculinities conducted by Anderson (2009), Russell (2006), Reddy (2003), Carter (2002), Morrell (1998), Salisbury and Jackson (1996), as well as Connell (1995), who proffer, *inter alia*, that masculine identity is a gendered social construction, and, as such, is subject to transformation. They suggest that whilst schools, by the nature in which they are organised, tend to condone the formation of dominant

hegemonic masculinities in boys, they are, however, also able to foster welcome change to this locale.

De Lange and Mbanjwa (2008) report that, according to John Kane-Berman (chief executive of the South African Institute for Race Relations), 80% of South African public schools are dysfunctional in terms of effective teaching and learning. Their report reveals that examination results are on a downward spiral, with the number of learners passing grade 12 who qualify for university entrance, declining from 13% in 1994 to 10.9% in 2007. More recently, Eugene Daniels, former district director of the Western Cape Education Department, informs us that statistics relating to poor learner academic performance indicate that out of 100 children enrolled at school in grade 1, only 40 attempted the senior certificate examination, and, of these, only 28 learners passed, with 4 entering university and only 1 graduating (Jones, 2012, p.5).

In the De Lange and Mbanjwa report (2008), reference is also made to an international study comparing the reading skills of grade 4 learners in 40 countries, wherein South Africa was placed at the bottom of the list. The report strongly infers that poor discipline in schools may be a factor leading to poor results. It concludes with a suggestion by Kane-Berman that teachers should be allowed to act against unruly learners so that discipline could be restored.

Gaillard-Thurston (2003) also argues that poor discipline and control of learners create a challenging context within which successful teaching and learning may take place. In her study, she makes the point that school-based policies to curb violence and restore discipline at a secondary school in Durban proved unsuccessful because those who drafted the policies failed to take into account the gendered dimensions of violence, as well as the views, feelings and perceptions of learners regarding their experiences of violence. She states further that the learning programme becomes disrupted in the presence of poor discipline.

Noting the breakdown in discipline and order within South African schools, the Department of Education has proposed that all school children make a pledge each week. Literature in a variety of settings (Human Resource Management, reproductive health and sexuality, marketing and

group relations) has shown that a pledge can work to create beneficial conditions (Brückner & Bearman, 2005; Chen, 2002; Anderson & Weitz, 1992).

On the other hand, Morrell (2008) points out that gender literature on behaviour and identity change in the field of gender studies suggests that formal declarations and interventions are not likely to change behaviours and identities. He emphasises that for successful interventions, one needs ongoing engagement with multiple interventions that seek to work with people in a deep and intensive way. This view is supported by Salisbury and Jackson (1996, pp.103-105).

Despite evidence that a pledge works in certain contexts, it is arguable that it can be used successfully within school contexts on its own to tackle issues of ill-discipline. It must be borne in mind that the nature of the disciplinary problem in schools is a complex and wide-ranging one. While in some contexts, a pledge might be successful in changing a specific behaviour, in multiple contexts (differently resourced and with many cultures) the pledge seems to be a 'one size fits all' intervention, and this is widely discredited (*e.g.* the AIDS literature which critique the 'one size fits all' approach, such as ABC – Abstain, Be Faithful, Condomise).

'Misbehaviour', in the context of this study, refers to any act by commission or omission on the part of a learner that is not in keeping with the expectations of the school's code of conduct for learners. It may also include aspects of conduct not specifically enunciated in the school's code of conduct, for example, markedly anti-social behaviour. Poor learner discipline encompasses a wide range of unacceptable behaviour. The list of examples below is by no means an exhaustive one:

- Not carrying out teachers' specific instructions
- Committing acts of violence towards other learners, or educators
- Stealing
- Teasing / taunting fellow learners
- Arrogance / insolence
- Rudeness
- Lewd / obscene behaviour

- Truancy

- Back-talking

- Being disruptive in the classroom

- Lying

- Carrying tales

- Gossiping

- Cheating

- Aggression

- Bullying

- Extortion

- Use of offensive language, including racist remarks

- Insubordination

- Unjustifiable repeated late-coming and absenteeism

- Unjustifiable contravention of the school dress code

- Unjustifiable incompletion of homework

- Disrespect for learners or educators

- Vandalism

- Bunking classes

- Non-compliance with regard to carrying out assigned duties

- Uncooperative behaviour

- Loitering in areas deemed out of bounds

Poor learner discipline may well be implicated in the underachievement of learners.

1.6   RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This study falls within the ambit of qualitative research, and the strategy of inquiry used is phenomenology. It is underpinned by the interpretive paradigm. Data was generated through focus group interviews with educators and learners. The interviews were tape-recorded for the purpose of transcription and analysis. The purposive sampling technique was followed as a

means by which to select participants. The sample comprised of four educators (two female and two male), as well as sixteen male learners. Data analysis entailed the process of coding the data according to the guidelines provided by Tesch (1990, pp.142-145), for the purpose of identifying the main themes and sub-themes. Ethical clearance to proceed with this study was obtained from the Research Office of the University of KwaZulu-Natal in 2008 (see Annexure 1), and permission to interview learners and educators was granted in 2008 by the Department of Education (see Annexure 2). Consent forms that were issued to participants in 2009 outlined key aspects that guaranteed their anonymity and freedom to withdraw from the research process at any time (see Annexure 3). In keeping with ethical considerations, pseudonyms were allocated to all participants in order to protect their identities.

1.7   ANALYSIS OF DATA

The data was coded according to guidelines suggested by Tesch (1990, pp.142-145) to identify the main themes and sub-themes. During this process focus was placed on the interpretation, understanding and explanation of the data according to the interpretive paradigm. The participants' responses were considered within the sphere of three themes, these being:

- What is poor learner discipline?
- Maintaining discipline
- Influence of parents and the community

1.8   SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is briefly summarised and any salient findings from the thematic analysis of the data are presented as a list (see 5.1). As the sample is limited, the findings are not intended to be generalised. A discussion of the implications of the study is presented in the understanding that insights may be informed by the experience of the researcher as a principal at the school in which the focus group interviews were undertaken. The discussion of the implications revolves around three main areas of school organisation, *viz*. school culture, curriculum, as well as parents and the community. A concluding note follows the discussion.

1.9   OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

Chapter 1 focuses on the background, rationale and introduction to the study. It includes the statement of the problem, aim and focus of the study, research questions, theoretical perspectives on learner discipline and clarification of concepts, research design and methodology employed, analysis of the data, as well as the summary and implications of the study.

Chapter 2 is a review of existing relevant literature that relates to this study. It begins with a discussion on understanding poor learner discipline in South African schools as a contextual backdrop to the study. It then discusses the theoretical and conceptual frameworks underpinning the study.

Chapter 3 covers the qualitative research design and methodology selected for the study, which fall within the ambit of the interpretative paradigm. Data generation emanated from focus group interviews conducted with a sample of educators and learners.

Chapter 4 focuses on the presentation and analysis of the data, and provides a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 5 includes a summary and implications of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR UNDERSTANDING EDUCATORS' AND LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF POOR LEARNER DISCIPLINE AT SCHOOL

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter dealt with the orientation and introduction to the study. The research aims and certain key concepts were explained. The research design and methodology, as well as the course of the study, were briefly mapped out. In this chapter, the focus is on the theoretical perspective for understanding poor learner discipline at school through a survey of relevant literature. It begins with an outline of the extent of the problem of poor learner discipline in South African schools, looks at some interventions by the Department of Education to address poor learner discipline, and then discusses salient literature on Masculinities, which cumulatively form the theoretical underpinning of this study.

2.2 UNDERSTANDING LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL CONTEXT – BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

In recent years, learner discipline in South African schools has come under sharp focus as there have been numerous incidents of misdemeanour, crime and violence among learners. The media is rife with reports of criminal behaviour experienced at schools. This has impacted negatively on teaching and learning in our schools. With the abolition of corporal punishment in South African schools (South African Schools Act, 1996) it would seem that it has become increasingly difficult to maintain discipline and control among learners in schools.

Hamlal and Morrell (2012) point out that incidents of disruptive behaviour and physical fighting at schools are commonly associated with boys. They suggest that, left untended, simple provocations and taunts employed by boys as they construct their dominant masculinity can escalate to more serious physical violence at school. Stoudt (2012) adds that masculine environments, determined by the authoritarian nature in which schools tend to be organised,

contribute towards the reproduction of hegemonic masculine boundaries in the context of poor discipline of boys. Morrell (1998, p.219), commenting on media reports, states that violence in schools instigated by learners is commonly experienced in a variety of contexts, for various reasons and by a wide range of victims, and moreover, that the perpetrators of violence in every case are male.

Fredericks' and De Vries' article in the Cape Argus (2010, p.1), which encapsulates the enormity of the problem of ill-discipline in Capetonian schools, cite a figure of 227 reported cases of attacks involving learners since the beginning of 2010. These cases included assaults and stabbings of classmates in Western Cape schools. Over the same period in 2009, 200 cases (42 stabbings and 158 assaults) were recorded. Learners at a school in New Crossroads live in fear of youth gangsters who threaten, rob, molest and beat them up using pangas, knives and guns. According to statistics furnished by the Department of Education, 45 learners were expelled from schools in the Western Cape in 2010 for assault or violence. Such is the severity of the problem that the Department of Education's Safe Schools arm has instituted several measures to address the problem of escalating violence and crime at schools. These measures include installation of CCTV systems, security gates, access control and burglar bars, as well as the provision of hand-held metal detectors at schools where there is a high risk of violence (Cape Argus, 2010, p.4).

Another newspaper article entitled "Black and yellow violence at school", by Soobramoney (2011, p.1), draws attention to brutal assaults among learners at a school in Kharwastan. The community was shocked at the degenerate behaviour that seems to be prevalent in several schools in and around Chatsworth, where violence has reached such epic proportions that teachers and school managements are ostensibly unable to control problematic learners. "What we are seeing is the result of a serious lack of morals and values that have crept into our schools. The culture of learning has been replaced by a culture of rebellion and an apathetic attitude towards educators" (Soobramoney, 2011, p.1).

Daily News reporters (2008, p.1), in an article entitled "I am scarred for life", highlight the trauma experienced by a learner after he and another learner were shot by a fellow learner at school, leaving one of them in a critical condition in hospital. The shooting was one of a spate of

similar incidents at schools in Durban. Parents, educators and politicians believe that strict measures are needed to curtail the violence that is spiraling out of control in KZN schools. The then Provincial Minister of Education, Ina Cronjé, announced that the Department of Education intended to hire security guards to safeguard vulnerable schools. Roger Burrows, a politician affiliated with the Democratic Alliance political party, remarked that violence has become "second nature" to these learners.

The editor of the Daily News (2009, p.20) penned an article entitled "School safety becomes urgent", in which attention is drawn to the increasing rate of violence that has become endemic in some schools. In March 2009, a Mariannridge learner lost his life after being stabbed by a fellow learner during a fight. In the first twelve weeks of 2009, there were five reported incidents of violence amongst learners using firearms in KwaZulu-Natal schools. In addition, in 2008, a learner at a high school in Umlazi went on a shooting spree that caused educators and learners to flee for their lives.

The Eastern Express published an article, the focus of which was also on ill-discipline and violence at schools. Soobramoney (2008, p.5), chairman of the South African Principals' Association (SAPA), expressed the view that "teachers spend too much time on discipline and too little on teaching". The article headed "Enough! Say school heads; violence drives principals to drastic new strategy against ill-discipline", drew attention to the importance of parents becoming more involved in disciplining their children, as well as obtaining psychiatric assessment in the case of learners manifesting problem behaviours. Soobramoney (2008, p.5) added, "There are serious issues to contend with, such as bullying, fighting, gangsterism, substance abuse, sexual misconduct, and the carrying of weapons. This is in addition to absconding, gambling and a visible disrespect for educators, parents and school management…We cannot cope; schools are in danger of losing functionality".

An unnamed education reporter for the Daily News (2008, p.6) stated that Provincial Education Ministers met with the National Minister of Education to discuss the problem of discipline at schools, as well as details regarding the creation of special schools for unruly learners. Principals and educators were "fed up with unruly pupils and no longer wanted to be held ransom by them".

Furthermore, a columnist for the Sunday Times, Fred Khumalo (2008, p.20), in an article entitled "Children condemned by a lack of discipline", made an interesting comment, which is indicative of the gender bias that is commonly associated with male misbehaviour. When his daughter telephoned him and hysterically related a stabbing that had taken place at her school in Kloof, he tried to calm her down, and by his own admission, tried to calm her down by making light of it through comments such as, "Boys will be boys, and I think what happened at your school was just one of those things".

However, his suppressed guilt over his daughter's safety at school resurfaced when, 3 weeks later, the "Ninja" school murder, by a pupil dressed as a Samurai warrior, killed a fellow learner and inflicted serious injury on 3 others at a school in Krugersdorp. He mentions other such incidents, *e.g.* the arrest of a 15 year old Pretoria learner who carried a firearm to school; the attempted murder of a 17 year old Eldorado Park school boy after he fired shots at other learners; and the stabbing of a 16 year old learner by a 17 year old learner in Heidelberg.

The author of the article holds the view that the school environment in general has become a microcosm of South African society, as it tends to reflect our frustrations, anxieties and anger (Khumalo, 2008, p.20). The fact that learners can come to school with weapons, and sometimes drugs, which exacerbate violence, is indicative of the lawlessness that is presently prevailing at South African schools. The columnist believes that a lack of discipline and failure to discipline children is tantamount to condemning them to a bleak future with no hope of salvation, or grip on such valuable traits as personal responsibility and accountability. Anderson (2009, p.x) concurs that the challenging poor socio-economic contexts that exist within South Africa encourage the flourishing of hegemonic masculinities, as evidenced by the spiraling poor discipline of many boys at schools.

The Tribune Herald carried an article entitled "Hell of a place for learning", written by Premdev (2008, p.4). Once again, school safety comes into focus: "Schools are dangerous places to be. Pupils have to deal with bullying, violence, drugs, extortion and even rape" (Premdev, 2008, p.4). She stated that a report by the South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC) noted that the school was now the single most common site of crime, including robbery and assault

against learners. In the same article, Gordon Govender, Public Relations Officer of the South African Principals' Association (Chatsworth branch) emphasised the importance of curbing bullying and violence at schools, thereby preventing the extension of ill-discipline beyond the schoolyard. He reported that social workers who conducted research at a local prison found that 91% of inmates indicated that they had displayed aggressive behaviour or intimidation of other learners at their schools.

Naidoo (2008, p.17) outlined several cases of lawlessness amongst learners at various schools in Durban during the course of the week, where shootings, stabbings, and drug abuse, as well as vandalism, brought teaching and learning to a halt. It was not clear when classes would resume.

Makhaye (2008, p.17), drew attention to the "dark week" for KZN schools, where two learners were shot in class, another stabbed, teachers assaulted, and two schools which were closed down as a result of bullying and drug abuse. In the article, researcher Thomas Blaser reported that in areas where violent crime is rife, learners tend to perform poorly in their studies. In a recent school safety-levels study conducted among 40 developed and developing countries, South Africa scored the lowest. Sayed Razak, chairman of the KZN Parents Association, endorsed the study saying that 95% of violent crimes in schools were not reported and that the recent upsurge of school violence stemmed from alcohol, sexual and drug abuse among learners. Micky Pierce, chairman of NAPTOSA, expressed the view that school violence and aggressive behaviour amongst learners increased after the abolition of corporal punishment in schools. Parents and educators held the view that the incidents that were reported were just the tip of the iceberg.

The newspaper articles cited above have direct implications for the study as they bear overwhelming evidence to support that poor learner discipline and violence constitute a serious problem that negatively impacts education. There is a need for greater understanding concerning the problem of poor discipline in schools, in order that effective measures can be instituted to bring about an improvement in behaviour amongst learners. Unless we can successfully instill basic human values in learners, the problem could escalate at an uncontrollable rate, to the detriment of our society as a whole; hence the rationale for the study.

De Lange and Mbanjwa state that the quality of teaching and learning in the vast majority of South African schools has deteriorated to the extent that examination results, at a national level, have been seriously compromised. The report, citing deplorable national examination results in grade twelve in the period 1994 to 2007, as well as an international study that placed South Africa last out of 40 countries in a comparison of reading skills of grade four learners, strongly suggests that poor learner discipline may be central to the lacklustre academic performance being experienced in schools (De Lange & Mbanjwa, 2008).

A further indication of the underperformance of our learners is the dismal outcome of the 2012 Annual National Assessments which reveal that only 10.6% of Grade 6 learners and 2.3% of Grade 9 learners passed mathematics with a mark of 50% or more (Oppelt, 2012, p.15). Further, Bloch (2012, p.1), referring to the results of the Annual National Assessments, which revealed that the grade 9 national mathematics average score was an appalling 13%, warns that "we are seriously in trouble", as this generation will write the matriculation examination with very limited mathematics skills, "and will struggle to read and write in both home language and the language of teaching".

Jones (2012, p.5) points to a sad state of learner grade-to-grade progression in South Africa. She reports that, out of 100 learners who started school in grade R, 40 eventually progressed to grade 12 with 28 passing, and of these, only 4 entered university with just 1 graduating. In the same report, academic Mamphele Rampele, states that much needs to be done to ensure that education in South Africa does not remain 'a game of chance'.

2.3 INTERVENTIONS BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION TO ADDRESS POOR LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS

2.3.1 National school pledge

According to the Department of Education, Porteus *et al.* (2001, p.8) aver that South Africa has extremely high levels of violence, with several educators and learners having to deal with the threat of gangsterism, attacks on teachers, and brutal rapes of female learners. Noting the

breakdown in discipline and order in schools, in 2008 the Department of Education proposed that all school children make a pledge each week (see Appendix 6), in the hope that exposure to human values and rights, by virtue of this method, might have a positive influence on behaviour. This study includes the views of educators and learners about the efficacy of such a strategy. In this instance, the proposed national school pledge merely serves as a platform to enter into a study of the perceptions of poor learner discipline on the part of educators and male learners specifically.

Literature in different settings indicates that pledges can work to improve conditions. Anderson and Weitz (1992), reporting in the Journal of Marketing, indicate that the use of pledges establishes mutual commitment between independent members that leads to a better servicing of customers. As a result, manufacturers and distributors benefit from enhanced mutual profitability when they commit to the ideal of loyalty among end-users.

Further, Brückner and Bearman (2005), from the Department of Sociology at Columbia University, examined the effectiveness of virginity pledges in reducing sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) infection rates in young adults. They found that pledgers were consistently less likely to be exposed to risk factors.

Additionally, Chen (2002), from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, in a study to assess the effectiveness of a binding pledge as a likely solution to public goods problems, found that a pledge is effective in enhancing cooperation because it induces group identity and the perception of criticality. He suggests that a pledge system may be effective in solving real-life social dilemmas.

Morrell (2008) avers that gender literature on behaviour and identity change in the field of gender studies suggests that formal declarations and interventions may not be effective in curbing the challenge of poor discipline among learners. He emphasises that for success in this regard, one needs ongoing engagement with multiple interventions that seek to work with learners in a deep and intensive way. This view is supported by Salisbury and Jackson (1996, pp.103-105).

Despite evidence which indicates that a pledge may work in certain contexts, whether it can be used successfully within school contexts on its own to tackle issues of poor learner discipline is arguable. It must be borne in mind that the nature of the disciplinary problem in schools is a complex and wide-ranging one. While in some contexts, a pledge might be successful in changing a specific behaviour, in multiple contexts (differently resourced environments and with a diversity of cultures) the pledge seems to be a 'one size fits all' intervention, and this notion could be widely discredited (*e.g.* AIDS literature which critiques the 'one size fits all' approach, such as ABC – Abstain, Be Faithful, Condomise).

According to Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.104), schools tend to be organised in a manner that reflects (and condones) aggressive masculinity, with parents tacitly supporting such regimes through tolerance and, at times, active encouragement. They emphasise that in this school culture, the vast majority of perpetrators of violent acts of aggression and disruptive behaviour are male learners – this may well be on account of the fact that they tend to feature far more than girls in acts of physical aggression.

Morrell (1998, p.219) supports the view that schools are sites that shape gender identities that result in girls remaining disadvantaged and discriminated against in several ways, such as in not having equal access to power and opportunity – boys usually tend to be given preference in terms of access to curriculum choices (such as mathematics and physical science) and extra-curricular programmes (such as sports). However, he underscores the point that whilst schools are responsible for creating and sustaining inequality, they also possess the ability to bring about positive democratic change, in terms of moving away from oppressive gender practices that promote hegemonic masculinity which give rise to poor learner discipline and violence amongst boys.

The proposed school pledge may be representative of a vehicle or tool that could positively impact such a change. Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.109) suggest that a very effective way of curbing bullying in a school is the adoption of a value system in which each member becomes responsible not only for the wellbeing of his or herself, but also that of others. This suggestion strongly echoes a core sentiment embodied within the proposed national school pledge, namely,

that learners make a commitment to 'respect and protect the dignity of each person' (see Appendix 6).

It would also be helpful if schools make a shift away from a rigid, authoritarian style of management to one which is instead reflective of caring (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996, p.110). If it is deemed that there exists a relationship between aggressive behaviour and authoritarian styles of school organisation and management, then it becomes clear that schools should re-examine the ways in which they are managed. Positive, democratic change here can create a caring ethos in which learners feel valued, safe and comfortable (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996, p.110). Perhaps the proposed school pledge which speaks of justice, freedom, rights, values, duties and responsibilities may have value in bringing about change to hostile conditions now prevailing within schools.

At the time of writing, the proposed national school pledge is yet to be implemented.

2.3.2   Corporal punishment

Anderson (2009, p.240) signals that the problem of violence in schools is further exacerbated by the use of violent strategies by educators to address poor learner discipline. She points to a sinister outcome where such actions on the part of educators at schools contribute to the reproduction of violent masculinities in boys, who might then resort to the use of violence in resolving their own problems with other learners.

Noting the link between the use of violent means to curb poor learner discipline in schools and the high levels of violence in society, the Department of Education promulgated the National Education Policy Act of 1996, which banned the use of corporal punishment in schools. In 2001 the Department of Education provided a manual on alternatives to corporal punishment for schools to use as they struggled to cope with the burgeoning levels of poor learner discipline (Porteus *et al.*, 2001).

However, in the decade since these measures have been implemented, aggression and violence in schools have continued unabated.

2.3.3   School discipline policy

Every school under the control of the Department of Education is required to formulate a school discipline policy in consultation with the school governing body. The policy addresses the management of discipline at the school in terms of what constitutes poor learner discipline and the strategies employed to address the same. A school discipline committee is set up at school consisting of level 1 educators and members of management. The committee sets up links with other organisations (such as the local welfare offices, the trauma centre of the local police station and the psychological services division of the regional education centre), in order to seek assistance with more serious cases relating to poor learner discipline. The school governing body monitors the process in the best interests of the learner/s implicated, as well as the school.

The principal of the school is required to conduct an investigation in cases where educators are implicated in the use of corporal punishment (now outlawed). There are set guidelines in terms of managing such incidents at school, including the counselling of learners, educators and parents, the issuing of verbal and written warnings to perpetrators, as well as reporting incidents to the Department of Education where deemed necessary. Principals are also required to arrange workshops for educators from time to time on how to successfully manage good learner discipline at the school.

2.4   MASCULINITIES AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

The present study has been carried out in a boys' school and focuses on educators' as well as learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline. For this purpose, research on Masculinities, and in particular, research on Masculinities and Schooling, form the theoretical framework that underpins the study. An understanding of masculinities within the schooling environment will be relevant in terms of understanding educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline at a boys' school.

Schools often embed noble values into their mission statements, stating in various but not dissimilar ways that learners are valued in a safe, caring atmosphere of respect for human rights. No mention is made, however 'lightly', that the schools' understanding of discipline amongst learners usually involves exerting firm authoritarian control over them. It may well be the case that learners soon come to experience the harsh realities of finding meaning in some unforgiving school contexts that fail to uphold their rights. An authoritarian management style from the principal's office down to the level 1 educator, together contrive to exude a climate of offensive, intolerant control over children, confining them to narrow areas of subjection to the rules of written, as well as unwritten policies ('hidden curriculum' / agendas). This may eventually result in certain learners adopting similar attitudes in their understanding of how life in general may be lived or experienced; if they cannot exert ultimate control over others, they may choose a repressive, aggressive and violent approach towards them, believing this to be correct and acceptable because they had learnt this behaviour at school. It would seem that these learners might just imitate negative attitudes that their teachers may have daily 'paraded' before them.

Anderson (2009, pp.239-240) reiterates that the harsh responses and attitudes of educators in managing poor learner discipline invariably lead to the perpetuation of this mindset in boys. Their painful experiences at the hands of insensitive educators result in retaliation and defiance on their part. Severe punishment meted out to boys may, ironically, prove ineffective and only serves to incite confrontation and a refusal to comply with the school's expectation of good learner discipline. She concludes that the use of violence by educators as a strategy to try to contain poor learner discipline tends to legitimise similar responses in boys with regard to disagreements they might have with other people at school, home and in the wider community.

The hegemony of unforgiving authoritarian school systems serves to encourage boys to replicate similar behaviour within themselves as they grapple with shaping their supposed dominant gender identity. Their experience of humiliation and emasculation in the presence of dictatorial teachers forces them to find other means of reclaiming their power (Anderson, 2009, p.242). Additionally, their rejection of such an exacting and rigid authoritarian climate often places them at odds with the school (Anderson, 2009, p.164). Clearly, schools, by virtue of their rigid,

unforgiving and dictatorial organisational infrastructure, remain implicated in the reproduction of dominant hegemonic masculine identities in male learners.

Morrell (1998, p.219) suggests that the school environment promotes the disadvantaged status of girls through discriminatory practices. He maintains that, according to Thorne (1993), boys and girls are influenced by particular discriminatory school social contexts as they form their gender identities. Curricular and extra-curricular choices offered to boys often discriminate against girls, leading to their enforced (through the enactment of school policies) disempowerment. Boys therefore tend to grow and develop in a milieu that promotes the formation of hegemonic masculinities. Morrell (1998, p.219) points out that this view is supported by Mac an Ghaill (1994), who states that "hegemonic masculinity is entrenched and enacted in school".

Ngakane, Muthukrishna & Ngcobo (2012, pp.39-48) concur, asserting that violence is experienced as a gendered phenomenon in schools that possess rigid styles of authoritarianism and control with respect to the manner in which they are managed. In addition, Swain (Kimmel, Hearn & Connell, 2005), argues that hierarchical structures in education create and maintain relations of domination and subordination within schools. The school formulates practices in terms of maintaining power as it defines its gender regime, and this has a profound effect with respect to the ways in which boys (and girls) experience their existence at schools (Kimmel *et al.*, 2005).

Whilst this may be so, Anderson (2009, p.x) indicates that harmful masculinities can be reconstructed to the extent that boys' poor discipline may become more socially acceptable. She argues that schools can be agents for change regarding the manner in which they offer opportunities to male learners, in order that they may instead value academic success, nurture peaceful relationships and reject violence. In this way, destructive and dominating behaviour in boys may be transformed into becoming more respectable forms of masculinity.

Additionally, researchers in the field of masculinities, according to Morrell (1998, p.219), generally agree that where schools were responsible for entrenching gender inequality, they also possessed the ability to bring about positive change. Such change may be possible where new

policies and subsequent actions that demonstrate 'wholesome' and socially just human values become clearly and tangibly visible within the schooling environment.

In a discussion on the philosophical views on education by Vygotsky, Russell (2006, p.185) underscores the value of imitation as a means of bringing about new disciplines for behavioural change. Educators, by the manner in which they live out values, particularly in the field of gender dynamics, can lead learners to also do likewise through the process of imitating or emulating those same values in their own lives. He points to the powerful medium of imitation / emulation as a means of fostering change, based on Vygotsky's philosophy that children learn more effectively through imitation which, he states, is "a complex developmental process involving conscious reshaping of meaning", leading to new ways of adapting to a changing environment (Russell, 2006, p.190).

Quoting Butler (1990), Reddy, in arguing for the theory of 'performativity' as a means of understanding the construction of gender identity, states that "…gender is a performance; it is what you do at particular times, rather than a universal 'who you are' ". Accepting that gender identity may be defined by performances, then, the possibility of redefining one's gender exists, for performances may be open to reconfiguration (Reddy, 2003, p.7).

Thus, a school environment, constituted in a manner that elevates gender equality in all spheres of learning and teaching, may promote changes to learner behaviour in general, wherein girls no longer feel threatened or marginalised, and where acts of bullying, as well as violence between and amongst learners can be reduced.

Carter (2002) describes such a scenario in extended research she conducted at a comprehensive school for boys in the English West Midlands. She suggests that the lived experiences of learners and educators at this school were in direct contrast to its mission statement, which was informed by a general approach to teaching and managing children that condoned and sustained aggression, where teachers believed "control to be paramount" (Carter, 2002, p.1). Learners at this school were subject to a strict, authoritarian style of management and control that seemed to cut across all areas of teaching and learning. Within this oppressive environment, the learners

formed their hegemonic masculine identities, which were eventually played out in the classrooms, corridors, fields and change-rooms in a hostile manner that mirrored the authoritarian approach to control evidenced in their school. Carter (2002) further points out that other researchers in the field of gender dynamics support the notion that schools entrench and promote the formation of aggressive, hegemonic masculine identities (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996, p.105; Mac an Ghaill, 1994; Connell, 1989). She concludes that, in order to herald necessary change, schools must re-examine how they teach. The embracing of a truly democratic mantra that affirms and acknowledges all learners in a caring, safe and supportive environment of teaching and learning, can contribute to a society free of male aggression.

In addition, Van der Merwe (2011, pp.771-778) asserts that the quality of education found within a school is reflective of the moral agency of the principal and teaching staff. As a result of their focus on ensuring that moral values are embedded in all spheres of learning and teaching, learners could be encouraged to follow likewise in terms of their attitude towards other learners, educators and the school's physical infrastructure. In such circumstances, learners often display honesty, politeness and respect.

Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.109) reiterate that the school community should not be tolerant of oppression between and amongst people, and, in establishing an alternative culture that elevates human values and rights, it should be mindful that the implementation of such a culture would only bear fruit if the school as a whole actively confronts masculinity and power-mongering wherever they might reside within the school, in a critical way.

Further, they strongly advise that an appropriately worded mission statement that addresses bullying should be widely distributed amongst learners, parents, the School Governing Body and relevant officials from the Department of Education. The authors propose that the document ought to circumscribe the consequences of breaching school rules. They state that such a document may prove to be an effective and powerful deterrent to displays of aggression that may occur within the school (Salisbury & Jackson, 1996, p.109).

Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.109) also proffer that it would be helpful if the school works toward a mutual goal that may contribute towards the achievement of change concerning unacceptable behaviour on the part of ill-disciplined learners. Geldenhuys and Doubell (2011) suggest that learners should be given a voice in the successful management of school learner discipline. They aver that whilst policies have been introduced into South African schools to address learner discipline, they often omitted the participation of learners in this process. Programmes around learner discipline that engage with learners' views may well result in learners also taking ownership of the problem, which might herald welcome change.

2.5   HOW DISCIPLINE IS UNDERSTOOD IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS STUDY

In the context of this study, discipline is understood in terms of adherence to socially acceptable behaviour and codes of conduct that are in keeping with school rules based on values. Refer to Chapter 1 (section 1.5) for a list (by no means exhaustive) of what constitutes poor learner discipline in schools.

2.6   IMPLICATIONS OF THIS SURVEY FOR THE STUDY AND CONCLUSION

The survey of literature in this chapter underscores a deeper understanding of the extent of the problem of poor learner discipline prevalent in schools, and forms the basis on which data may be understood and analysed within the framework of masculinities in schooling. The literature therefore informs pertinent discussion arising from the analysis of the responses of educators and learners to the research questions, namely:

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding poor learner discipline at school?
- What are the perceptions of learners regarding poor learner discipline at school?

This chapter focused on an understanding of learner discipline in the South African school context and outlines interventions promulgated by the Department of Education to address the issue of poor learner discipline in schools. In addition, it included a survey of any salient literature pertaining to masculinities and school discipline, which forms the theoretical

framework of this study. In addition, it offered an explanation of how discipline may be understood in the context of this research project. In the next chapter the research design and methodology for this study will come under discussion.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter included a survey of literature pertaining to theoretical perspectives for understanding poor learner discipline at school. The focus of this chapter is on the research design and methodology underpinning this study.

A qualitative method of inquiry has been selected to explore educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline, as well as ways in which issues of poor learner discipline are managed in the classroom and school environs. In addition, it seeks to ascertain their views on whether a school pledge can positively impact the conduct of learners at a primary school for boys in the Durban South region. In this chapter the research paradigm, research design (which entails the qualitative method of inquiry), data generation procedures and data analysis procedures are explained. This is followed by a discussion of the sampling strategy for data generation, as well as ethical issues.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

The term 'paradigm' is used to describe "an approach to research which provides a unifying framework of understanding of knowledge, truth, values and the nature of being" (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p.347). A paradigm is a world view or basic set of beliefs we have, which ultimately influences how we design and conduct research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.21; Guba, 1990, p.17). Neuman (2006, p.81), Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007, p.33), Henning, Van Rensburgh and Smit (2004, p.16), as well as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p.6), identify three theoretical frameworks or paradigms, namely, positivist, interpretive and critical frameworks. Others have identified four world views used in research, namely, positivitism, constructivism, advocacy, and pragmatism (Creswell, 2009, p.9; Creswell, 2007, p.19; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.22; Creswell, 2003, p.6; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 1998, p.22). This study is

underscored by the interpretive paradigm, as it aims to discover meaning and gain a deeper understanding of the implications that the data reveals about people (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p.346). In particular, it aims to investigate male and female educators' as well as learners' perceptions about problems pertaining to discipline and misbehaviour among learners at a primary school for boys in Durban.

3.3   RESEARCH DESIGN

The qualitative approach is adopted. This approach includes phenomenology as the strategy of enquiry, which involves the study of human phenomena within the context of everyday social experiences, "from the perspective of those who experience them" (Titchen & Hobson, 2005, p.121). Phenomenology is an interpretative process which entails research that focuses on the study of human experiences so as to gain a deeper understanding of their essence, and to make meaning of the experiences of a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2009, p.13; Creswell, 2007, p.58; Fouché, 2005, p.270). According to Van Manen (1990, p.177), cited by John (2009, p.120), the purpose of phenomenological research is "to grasp the very nature of the thing", which, in this research project entails the phenomenon of male and female educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline and ways of maintaining discipline at a primary school for boys.

Qualitative research allows the researcher to elicit participants' accounts of their experiences, perceptions or meanings in their own words (Fouché & Delport, 2005, p.74). John (2009, p.121) maintains that several writers concur with respect to the purpose of qualitative research: that it may be utilised to construct detailed accounts of social reality through the use of participants' natural language, in order that a clear understanding of their social worlds may be obtained. Henning *et al.* (2004, p.7), as well as Creswell (2003, p.182), contend that the qualitative researcher cannot escape the subjective interpretation he / she brings to the analysis of the data. In this study, the researcher is thus concerned with a subjective interpretation of participants' utterances regarding issues of poor learner discipline and the manner in which learner discipline could be managed at school.

3.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding poor learner discipline at school?
- What are the perceptions of learners regarding poor learner discipline at school?

3.5 SAMPLING

Perhaps the most important action in the entire research process is that of sampling (Strydom, 2005, p.94). The reason for sampling in research is to try to understand the population from which the sample is drawn, as, particularly in the case of this research project, it is not practical to include the entire teaching fraternity and body of learners in order to explore the phenomenon of poor learner discipline, as well as ways of maintaining learner discipline at school. In this study, non-probability purposive sampling, including the convenience sampling procedure is used. Purposive sampling aims at achieving more in-depth information from a smaller sample (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p.74). It involves deliberately choosing individuals, groups or institutions for specific purposes so as to find answers to the research questions (Maxwell, 1997, p.87).

Henning *et al.* (2004, p.71) suggest that this method of sampling tries to engage with people considered to be 'desirable participants', based on the researcher's own knowledge of the main focus of the study. Purposive sampling includes participants who possess the most typical attributes of the population, based on the researcher's judgement of their capacity to provide information that can best answer the research questions (McIntyre, 2005, p.105; Neuman, 2006, p.222; Lewin, 2005, p.218; Strydom, 2005, p.202). Non-probability sampling is sufficiently adequate for a study in which the researcher does not intend generalising the findings from the sample selected to that of the larger population (Cohen *et al*. 2007, p.377). In this study, therefore, the findings are not intended to be generalised, as the sample is limited.

Convenience sampling entails selecting participants who are easily accessible and willing to participate in the research process (Teddlie & Yu, 2007, p.77). For this study, it was convenient to select educators and learners from a school for boys in the south of Durban, where the

researcher is employed, in order to gain a deeper insight into issues relating to poor learner discipline. The sample included two focus groups, consisting of four educators (two males and two females) and sixteen male grade seven learners. One of the male educators taught in the grade seven division, whilst the other taught a grade one class. This allowed for a steep chronological perspective in terms of the age cohorts being taught. Further, this led the researcher to consider requesting the participation of two female educators from two similarly varying age groups of learners. Accordingly, one of the female educators hailed from a grade one class, whilst the other was in charge of a grade five class. Thus, issues relating to learner discipline from a wide range of age groups of learners within the school became possible. Moreover, the opportunity to engage with fair gender balance in this focus group now presented itself.

The learner focus group was selected from the grade seven classes. At this school educators tend to be grade specialists, remaining in their grades over many years. Accordingly, all the participants in the educator groups may have taught these focus group learners as they progressed through the grades, which may well have provided them with a broad, chronological perspective of these learners' behaviour. In addition, the views presented by the participants in the learner focus group could have been informed in part by their experiences whilst in the care of several educators across the grades at the school, now represented by the participants in the educator focus group. A gender balance in the learner focus group could not be achieved, as the learner population consisted of boys only.

A further criterion that was considered in the selection of grade seven learners was the researcher's knowledge about the literacy levels of these learners. At the time of data collection, ninety-six percent of learners from the larger population of the school hailed from a community whose mother-tongue was not the language of teaching and learning at the school. As English Second Language learners who had had the benefit of eight years of learning at this school, their communication levels would have deemed to be more desirable for the purposes of the interview. Further, a group made up of mixed ages / grades may have produced a unique dynamic which could have imported undesirable constraints to the verbal interaction within the group. In this regard, Morgan (1988, pp.41-48) cited by Cohen *et al.,* (2007, p.377) emphasises that the

researcher should try to ensure that the participants will be able to discuss the topic and feel comfortable to share their views with others in the group.

3.6   DATA GENERATION

In qualitative research several data generation instruments may be used, the basic ones being interviews, observation, document analysis, as well as visual participation (Creswell, 2009, p.130; Flick, 2006, p.273).

In this study, data was generated through two semi-structured focus group interviews which produced data from participants that provided a deeper insight into the phenomenon of educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline as well as ways of maintaining discipline at school. The interview schedules (see Annexures 4 & 5) that were utilised in the focus group interviews with educators and learners sought descriptive answers to the research questions. The interviews were audio-taped with the permission of the participants. Subsequently, the tape recordings were transcribed for the purpose of data analysis.

According to Morgan (1988, p.9), cited by Cohen *et al*. (2007, p.376), focus groups constitute a form of group interview which is growing in popularity in educational research. There is a reliance on interaction within the group as participants discuss a topic or question supplied by the researcher, at times giving rise to a 'group view' rather than an individual one. Resultantly, data emerges from interaction within the group as was evident in this study.

Cohen *et al*. (2007, p.376) hold the view that focus groups are "contrived settings" bringing together specifically chosen participants "to discuss a particular given theme or topic". They contend that the contrived nature of the focus group is both a strength and weakness, as the group considers a particular issue, which "will yield insights that might not otherwise have been available in a straight-forward interview". Morgan (1988, p.19), cited by Cohen *et al*. (2007, p.376), states that focus groups are time-saving as they can generate a large amount of data within a short space of time. However, he argues that they have a tendency to yield less data than one-to-one interviews with the same number of individuals.

Robson (2002, pp.184-185) indicates that focus group interviews are useful for generating qualitative data quickly on attitudes, values and opinions relating to a particular area of focus, while encouraging participants to air their views. Cohen *et al*. (2007, pp.376-377) list several other advantages of focus group interviews. Among others, they are useful for gathering qualitative data on a particular field of focus quickly (at low cost), encouraging participants to voice their opinions within the groups while empowering participants to speak out, as well as allowing for more in-depth coverage of issues than would be possible through a survey.

Morgan (1988, pp.41-48), in Cohen *et al*. (2007, p.377), points to several issues that researchers may need to consider with regard to focus groups. These include, *inter alia*, deciding on the number of focus groups for a topic, as one group is deemed insufficient; deciding on the size of the group – if the group is too small, "intra group dynamics exert a disproportionate effect", whereas if the group is too large the interview becomes difficult to manage. Moreover, the researcher is required to strike a balance between being overly-directive and "keeping the meeting open-ended but to the point" (Cohen *et al*., 2007, p.377). In this study the researcher feels confident that this balance was maintained.

Cohen *et al*. (2007, p.377) point out some of the drawbacks of focus groups, which include, *inter alia*, the tendency for data generated to be unquantifiable, and the fact that generalisability can be compromised. Furthermore, the data gathered may not be easy to analyse and the information garnered may be less than what is possible to be generated through a survey. In addition, some participants may not participate as a result of the group dynamics, such as status differences among members *e.g.* prefects *vs.* non-prefects. In this study, both the educator focus group (all 'level one' educators), as well as the learner focus group (which consisted of prefects and non-prefects), seemed unaffected by group dynamics.

Further, conflicts may arise as a result of having different opinions. In this study, although male and female educators espoused differing views, these did not result in conflict. Instead, the perspectives elicited gave rise to healthy argument concerning the issue of establishing discipline among learners. An additional drawback of focus groups is that they may discourage inarticulate members from sharing their views, while others may tend to dominate the discussion. In the

research project, this did not seem to be evident. All participants were given an opportunity to share their views without being made to feel uncomfortable, threatened or ridiculed in any way.

3.7   DATA ANALYSIS

Qualitative data analysis "is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data" (De Vos, 2005, p.334). This entails transforming the data by reducing the quantity of raw data, sifting relevant information, identifying significant patterns and developing a framework for conveying the essence of what the data reveals (Flick, 2006, p.104; De Vos, 2005, p.341; Creswell, 2003, p.190; Wilkinson & Birmingham, 2003, p.147).

The process of transcription is a phase of analysis which involves the researcher getting closer to the data. Transcription is an essential step towards interpretation if a technical device such as an audio-tape recorder is used to record data (Flick, 2006, p.288). In this study, the process of qualitative data analysis involved transcribing the audio-taped focus group interviews, and carefully scrutinising the transcripts for the purpose of coding, in order to formulate categories and themes.

Coding is a process of organising the data into small units of text to which meaning is attached (Creswell, 2009, p.186; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p.131; Creswell, 2003, p.192). Open coding is that part of the data analysis process which involves close examination of the data collected, and assigning of codes which are used for the naming, as well as categorising of phenomena (Neuman, 2006, p.461; Corbin & Holt, 2005, p.50; De Vos, 2005, p.340; Henning *et al.*, 2004, p.105). The aim of open coding is "to express data and phenomena in the form of concepts" (Flick, 2006, p.297). It is the first basic step in the analysis of the data to condense the mass of information into categories, which will then inform the rest of the analysis process. The open coding process was utilised to generate descriptions of participants' perceptions of poor learner discipline and ways of maintaining learner discipline at school.

These were categorised into themes and sub themes, which are discussed in detail within the next chapter. The coding process suggested by Tesch (1990, pp.142-145) was followed for the

analysis of the data in this study. The transcripts were read carefully to get a sense of the perceptions of educators and learners regarding issues of poor learner discipline, after which points were written in the margin to highlight certain thoughts. A list of all the topics was made and similar topics were grouped together. The topics were abbreviated into 'codes', which were written next to the relevant section from which they were derived in the text. Descriptive words were given to topics, which were then turned into categories. Related topics were grouped together and labels were assigned to the categories. Different categories were also colour-coded on the transcripts for easy identification. The categories were then arranged according to themes which reflect the major findings. These themes enabled the researcher to make sense of the data and interpret participants' utterances more meaningfully.

3.8   ETHICAL ISSUES

Denzin and Lincoln (2003, pp.89-90) identify three important principles that should be observed when conducting research which uses people as respondents in the focus group interview, *viz.* the need to obtain the informed consent of the participant, to guarantee the right to privacy of the participant, and to ensure that the participant will be protected from harm. Cohen *et al.* (2007, p.52) highlight the importance of obtaining the informed consent of the participant as the "bedrock of ethical procedure", which is informed by the respondent's right to freedom and self-determination. Henning *et al.* (2004, pp.73-74) emphasise that the researcher "remains accountable for the ethical quality of the inquiry". They elucidate the importance of keeping the participants fully informed about the research, and ensuring their right to privacy. The core ethical concern of the researcher, therefore, revolves around the protection of the participant from all manner of harm that may arise in the course of conducting research. Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999, p.66) refer to this as the principle of 'non-maleficence'.

The researcher, at the outset, is required to seek the informed consent of the participant in order to engage in the research. The act of seeking consent hinges on the participant being fully informed with regard to what the research is about. Further, consent to participate in the research is based on the assurance that the participant is free to withdraw, without prejudice to himself / herself, from the process at any time (Cohen *et al.*, 2007, p.53).

All the ethical guidelines outlined above were incorporated into the process of obtaining informed consent from participants by the researcher (see Annexure 3 – copies of informed consent letters to educators and learners). Permission to conduct research at the school was applied for at, and received from, the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (see Annexure 2 – approval of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to conduct research and interview learners and educators at the school).

3.9   CONCLUSION

The focus of this chapter was research design and methodology of the study. In addition, the research paradigm was explained. The qualitative method of inquiry, which was selected to explore the perceptions of educators' and learners' regarding issues of poor learner discipline, was discussed. Furthermore, data generation and data analysis procedures were explained. The sampling technique, which involved purposive convenience sampling, was expounded. Ethical issues were also discussed.

The next chapter will focus on analysis of the data, as well as provide a discussion of findings that have emerged from the research.

CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1   ORIENTATION

This chapter focuses on the interpretation, understanding and explanation of the data emanating from participants' responses to the focus group interview questions, in a manner that is in keeping with the interpretive paradigm. A thematic approach to the discussion of the data is used for both the educator and learner focus group interviews. The responses of both groups are considered together under three themes which emerge from the data. Where appropriate, the use of participants' direct speech will be included to enhance the discussion. All direct quotations from the participants are reflected in the form of italics. Pseudonyms have been allocated to all participants in keeping with ethical considerations with regard to the protection of their identities.

The educators are:-

Mandla	:	male educator in the Foundation phase
Lolly	:	female educator in the Foundation and Intermediate phases
Sagren	:	male educator in the Intermediate and Senior Primary phases
Saro	:	female educator in the Intermediate and Senior Primary phases

The learners (grade 7) are:-

Farouk; Deno; Jabu; Lutho; Vikky; Sam; Mota; Sipho; Morris; Dudu; Siza; Lucas; Nkosi; Musa; Duma and Thabo.

4.1.1   Critical questions

The critical questions posed in this research are:

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding poor learner discipline at school?
- What are the perceptions of learners regarding poor learner discipline at school?

4.1.2   Themes

The data is viewed within the context of three themes relating to learner discipline at school, namely:

- What is poor learner discipline?
- Maintaining learner discipline
- Influence of parents and community

4.2   DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.2.1   Theme: What is poor learner discipline?

In this section, both educators' and learners' perceptions of what constitutes poor discipline in schools are considered. The data reveals overlapping views in this regard. Two educators mentioned more serious offences, whilst the other educators pointed out some of the 'usual' incidents of bad behaviour, such as arrogance and disobedience (which come under discussion in this section, as well as in 4.2.2). However, it was the learners who pointed out examples of a wide variety of forms of ill-discipline, some quite serious in nature that are perpetrated by learners, not only in their school, but also at other schools. Learners, *inter alia,* highlighted the following serious forms of poor learner discipline: stealing, back-chatting educators, fighting, vandalism, disobeying prefects, and ridiculing educators with the use of their mother tongue.

Educators Mandla and Saro spoke about two serious social problems finding their way into schools, exacerbating the incidence of poor learner discipline there. The following excerpts from the data bear reference to what educators and learners perceive as being poor learner discipline:

> Mandla: *In my area – I live at Umlazi – in some schools, children bring, what you call, drugs to school. So some principals, when I talk with my friends who teach in those schools – they tell me about those things that are happening in those schools, I think that's a thing that is very worrying to their schools. Ja, that's a problem they are facing at the moment, especially in the Umlazi schools.*

Mandla spoke about the problem of drug addiction at schools in his residential area of Umlazi, which was causing much concern for educators and principals at those schools. The fact that learners can easily carry drugs into schools points to a collapse of safety and security at those schools. He intimated that principals and staff at affected schools were very worried about this problem that had beset them, and remained nonplussed as to how to react to it. In such contexts where the fear of violence is present it becomes very difficult to establish a culture of teaching and learning.

Zulu, Urbani and Van der Merwe (2004), in defining violence as the application of physical force in an attitude of anger and hostility to abuse, damage, as well as violate other persons (in addition to oneself) and property, maintain that endemic and persistent violence at South African schools has been shown to have a deleterious effect on the culture of teaching and learning. Furthermore, citing McKendrick and Hoffman (1990, pp.24-30), they inform that all forms of violence (including corporal punishment) disrupt, damage, and contradict the generally held common values of people (as individuals and family) and society. Violence perpetrated by learners under the influence of drugs can be extreme in the extent of the damage caused to people and property – hence the state of deep anxiety experienced by principals and staff at the schools mentioned by Mandla. Morrell (1998) contends that in almost all cases, learner-on-learner violence and learner-on-property violence in schools is perpetrated by males enacting their dominant masculinity. In the presence of drugs, this behaviour can be exacerbated.

Saro: *I've had cases of disobedience with stealing – I think that's such a big thing… stealing learners' things and stealing their own parents' money – although it is outside school, the fact that he brought it to school – being so dishonest at the tuck-shop, you know – I found that a very big…*

Musa, Duma and Nkosi (learners) also mentioned incidents of stealing in which they were involved while at school.

Saro's account of one of her learners stealing money at home and bringing it to school to spend at the tuck-shop is also worrying, for it reveals that dishonesty practised at home finds its way into the school – it also shows that poor discipline on the part of learners is not only a matter for the school, solitarily, to be concerned about. Parents also have an imperative role to play in correcting ill-discipline. The fact that this learner was quite comfortable with spending his ill-gotten money at the school tuck-shop also points to a greater problem relating to the quality of values-based learning experiences available to children both at home and in the school. In addition, the errant learner could have learnt this behaviour at home or from within his community.

Saro's use of the word 'disobedience' seems to suggest that she may be trivialising this criminal act of theft. Stealing is not just disobedience, and if learners get away with it at school (where it may be perceived as ordinary disobedience), it could lead to the occurrence of more serious crimes, such as house-breaking, mugging and hijacking. In their accounts, Musa, Duma and Nkosi did not mention any notable consequences as a result of their acts of stealing at school. They did not seem to express any fear of 'getting caught'. The behaviour of boys in this instance reflects the risky behaviour patterns that seem to be expected of them as they shape their hegemonic masculine identities. Their conduct here can also be seen as an act of defiance against authority and societal norms of good behaviour – that the culture of 'boys will be boys' confers on them the power of doing whatever they pleased. Mora (2012), in his study of Latino boys, informs us that masculine behaviours of boys are a result of the "dominant gendered expectations" of their peers, both at school as well as in their communities.

When such patterns of destructive behaviour eventually make their presence felt inside the school, they can cause the culture of teaching and learning to be severely eroded.

Inter alia, the learners had much to say about what they understood poor discipline to be:

> Farouk: *Not paying attention in class and fighting... breaking the school property.*
>
> Nkosi: *Laughing when the teacher is talking.*
>
> Deno: *Err, Sir, even outside the school, children can break windows and, when they are in school they'll be good, but as soon as when they are outside the gate… they are completely different.*
>
> Interviewer: *Why do you think that is so?*
>
> Deno*: Because, Sir, they want to be good in school, Sir, because they know they'll catch it in school, but outside the school their parents...*

Deno's account about learners misbehaving outside school is an alert that parents are failing to build good character in their children. He intimated that some learners feel free to damage property because their parents do not respond adequately to the misdemeanour. Whilst schools may have measures in place to deal with vandalism, some parents clearly ignore the issue and choose to remain silent in the face of the criminal activity on the part of their children, thereby creating a sense of disjuncture between policies practised at school and rules followed at home. In this instance, they may remain silent on the issue as a result of their understanding that 'boys will be boys'. Further, their expectations of boys' behaviour are not the same as for that of girls, leading to and perpetuating boys' beliefs that they may be superior to girls, as their parents do not respond to their vandalism with firmness, thereby giving them the license to do as they wished. In these circumstances, parents unwittingly entrench the "culturally exalted" behaviour of their sons (Connell, 1995). In this case, boys vandalising property out of school, where there is a perceived lack of supervision and control, may feel that their actions confer on them perceptions of power and control in the eyes of their peers.

This also reveals (as in the case of Mandla's account) that there is a need for an effective programme of human values education to be in place, both in the school and in the community. With the implementation of the CAPS document (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement) in 2012 in the Foundation phase (DoE, 2011), the time allocation for the teaching of Life Skills (which includes the teaching of values, morals and character building) has been reduced in favour of teaching Language and Mathematics.

Two learners drew attention to the problem of learners defying the instructions of prefects:

Jabu: *By people throwing garbage on the floor, and when you tell them to pick it up they don't want to listen... and you do it to set an example but in the mean time they don't want to do it.*

Lucas: *When the prefects tell them to do something, they don't listen.*

This is an indication of not only flagrant disrespect for authority, but also a disregard for values and school rules, as littering is prohibited in school.

Keeping the school clean was a value that this school tried to inculcate in learners. It is a credit to this youngster that he understood this and was able to articulate it in the interview. Prefects were tasked with the responsibility of ensuring that those who threw "garbage on the floor" should be instructed to pick it up and place it in the bin. His use of the word 'people' suggests that many learners refrained from following the instructions of prefects at the school. In saying that he wanted the offender to follow his instruction as "an example" for other learners to emulate, he revealed that he understood that there was an educational component in his responsibilities as a perfect. This was a mature position for such a young learner (12 years old) to hold. In this light, schools have the opportunity to build good leadership qualities in young people that have the potential to bring about welcome change in society.

The act of being defiant is a feature in the construction of male identity in boys. It tends to enhance their feelings and notions about superiority over other learners, as well as over school rules. Being defiant in the context of school-based authoritarian practices (such as the

observation of school rules about behaviour) confers on them, in their view, definitions of resilience, strength and domination amongst their peers. We can understand this construct in the account by Jabu and Lucas about the lack of respect for authority and the disobedience of learners at the school.

Vikky and Deno made a pertinent point concerning how the education of several learners can be deleteriously affected by some learners who disrupt lessons in the classroom:

Vikky: *When... in the class Sir, when the teacher is teaching, then you walk around and disturb other children and you ask them to* (sit down)... *Sir, it causes the other children to get disturbed... they, they, don't learn anything.*

Deno: *It's a loss of education. And Sir, if their dream is to... and if they want to study... get a good job where they pay, like, maybe one-comma five million a month...*

Interviewer : *Wow, okay... And they'll be prevented from doing so?*

Deno: *Yes, Sir.*

Both of these learners signaled the incalculable damage that poor learner discipline can wreak on the education of those who desire to be educated. Clearly, these learners, in indicating their disapproval of this type of behaviour, had made the connection between successful learning and success in life. The behaviour of those who were disrupting the lesson conforms to the defiant and attention-getting bullying of boys trying to establish their perceived superior masculine persona over their peers. Further, their 'bravado' in defying the class rules and aggressive nature of their actions may produce a climate in which they remain unchallenged by the other learners who desperately want to get on with their learning – Vikky and Deno did not indicate that they themselves, nor any of the other learners, had objected to the behaviour of the disruptive learners, perhaps out of fear of being attacked by them later during play / lunch-break time or after school.

Attributes of defiance, bullying and attention-getting behaviour are part of the dominant enactments of boys seeking to establish their masculine identities. Their actions may be seen as a performance that mirrors their observations and experiences in a world informed by power and authority being vested in males. Boys who live in contexts informed by patriarchy at home, in the community and at school may choose to act, or perform, in these ways because of their understanding of what their culture expects of them. Reddy (2003, p.7), citing Butler (1990), makes the point that the construction of gender identity may be defined by performances or ways of being seen to be acceptable in society.

Lutho expressed his view of poor discipline as being disobedience and disrespect for the teacher when learners fail to do their homework and then resort to lying to cover up for their irresponsible behaviour. Another learner, Vikky, cited disrespect through the use of offensive language towards a female educator. He added that the perpetrator would not attempt such disrespect with a male teacher for fear of being punished. The female teacher asked the offender to apologise and detained him during the break time.

Both of these learners identified disrespect for educators as being instances of poor learner discipline. Vikky's description of boys disrespecting female educators through the use of foul language can be viewed through the lens of patriarchy, a gendered order in which males exercise power and control over females. Patriarchy has its genesis in a deep-rooted social order informed by sources such as culture, class distinction, national identity and religion, which confer power over males to orchestrate and guarantee the elevation of men, as well as the subordination and subjugation of women in all spheres of life. Connell (1995) refers to this order as the "patriarchal dividend", where benefits accrue to men in terms of honour, prestige and the right to command. In shaping their masculinity, boys can carry this patriarchal power dynamic into the classroom and this can lead to the undesirable consequence of exhibiting disrespect for female educators.

A further and more sinister use of language by misbehaving learners lies in the practice of using their mother tongue to lash out, causing embarrassment to or making fun of (ridiculing) the teacher in the classroom, as revealed in the following encounter:

Lucas:	*…when the teacher says something and you say, 'ya, mpela…' and things like that.*
Interviewer:	*So you speak in Zulu and the teacher does not understand?*
Lucas:	*Ja, but the boys who know, know what you are saying.*
Interviewer:	*Is it something bad?*
Lucas:	*Ja, and they will laugh… and that boy, let's say he's a bully and the teacher asks, 'what was you saying?' and he keeps quiet – they don't want to say.*
Interviewer:	*What do you think of that?*
Lucas:	*Bad behaviour.*
Nkosi:	*No respect.*

Saying offensive things in Zulu to other learners about the teacher was identified by these learners as an example of poor discipline. In this instance, Lucas revealed how a bully uses language as a tool of oppression against an unsuspecting educator because he is aware that the educator did not understand Zulu. This is an example of poor discipline that is hidden from the educator – the learner 'enjoys' a moment of triumph over the educator who remains, to an extent, unaware of the damage being done to his or her character as a result of not understanding the mother tongue of the learners. Further, for this reason, this serious form of poor behaviour may remain unaddressed and unresolved by the educator, thus creating the likelihood that it may easily occur again.

Nkosi identified this demeanour as being disrespectful to the teacher. Resorting to this form of poor learner discipline (disrespect) serves to create unhealthy platforms for teaching and learning to take place. It also reveals how educators in multiracial contexts, who are not conversant with the mother tongue of their learners, may be further pressurised in terms of dealing with poor behaviour.

Learners also intimated how boys tend to be aggressive and violently disposed, when they provided examples of learners being poorly behaved:

Nkosi:	*Carrying weapons to school... I fought in class.*
Thabo:	*Using bad language.*
Musa:	*Fighting and robbing... I broke another boy's scissors because he didn't want to lend me.*
Vusi:	*I broke another boy's leg... we were playing soccer and when I turned around I kicked him* (and broke his leg).
Duma:	*I stole money from a boy... I broke a DVD at home... I tripped a boy and the prefect saw me and he took me to Mr Palan* (pseudonym) *and I got* (a) *hiding.*

To the question, "What do you think causes boys like yourselves to be disobedient (poorly behaved)?" three learners were able to articulate answers that reflected key research arguments that seek to explain the formation of dominant, hegemonic identities in young boys:

Lucas:	*To get attention from the other learners... Sir, when a boy thinks that he is strong and he has the power to do anything, then he does wrong things.*
Duma:	*...the boys are* (badly) *disciplined because other boys they tell them to do the wrong things and the older boys encourage them to do it and not stop it... when the boys are young – when they do something the parents say, 'Ha! He's just a boy', so when they grow up, they think they are the best and the ladies are not strong.*
Musa:	*When your father hits your mother you see that your mother doesn't do anything – then you see that because your father is a boy, your mother is a girl; your father is more powerful.*

Musa must have been terrified at witnessing his mother being beaten by his father. Yet, he tries to formulate some kind of explanation about what happened here. He does not seem unduly shocked by this violent episode. This suggests that violence may be a feature of his father's response in dealing with differences at home. We may surmise that this incident in Musa's home is yet another manifestation of his father exercising dominance over his mother. That his mother

silently accepted the abuse is another indication of the culture of acceptance and tolerance of violence in his home. There seems to be an 'air of normality' about the father's violent character. His candid explanation denotes an understanding within himself that 'this is how life is lived'.

This episode of violence in Musa's home can be viewed as an example of how patriarchy reproduces male dominance cyclically from generation to generation. The culture of disrespect and violence in the home contains the seeds for their repeated performance in other situations, such as at school and in the community, in relationships between males and females.

It appears that Nkosi, Thabo, Musa and Vusi had become 'comfortable' with the option of choosing aggression as a means of attaining redress in situations of disagreement with other boys, in spite of attempts by the school to elevate the teaching of human values as a curriculum focus (Lolly mentioned that she had been teaching values to her grade 1 learners on a daily basis, in keeping with a mandate from the office).

Yet, many learners had reported that they were being beaten by male educators. Additionally, some female educators were sending their poorly disciplined learners for punishment at the hands of male educators.

The reproduction of male dominance is not the reserve of males only. Female educators at school are complicit in this when they send their poorly behaved learners to male educators in order that 'suitable punishment' may be meted out to them. Whilst in most circumstances females remain the victims of patriarchal male domination, in this circumstance they collude with males to uphold this undesirable social stigma. In so doing, they relinquish their agency to effectively deal with poor learner discipline; this may be viewed as weakness on the part of learners.

Musa alerts us to the fact that violence, as a means of addressing differences between and amongst people, was firmly in place in his home (he witnessed his mother being beaten by his father). He alluded to how this seemed acceptable to him and his family, in stating that 'your father is a boy, your mother is a girl; your father is more powerful'.

This leads us to understand that boys may be conditioned towards accepting the adoption of violent strategies to resolve problems since they continually experience this scenario being played out in their homes, as well as in their school.

Duma added to this mindset in mentioning that his parents would allow (and forgive) the acts of poor discipline on the part of their sons simply because they were boys.

Frosh, Phoenix and Pattman (2002, p.75) indicate that the literature on masculinity reveals that boys and men subscribe to a dominant or supreme form of masculine identity so that they can be seen as being 'acceptably' male, with all its socially constructed connotations of power, toughness and heterosexuality. Additionally, Connell (1995) explains that a "culturally exalted" form of masculinity exists in society at any given time which is hegemonic in character (associated with supremacy, or the ruling class). This link with the wider culture legitimises and entrenches a dominant masculinity in boys.

Skelton (2001) avers that both primary and secondary schools promote the construction of hegemonic male identities in boys; schools determine how boys are socialised into a disciplined society – they are regularly beaten into submission (Swain, 2005).

Further, Morrell (1998) suggests that schools, due to the manner in which they are organised, remain responsible for creating and sustaining gender inequalities that both support, as well as encourage violent attitudes in males. Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.104) similarly posit that schools reflect and condone aggressive masculinity, with parents tacitly supporting such regimes through tolerance and, at times, active encouragement. Saro recalled an incident with a parent who, when called to school to address the impropriety of her son, promptly advised her to "give him" (a hiding).

I also recall a similar incident when, in 2010, a parent was called to school after his son had committed several offences relating to the disruption of lessons. Teachers complained that it was difficult for them to meet their teaching objectives in the midst of the incessant disruptive tendencies of this particular grade six learner. The boy's father, after hearing about his son's

behaviour, calmly left the office, removed his belt and began striking his child with it, using extreme force. I had to quickly rush out of the office to restrain him from further harming his child.

Perhaps these incidents are indicative of a revelation as to why these boys were misbehaving in class, in that, based on the above-mentioned example, there exists a direct relationship between the father's dominant masculinity and his son's defiant behaviour at school. The aggressive and disruptive tendencies at school on the part of the aforementioned learner could be seen as a reproduction of his father's dominance and aggression at home. Gershoff (2002, pp.539-579) indicates that many researchers point to a link between physical punishment and increased anti-social behaviour. Several parents who reported to my office from time to time when their children had committed offences also believed, *inter alia*, that:

- The school must take on the 'responsibility' of caning their children in order to correct their erroneous behaviour;
- They saw nothing wrong in caning, as they themselves had been brought up in that way;
- Caning is part of caring for children.

Parents had held this position even in the knowledge that corporal punishment had been outlawed in schools (DoE, 1996). They seemed resolute in their view despite my efforts to convince them, upon occasion at school parent meetings, that the application of corporal punishment violated the rights of children and perpetuated the misconception that violence could be used as a means of correcting poor learner discipline, both at home, at school and in the broader community.

Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.104) emphasise that the vast majority of perpetrators of violent acts of aggression and unruly behaviour in schools are male learners. The postulation that 'violence begets violence' through the display of hegemonic masculinities explains the reasons that contribute to the present breakdown in order and discipline within schools.

However, Morrell (1998) signals a ray of hope here by indicating that, whilst schools produce gender inequalities, they nonetheless have the ability to change oppressive gender practices.

A lack of discipline in schools, as suggested by the learners and educators in this study, can be viewed as a significant factor in explaining the low standard of academic achievement obtained by South African learners, as compared with statistics from other countries. The 2006 PIRLS (Progress in Reading and Literacy Skills) international survey determined that South Africa was placed last out of 40 participating countries (Prinsloo, 2008).

In concluding this section, it is suffice to say that the data gathered from interviews with both educators and learners revealed overlaps with regard to their perceptions of what constitutes poor discipline. It was significant (to the researcher) that learners appeared so cognizant of the problems relating to poor learner discipline at schools, for it reveals that they, as learners, are also concerned about this issue and, consequently, may want to be part of the solution.

4.2.2   Theme: Maintaining learner discipline

This section will focus on how educators maintain learner discipline under two categories, namely:

- Gendered management of poor learner discipline;
- Promoting good learner discipline.

4.2.2.1 *Gendered management of poor discipline*

It would seem that male and female educators have differing perceptions on maintaining discipline within their classrooms, with some female educators who participated in the study believing that their male colleagues wielded better control. The female educators who took the position that male educators had better management of poor learner discipline did so in the knowledge that male educators displayed a dominant masculinity in their approach which was authoritarian in nature, and often included the defiant, illegal use of corporal punishment. In this

way, the study reveals that some female educators, by virtue of their inclination towards submissive femininities, are complicit in reproducing a status quo that invariably supports and entrenches authoritarian patriarchal regimes at school sites.

Lolly: *…I find I really can't handle them sometimes.*
Saro: *…if Barry is there, they keep quiet. So, it could be that when a male teacher is there, they are quiet.*

Lolly's experience with a male learner in her class reflects how female educators may often remain disadvantaged by gendered perceptions of keeping discipline.

Lolly, who also teaches in the Intermediate phase, revealed that she just could not handle the grade 4 learners. She mentioned the case of a learner who was arrogant and disrespectful, refusing to take instructions from her, opting instead to just smirk and laugh at her when she had threatened to report him to a male educator. She complained that the grade 4 learners resorted to talking amongst themselves while she was teaching them.

The assumption that male learners are problematic in terms of their poor behaviour is linked to educators' construction of masculinity that is biologically based. It includes the understanding that there exists a common core personality and character that is shared by all boys (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998). However, the view that gender identity is biologically determined is challenged by researchers, who argue that the construction of gender identity is influenced and shaped by extrinsic social factors such as class distinction, ethnicity, culture and religion (Morrell, 1998; Reddy, 2003). Consequently, they posit that change in the formation of gender identity is possible when positive transformation is effected in the social environment of people. Citing Foucault (1981), Reddy (2003) suggests that the definition of one's gender is a "shifting, temporary construction". (Morrell, 1998) indicates that while schools promote and perpetuate aggressive dominant masculinities, they nevertheless possess the capacity to bring about welcome change as they consider ways of being that are no longer autocratic, reflecting instead respect, nurturing, tolerance and democratic values.

Saro remarked that boys tend to be disobedient with female educators but obedient to male educators. Lolly agreed that this was so with most of her classes. However, this view was countered by Sagren, who pointed out that there were some female educators at school who were experiencing success with respect to discipline in their classes. Mandla remarked that this success was probably related to those female educators having accumulated many years of teaching experience. Sagren disagreed with this contention, quoting the names of two other female educators who, in his opinion, had similar teaching experience to the two female participants and yet did not encounter any palpable discipline problems. One of the educators he referred to here is a Head of Department with 18 years of teaching experience within the Intermediate and Senior Primary phases. Mandla most likely assumed that, as a figure of authority, she was therefore better able to assert herself more successfully with the learners. He was probably thinking about this when he made the comment about experience (*viz.* the fact that she was an HoD). As principal, I was aware that this particular Head of Department is an educator who tends to cultivate a relationship of trust with her charges and in so doing, earns their respect.

However, in the learner group interview, some boys mentioned that they do disrespect female teachers:

> Vikky: *I disrespected a female teacher because I know that male teachers can...* (His hand gesture indicated that male educators do inflict corporal punishment.)

Vikky acknowledged that while he disrespected a female educator, he would not attempt this with a male educator, because he feared the perceived authority of male educators who can strike back (he believed they would resort to corporal punishment). It would seem that male educators tend to command 'respect' or obedience from learners because of the fear they instill in learners through the use of corporal punishment.

Male educators, in so doing, may be inadvertently contributing to an escalation of poor discipline in schools – learners may see this male response to correction as legitimising aggression and the

instillation of fear in other people through violence. Further, this behaviour of male educators may result in learners being disrespectful to female educators (in the knowledge that female educators tend not to resort to corporal punishment). Walkerdine (1988) asserts that the perceived power relations that underpin the social construction of male and female gender groups lead to boys establishing themselves as members of the more powerful male group; this could occur at home or in the primary school, where the person in charge of them on a day-to-day basis is usually female.

Saro argued that 'good discipline' should not be construed as having learners just sitting quietly and getting on with their work – alluding to the manner in which learners in Sagren's classes relate to him. She emphasised that "productive noise", which emanates from learners 'buzzing' with ideas, should never be construed as learners behaving poorly. In this instance, Saro, as a female educator, was questioning the appropriateness of this male view of what constituted good behaviour in learners. Whilst male educators entrenched stern / strict control over their learners, female educators opted for the promotion of a more educationally sound learning environment in which learners could feel free to express themselves. Saro firmly challenged the view of the male educator regarding the attainment of good, wholesome discipline and control amongst learners.

Moreover, she made an important distinction here, namely, that educators should differentiate between a 'busy noise' and a disruptive, 'noisy noise'. The male educator was being challenged to make a distinction between classes that were just being kept quiet (not necessarily good discipline), and classes being 'abuzz' with learning, irrespective of the form in which this learning took place, even to the extent that a busy atmosphere prevailed in which there was movement of learners and healthy discussion, as well as sharing of ideas. The observation that some educators (including female educators) were keeping their classes quiet should not necessarily be interpreted as being 'good discipline'. Saro reiterated the point that the particular boy, whom Lolly had remarked on, was rude, arrogant, disrespectful and disobedient. Therefore, the teacher should not be presumed as being ineffective in terms of sustaining good class discipline in this instance.

This development in the interview was pertinent. Male educators may be of the view that a military style of discipline is desirable, leading to controlled learning environments in which teaching and learning may well take on a regimented air. This type of control may lead to a classroom environment in which learners may feel discouraged, put down, uncomfortable and rebellious. It is possible that a condition is being created by male educators that could lead to poor discipline in learners when they (male educators) are not present. Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.104) contend that schools lean toward being organised in a manner that condones aggressive masculinity. Morrell (1998, p.219), citing Mac an Ghaill (1994), avers that "hegemonic masculinity is entrenched and enacted in school".

This poor discipline may rear its unwelcome head in the presence of female educators who do not envisage an environment of tight control over learners as being altogether correct or desirable for learning to take place, as their gender identity may be shaped by dominant feminine notions such as caring, nurturing, tolerating, forgiving and understanding.

Female educators may then be seen as having to bear the consequences of poor attitudes toward discipline amongst learners who hail from the classrooms of their male colleagues. Learners may assume this different form of maintaining discipline to be a sign of weakness on the part of female educators, which in turn, may result in a lack of respect for these educators. Salisbury and Jackson (1996, p.110) contend that authoritarian styles of school organisation and management can produce aggressive behaviour amongst male learners.

Additionally, female educators may be sacrificing their own agency to be able to exercise control over learners when they choose to let male educators handle their disciplinary problems with misbehaving learners. One of the learners, *viz*. Sam, describing an incident of his misbehaviour in a female educator's class, recounted how she had called for a male educator to address his wrongdoing. The male educator's method of resolving this problem was to give him 'a hiding'.

The female educator, by resorting to this line of action, clearly underestimated her own ability (in the eyes of the male learners) to maintain control and to efficiently discipline the learner. In this instance, it implies that she had renounced her right to handle learner misbehaviour by

relying on a male educator to do this for her, thereby disempowering herself and alerting learners to the notion of male superiority. This admission of weakness on her part forces learners to respond to more aggressive punitive measures from male educators in comparison to the verbal measures often adopted by female educators (talking, reasoning, negotiating, advising, instructing, reprimanding, *etc.*). Disempowering herself in this way reinforces the gender stereotype that female educators are unable to maintain good discipline in their classrooms. Furthermore, it reveals how women themselves can be complicit in constructing and upholding this dismal mindset in schools.

In resorting to physical punishment as a means of keeping discipline, both on the part of female educators (by sending the errant learners to male educators such that they might 'deal with them'), as well as male educators (who use aggression as a tool to preserve discipline), educators do so in the knowledge that they are in breach of the law that prohibits corporal punishment (DoE, 1996).

It may well be the case that they feel compelled to find a 'quick fix' solution to problems of learner discipline by turning to corporal punishment as a last resort, when all other measures fail, so that they can get on with their main purpose of educating learners. This is understandable, given the dearth of support for educators in terms of the withdrawal of counselling services to schools. What is more, educators may feel constrained as a result of their increasingly heavy workloads and high demands placed on them to produce good results within the allocated time frames. Further to this point, educators are hard-pressed to attend to the fulfillment of the seven roles and competences expected of them, which include academic, managerial and pastoral roles (South African Qualifications Authority, 2001). In addition, as outlined by Saro (educator), when parents are called to attend to their ill-disciplined children at school, they sometimes pass on the responsibility to the educators to deal with the problem by telling them to 'hit' the offenders.

However, the use of corporal punishment by educators, even in these circumstances contributes to the escalation of violence in schools. This may set the stage for an unwelcome development in which learners then proceed to role-model this behaviour at school and within the broader community (as youngsters, as well as later on in life as adults). Lloyd and Duveen (1992, p.27)

hold the view that children born into a particular society construct particular social identities that are representative of significant groups in that society. Porteus *et al*. (2011, p.8) draw attention to growing international research, the evidence of which suggests a strong correlation between corporal punishment and interpersonal violence within communities in a society, and that in order to decrease social violence, corporal punishment in schools should be prohibited.

Many learners attested to the prevalence of the use of corporal punishment as a means of correcting poor discipline both at school and at home. They also identified the instruments that were used to apply the punishment:

> Mota: *…Mr Ali* (pseudonym for a member of the school management team) *gave me a hiding, Sir… he slapped me, Sir… he hit me here… on the shoulder… he hit me with a stick.*
>
> Sipho: *My granny gave me a hiding – with a school belt… she was just trying to make me well-behaved.*

The following account by Deno (who had been punished by his parent for a misdemeanour) indicates the futility, as well as the damaging consequences of using corporal punishment as a means of correcting poor learner discipline:

> Deno: *Sometimes it* (hiding) *just makes you more angry… You start crying. It makes you wanna' be a… a foolish person… and you want to see what your parents will say and you wait until they say sorry to you. That's why you do all the naughty stuff. Until they forgive you and then you stop… If they don't forgive you, then you say, I'm gonna' show them who I am, and you carry on…*

Deno hated being given a hiding from his parents. In his anger, he just wanted to 'show them who I am' and continued to do more of 'the naughty stuff', while waiting for them to apologise. At this point he craved forgiveness and a demonstration of love from his parents, intimating that the use of corporal punishment may result in more sinister and deep-rooted outcomes, such as a

breakdown in relationships between parents and children, as well as between educators and learners. He believed, rightly so, that the infliction of pain on children was unwarranted and not a suitable recourse in addressing poor discipline. He argued, later on in the interview, for parents to use alternative methods for admonishment instead of corporal punishment – suggesting that parents should rather withdraw privileges from the offending child:

> Deno: *Sir, the child... I don't think they deserve to catch hiding Sir. It's like better if you get grounded... like no TV or no food... no no, I don't think no food but you must get grounded. I think that's the way... it's better that way...instead of catching hiding Sir.*

Other learners (*e.g.* Mota, Dudu, Lutho) also recounted incidents when they had received physical punishment at the hands of male educators when they had displayed aggressive behaviour (fighting, bullying and generally interfering with other learners) at school. In this way, male educators further add to the problem of disempowering female educators who, as a result, tend to command less respect from (male) learners as they try to establish control through the approach of reasoning and negotiating with learners. This could (in the case of learners), be the breeding ground for male hegemony and violence against, as well as disrespect for, females in general. It appears that schools may be legitimising violence by means of their teaching methods, which may be impacting the high crime rate in the community. Male educators, who resort to corporal punishment as a method of disciplining learners, may unknowingly be entrenching or contributing to poor discipline amongst learners in schools.

It is regrettable that, after a decade since a law had been passed banning the use of corporal punishment in South African schools (DoE, 1996), it is still being widely used as a 'weapon' against children when they 'do something naughty'. Children at numerous schools and homes continue to be subjected to this reign of terror. If not curtailed, the continued use of corporal punishment on learners could result in them becoming accustomed to the use of violence and other forms of aggression to resolve problems. This portends dire consequences for themselves and society in general.

On the question of whether there were key differences between the misbehaviour of boys and that of girls, Sagren felt that, as girls tend to mature faster than boys, their behaviour in class appears to be better (than that of boys). In his experience, girls did not resort to 'irritating' and 'petty stuff' (this educator had previously taught in a co-educational school before transferring to the present 'boys only' school). Sagren added that, perhaps, boys are more inclined towards misbehaviour because of their physical capacity to do so – being physically stronger could be a factor that predisposes them towards aggression. Girls, on the other hand, may shy away from any altercation which may result in physical aggression perhaps as a result of not being suitably equipped physically to defend themselves as boys do. This may influence their behaviour in terms of not being openly aggressive in the classroom as well as out in the playing field.

Although Lolly agreed that girls do mature quicker than boys, both she and Saro challenged the viewpoint that girls are better behaved than boys, intimating that girls 'nowadays' have a penchant to be more like 'tomboys', getting up to mischief whenever they could. They felt that there are no major differences in the misbehaviour of boys and girls. This stance questions the 'nature versus nurture' debate and challenges the stereotypical notions of 'boys behaving badly' and 'boys will be boys' due to biological reasons, which points to the social construction of a gendered notion that boys are made of 'rats and snails and puppy dogs' tails', while girls are made of 'sugar and spice and all things nice'. Differences in gender roles involve power relations in which 'masculine' activities are given a higher status compared to 'feminine' activities (Reddy, 2010).

On the issue of whether there are key differences between the behaviour of boys and that of girls, opinions were equally split between the male and female educators. Both female educators believed there were no significant differences between the two genders in terms of their behaviour.

However, all in the group felt that girls were not raised in the same manner as boys by their parents:

Saro: *Parents are hard on girls... They are more protective of girls; from my experience, I felt that the males had more freedom to do things than girls – and we were always told, you know, 'Come this side!', 'Don't do that!'*

Lolly: *Sometimes, when boys are being naughty they say, 'Boys will be boys' – but if the girls were to do that, they would say, 'It's disgraceful!'*

In this regard, Bhana (2009) contends that the notion of 'boys will be boys' creates the impression that boys are naturally problematic. It is an assumption based on biological stereotypes that brand all boys as naughty, aggressive, and purveyors of poor behaviour.

Sagren: *Boys can 'get away' with doing terrible things – a girl just has to do one thing and she is reprimanded.*

Because of the power relations inherent in constructions of gender differences, masculinity is more precarious and therefore more defended than femininity (Reddy, 2010).

The experiences of the educators on this matter elucidated different approaches in terms of how male and female children are raised in the community. Of particular note is the observation that boys are given greater freedom by parents to do as they wish, without being subjected to the same stringent, restrictive rules that which girls are expected to abide by. This may point to why boys have a propensity towards misbehaving in school, as their expectations of freedom to act as they please seem to be firmly rooted in their rearing – parents, by allowing boys to do whatever they may want to do, might be propelling their sons toward a life at odds with the broader behavioural expectations of schools and other institutions. This gendered manner of raising boys may be a key factor in the challenges currently besetting schools (and the greater community), in terms of poor behaviour stemming from male learners, as well as adult males. Foster, Kimmel and Skelton (2001) contend that if boys' bad behaviour is accepted as natural and unchangeable, it eliminates the possibility of effecting change and retains unequal power relations within society, which serve to legitimise and promote hegemonic masculine power.

4.2.2.2 *Promoting good learner discipline*

The data reveals differences in the perceptions of educators with regard to 'appropriate' techniques of maintaining discipline. While most educators agreed that positive reinforcement works well, one male educator expressed the view that a firm, but loving and caring demeanour contributes to better learner discipline and class control. A female educator firmly attested to the belief that unless learners are kept busy, behaviour problems are bound to occur:

> Saro: *I think when the children are not busy they tend to interfere with one another a lot, fight, and tease...*

Saro espoused the view that she needed to keep the boys in her class occupied, and feared that if they were left unattended, they would get up to mischief. She evidently supports the notions that 'idleness is the devil's workshop' and that 'when the cat is away the mice will play'.

> Lolly: *...You've got to keep praising them, even just stars in their books, and stickers, and now I've bought them Easter eggs; so, they are to learn their words, but at the end – I try to make it up so that every child ends up getting something. So, with the discipline – they know they must be good. Somehow, even though you may say that a child's only* (said with emphasis) *going to be good if they know they will be rewarded – you know, they are not going to behave if they're not rewarded....*

Lolly revealed that she uses positive reinforcement and rules in her class. This educator relied heavily on positive reinforcement through extrinsic motivation such as praise and rewards for good behaviour in a bid to maintain discipline, as well as to spur learners on to better achievement in her classroom. Nonetheless, she acknowledged that this may not always be the best practice to adopt. Whilst revealing that she often rewards the children for good behaviour with stars in their books or by lavishing them with sweets or Easter eggs, she questioned the value of providing such rewards, intimating that the practice may lead to unhealthy attitudes in

the child (*i.e.* the child should not always expect to be rewarded for good behaviour). However, she concludes that children should understand that being obedient 'pays off' in the end. This educator also made the vital point that establishing a routine in the grade one class also led to positive developments in respect of the attainment of good behaviour amongst learners.

> Mandla: *I agree – even in my class, when I praise my boys they behave; if I don't praise them, they are a bit naughty; when I praise them, ja, they behave…*

Mandla's outlook concurred with that of Lolly. He pointed out that praising the boys in his class works successfully for him, as they visibly respond better to positive ways of maintaining discipline. He said that in the absence of praise, they tended to be naughty. Saro agreed with the viewpoint that praising learners for the completion of 'good work', or for demonstrating apposite behaviour, produces positive outcomes in children.

All the educators agreed that providing rewards may eventually produce the type of adults who would only work well if they expect to be rewarded. In the absence of a reward, however, there might be a lack of passion and dedication in their work. Although, whilst holding this position, they concurred in their view that it is acceptable and necessary to provide young children with rewards since such an approach led to feelings of affirmation in them – their teachers' satisfaction with them served to propel them towards the prospect of good achievement and acceptable behaviour in class. This position, they agreed, was subject to the understanding that the rewarding of good behaviour ought to be gradually curtailed as the child matures in higher grades; their reward should come from the experience of self-satisfaction on having achieved success, as well as for displaying good conduct, since intrinsic motivation is far more beneficial than extrinsic motivation.

> Sagren: *Discipline, with me – I think, you gotta' be firm with your learners, but you've also got to be a parent as well, and although you have a firm hand, you've got to have the parental love as well – and it must come through; the boys must be able to see it – must be able*

> *to see that you care for them. More than anybody else in school, they must know that when they are in trouble, they can run to you.*

Lolly: *Yes!*

Sagren: *No matter what they've done or how deep in trouble they are – they must know that they can run to you – you are the first person they must run to. Secondly, er... they must know you 'mean business' when you're in the class – they must see you as that person who is serious in the classroom. When you are teaching, they must know it's time to "listen to my teacher" – because, er... often enough when boys do misbehave, I will just look* (at them) *and say nothing else. They must know that I know that they've done something wrong...*

Sagren, in maintaining that he needed to be a firm disciplinarian with his learners, also made the cogent point that a teacher, at the same time, needs to be a loving parent-figure to the learners. Learners, then, should be able to see that their teacher really cares for them, perhaps 'more than anybody else in the school', regardless of what misdemeanour they may have been involved in.

There is a danger here, in that learners in his care might become comfortable with misbehaviour, which, in turn, could lead to conflict in their relationships with other educators who may be intolerant of poor learner discipline. Learners could become confused about how different educators handle misbehaviour, and this could result in further rebelliousness. Perhaps if all educators in the school practised the same policy in terms of how to cope with poor learner conduct, then maintaining a decent code of discipline at school would be less demanding. Clearly, this was not in place at this specific school.

Sagren mentioned further that he had developed a style of teaching where particular mannerisms or body language, appropriately applied (such as a silent stare), can convey a required message; in this case, that he 'means business' and that he *knows* that they (learners) have done something wrong. Just applying 'the look' was sufficient for him to establish order amongst his charges. Sagren's ability to wield such power in disciplining his learners could be linked to what Connell

(1995) identifies as hegemonic masculinity – a socially constructed notion of male dominance and superiority.

Saro agreed that Sagren's approach to sustaining discipline was far better than that of shouting, conjecturing that, "when you're screaming and going mad in the class, they look at you like this" (she demonstrated by putting on a confused, grimaced look on her face) – suggesting that they thought that there was something amiss with the teacher. Mandla and Sagren agreed, laughing with the others. Sagren added that, at that moment, the teacher became 'just like one of them', implying that this simply added to the noise and chaos in the classroom:

> Sagren: *When you're screaming, it's actually going there... it's like you're... just like them.*

This led to a discussion that educators should rather endeavour to build trust between the learners and themselves. Sagren made the point that there must be 'give and take' – there should be times when the educator can be humorous, just as a good 'parent' would relate to his / her children, with Saro adding that, "You must let them be children, too", signifying a general understanding in the group that effective control in the classroom had less to do with educators having stern, autocratic measures in place and more to do with letting 'children be children' in an atmosphere of trust and understanding.

Lolly recounted how a particular learner, who was 'not usually naughty', had jumped over his desk so that he could be first in the line when a 'pretty' student teacher entered the classroom – she had given the class an instruction to get into position to lead out, and he wanted to impress her with his promptness. When his teacher (Lolly) looked at him firmly to show her disapproval of his behaviour, he immediately started to cry. She explained that he became sad by the fact that he had let his teacher down (in the presence of the student teacher), and this had resulted in him crying as he could not accept the look of disappointment on his teacher's face.

The educators agreed that it was important to establish a culture of respect in the classroom, as a more efficient means of establishing and maintaining order, so that effective teaching and learning could be promoted.

This was a high point in the interview. It was apparent that these educators were coping with misbehaviour amongst learners in ways that led to the strengthening of the affirming relationship they sought to establish between themselves and the learners. It was significant that an atmosphere of 'love and caring' in the classroom was beginning to produce worthy outcomes, where children did not want to disappoint their teacher.

Mandla, likewise, commented that while he was 'firm' (stern / strict) with his learners, he also sensed that he was 'loved' by them. He continued that he also avoided shouting (raising his voice / screaming) 'all the time', and that his learners understood that there are times when they had to listen to him when he spoke to them. His learners understood that 'when Sir is saying something, he doesn't want *this*' (*e.g.* noise; talking; inattention; disruptive behaviour).

Saro added that telling children stories helped to maintain order. At this point she explained to the researcher (who was also the principal of the school) that this happened 'not all the time, Sir'. This comment alluded to an inherent weakness and limitation in the methodology, in that the participant became guarded or cautious in what she was saying, as she may have felt 'threatened' by suggesting that she was using teaching time to 'tell stories' – hence, her explanation.

At this stage, the researcher pointed out that, whilst many responses to the question "Which methods of maintaining discipline have worked best?" might overlap with the previous question ("What do you do to maintain discipline in the school and classroom?"), a distinction was now being made as to which method/s worked better than others.

In response to the question, "Which methods of maintaining discipline have worked best?" participants shared the following views:-

Saro articulated how detention of learners during the breaks (tea break / lunch break) had worked to her advantage. Learners tried to avoid serving detention by moderating their in-class behaviour. Being with friends and having fun during the breaks was an important occasion for them. The withdrawal of this privilege had worked for her. She added that these learners also felt embarrassed as other learners (including those from other classes) saw them being detained. They felt 'exposed' as others recognised that they had displayed poor behaviour. The pressure on these learners to abide by class rules and be obedient to the teacher was keenly felt.

Like Saro, Lolly also resorted to embarrassment and isolation of disruptive learners as a means of disciplining them:

> Lolly: *One of the things that I do, if we, er... are having like a discussion you know, in the mornings... sitting on the carpet and if – I know, many times, you find the same lot of children that disrupt, you know, that push the other boys, or disturb the other boys, er... Or disturb the whole class, by doing such – you ask them just to get up and stand in the corner – they're still included in the lesson, but now, they're an 'outcast' because 'you spoilt it for all of us' – so you will stand there in the corner you know... They're still participating in the lesson – they're still listening to what I'm saying, but now, they're not part of 'us'; they are 'out' – they're standing there – and I don't agree in sending the child outside, because he's missing out on the lesson. It actually does more harm to the teacher because you're not covering up on your content – but just putting them aside, they actually feel embarrassed, but now they're not part of the group and they're standing aside; only when you behave then you will come back.*

Lolly explained how removing disruptive learners temporarily from a discussion group and letting them stand in the corner of the classroom appeared to work effectively for her, as the learners being disciplined were still kept in the classroom and were thus allowed to participate in

the discussion, all the while feeling embarrassed by their isolation from the main group. She explained further, that if there was an improvement in their behaviour during the lesson, they would be drawn back into the group. Thus, it became the learner's own decision to effect changes to his errant behaviour, so that he could yet again become part of the main group. She further reiterated that this method was better than sending the offending learner/s to stand outside, as those learners would then have been denied access to teaching and learning, creating more demands on the teacher to do a catch-up lesson with them at some other time.

This tactic of keeping order in the classroom without omitting the errant learner from the lesson is in keeping with wholesome values that do not exclude learners from learning. Clearly, this approach to maintaining discipline is in tandem with the principles of Inclusive Education (DoE, Education White Paper 6) as it reflects a caring, inclusive attitude towards all learners in the class on the part of the educator. It would seem that while disruptive learners are not denied the right to teaching and learning, they are inadvertently being made aware that together with rights go responsibilities, and that they must respect the rights of other learners as well.

On the other hand, Saro tried an unconventional method of maintaining discipline which resulted in a 'win-win' situation for both learner and educator, as evinced in the following excerpt from the data:

> Saro: *Even I've tried that one, putting them in another class with, er, senior boys; that worked. It worked, because in another class we put them in for a few days... When they came back, they are – you know...* (educator beams). *That new boy – he had all A's for all his tests! So it worked!*

Saro explained how, when other disciplinary measures repeatedly proved fruitless, temporarily demoting the learner to a lower grade (with permission from the office and with the cooperation of the lower grade teacher), had proved successful for her. When the affected learner returned to his former class, his behaviour had evidently changed for the better, and his academic performance began to improve by leaps and bounds as he scored 'A' credits in all his tests. This

method of maintaining discipline was embarked upon as a last resort (when all other measures had failed), in the understanding that it was only a temporary measure. In this instance, 'demotion' was felt intensely by the learner, who, at the time when it was effected, might have perceived the move to be a permanent one. Hence, upon his pardon and return to his former class, his attitude changed for the better.

However, the educator had reservations about this extreme method of maintaining discipline, since it was 'not legal' and could incur the wrath of parents.

Although the technique Saro described produced positive results in this particular instance, it could possibly lead to undesirable consequences for other learners, who might respond in negative ways (anxiety, depression, more accentuated rebelliousness and aggression, *etc*.). Such an option, therefore, may demand more careful consideration prior to it being implemented as a likely solution.

Mandla shared his experience of having successfully attaining appropriate learner discipline in his class. He reported that, in instructing disruptive learners to face the chalkboard, it helped to bring about order, and in so doing, worked for him as learners 'don't like to do that'. Saro added to the argument that Lolly had raised – that sending badly behaved learners to stand outside the classroom was not necessarily a good solution. When she (Saro) had resorted to this form of discipline, her learners (senior boys) were 'having a ball, joining with the boys from other classes'. Saro's point (that sending the offending learners out of the class only worsened the situation) added another dimension to the problem of poor discipline – learners may resort to disruptive behaviour as a means of 'escape' from the classroom, so as to be 'free' and join with other ill-disciplined learners in order 'to have fun' outside.

It became clear that educators, by and large, were being greatly challenged with the problem of coping with disruptive learners, particularly in the senior classes. The educators in the group generally felt that isolating poorly-behaved learners from the main group as a strategy could be effective, so long as it was a temporary measure and did not exclude the learner from the lesson. Sagren tended to stay out of this discussion as he had previously intimated that he, whilst being a

'good parent' was also a 'firm disciplinarian' – he rarely felt the need to 'expel' learners from the classroom.

From the above it seems as if only female educators identified the caring and nurturing route as a way of preventing poor learner behaviour, rather than choosing stringent punitive methods.

4.2.3   Theme: Influence of parents and community

Whilst school culture can be seen to be producing and reproducing dominant masculine gender identities through a rigid and authoritarian operational manner, there are, however, other significant influences that do likewise. These include the home and community contexts within which learners find themselves. As pointed out in 4.2.2.1, social contexts such as ethnicity, culture, tradition, sport and religion also play a substantial role in seeding the construction of dominant masculinities in learners. Parents, by the attitudes they may hold, are often seen by educators as being non-cooperative in terms of resolving issues linked to poor learner discipline.

The educators expressed a strong desire for greater cooperation between parents and themselves in dealing with issues of poor learner discipline. They bemoaned the present scenario in which they felt abandoned by parents when their sons had committed acts of wrongdoing at school. Some even attested to situations in which they realised that it was becoming increasingly futile to call parents to school to address the misdemeanour of their children, as the parents tended to side with their children and felt that their children were being victimised. In response to the question about what they thought about the role that parents play in upholding school discipline, they expressed, *inter alia*, the following views:

> Lolly: *I think, with parents, that's where it all stems from. I know, when I was at school, you wouldn't dare not doing your homework, or do something wrong, because, you know, it's going to get back home. You get punished, reprimanded, you know. If parents bring up their children to respect their teacher then there is much better parent and teacher understanding, and if there's lots of creative*

involvement, then, together, we can discuss the child's behaviour.
It's a partnership – so that's a parent's role.

In pointing out her belief that parents are responsible for instilling respect for educators in their children, Lolly may be understood as blaming parents for the lack of good manners that she finds vested in some learners. Saro later related her experience with parents who felt that the responsibility to teach good behaviour lies primarily with the educator. She posited that parents tend to blame the school for their children's' misbehaviour. Some parents may take this position in order to avoid embarrassment, not wanting to be seen as being weak parents.

Apparently, educators and parents alike miss a crucial understanding that they are equally, as well as mutually, responsible for inculcating wholesome values which inform good discipline in children. Research underscores the fact that boys' masculinities are constructed in social interactions not only experienced at schools, but also, tellingly, in the social structures of their homes and the wider community (Frosh *et al.,* 2002, p.75).

Saro: *However, some parents are involved, but they really mess up the*
children's life. I feel – the stage we're going through now – I feel
that parents are 'heavy' to deal with.

Lolly makes the point that there would be less discipline problems for teachers to handle if parents acknowledged that good discipline begins in the home. If this were practised in the home, then it would lead to better partnerships between parents and educators when attending to issues relating to learner underachievement and poor discipline. She believed it was a parent's explicit role to mould good character in their children. Saro added that, whilst some parents were involved in the school-life of the learner, they often 'get it wrong' and consequently end up negatively impacting the life of the child – to the extent that, based on her experiences, it became increasingly more challenging to negotiate with parents regarding their children's poor academic performance or misdemeanour.

Sagren continued likewise, asserting that if parents were to raise their children in loving and caring circumstances, within which children felt safe and valued, they would be helping the school to achieve a better grasp on learner discipline.

When asked whether they were content with the present state of parent-teacher interaction when parents were called to address some act of poor discipline on the part of their sons, Saro replied:

> Saro: *No, they come for the sake of being there and they leave the responsibility totally on us – they say – 'you must give the child (a hiding)' – it's your responsibility, it's up to you now – you know – they just come for the sake of it and nothing gets solved. I've got a child whose granny came last week – his behaviour got worse.*

She also intimated that parents may, essentially, defend the wrongdoing of the child:

> Saro: *There was this parent who actually said to me that "he doesn't behave like this at home" – that's the famous line – as if you are lying or something; but some parents – they believe you and they co-operate, but they don't really do much. I don't think that they do anything at home when the boy misbehaves – this is a new generation of parents... So, children know they will 'get away' with anything.*

Educators agreed that some parents try to evade their responsibilities when called to school to attend to the ill-discipline of their children. They become defensive and, to a degree, offensive, when they trot out the 'famous' line: "he doesn't do this at home". They appear to be in denial of their children's misbehaviour. Saro labeled such parents as 'a new generation of parents' who, unlike the older generation, perhaps allow their children freedom to do as they please. The educators also made the point that, frequently, parents give in to every 'whim and fancy' of their children, buying them whatever they want (*viz*. a video-game console such as Sony Playstation;

PVR; decoder), and in so doing, 'spoil the child'. They proffer that certain parents are also averse to the removal of privileges as a way of correcting poor discipline.

Clearly, the educators feel that they have little or no support from the parent community. Parents seem content to just leave the responsibility of raising and educating their children to the school. They do not appear to be playing a critical role in moulding character and correcting poor discipline in their children. Schools are left to 'carry the baby', in addition to providing a sound education. This lack of parental support from the parent community often leads to situations in which schools fail to deliver education adequately to the learner, for they find they are constantly engaged in attending to many other matters (not the least of which poor discipline features largely), that often make inroads into the time allocated for teaching and learning. There is a strong need for better school and parent relationships in the common interest of educating and moulding children for the myriad challenges of life.

Noting the unprecedented levels of violence and crime contributing to a breakdown in teaching and learning at schools, the national government of South Africa in 2008 proposed the adoption of a school pledge (see Annexure 6) for learners to recite at schools. The government envisaged this as being one of the ways to bring about a greater sense of pride and patriotism which, it was hoped, would play a part in restoring better discipline within the teaching and learning environment. This in turn, it was envisioned, would positively impact the quality of life in society.

In response to the question as to whether the participants thought the pledge would work in improving the climate of discipline in school and usher in a better quality of life, the data revealed, *inter alia,* the following views:-

The educators agreed that:

- In its present form the pledge will not work;
- It may work if it were made easier for the learners to understand;
- The pledge is too complex in nature for learners in the Foundation phase;

- There is a need for children to be taught the history of South Africa, in terms of the struggle for freedom, in order for them to better comprehend the pledge;
- The novelty of reciting the proposed pledge might wear out and it might therefore eventually become meaningless to learners;
- It should be coached in language that has more meaning for, and connection to, learners;
- The pledge may work but much time is needed before it can perceptibly produce results – schools need immediate solutions to their problems of poor learner discipline.

The learners struggled to grasp the question of whether the pledge would work, finding themselves 'out of depth' at times in terms of understanding it. However, they also felt that, given time, it may work to bring about change. They also felt strongly that its success rested on a good example being set by those in positions of leadership in the country. Some bemoaned the callous disregard for human values in the leadership of people in high places, in addition to those in the communities from which they hail. A few learners felt that the words were too difficult for children to understand. Sam (learner) articulated that some people do not really understand the meaning of the word 'freedom':

Sam: *But someone people, Sir, take freedom as* (to mean that) *you can do whatever you want, there's no rule to* (for) *that, but in the meantime freedom is not actually* (doing) *the wrong things... it actually* (means) *you must* (have) *respect for what the... people who have suffered for us. We are living now and we must take good care of the country, but some people don't wanna' do it, they just think freedom* (means) *they must party...*

Sagren (educator) also drew attention to the present impasse of the poor example being set by the leadership in the country, both in government and in the broader community. He made the important point that learners would be discouraged from being good citizens when their leaders were visibly not. This drew into focus the paramount role that leadership plays in the destiny of a country. Followers will try to emulate the example being set by leaders, not only in schools, but also in the wider community, particularly those in positions of power. Consequently, there is a

need for role-modeling of wholesome values in the leadership of the wider community so that a pledge for learners may work more effectively.

4.3   CONCLUSION

The findings emanating from the data reveal that educators hold differing views about what constitutes poor learner discipline, which define the methods they choose to adopt in exercising discipline at school. Further, the data revealed that learners understood the value of good discipline within the teaching and learning environment. They also showed that they understood the damaging consequences of negative ways of maintaining discipline. Yet, the data also indicated the complicity of males and females at school in conspiring together to produce and reproduce masculinities that are violent and disruptive in nature.

Furthermore, the data sheds light on a situation in which parents generally remain averse to forming partnerships with educators as regards the education of their children, choosing instead to leave this responsibility entirely in the hands of educators.

It is hoped that all role-players (*viz.* principals and their management teams; educators; school governing bodies; parents, as well as local and national education officials who are accountable for the quality of teaching and learning that transpires) would assume joint responsibility for the education of our learners in an atmosphere that reflects sound morals and human values, in full acknowledgement that it is a collaborative effort. This partnership approach is in keeping with the mantra that "it takes a village to raise a child" (Swart & Phasha, 2005, p.214).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

5.1   SUMMARY OF METHODOLOGICAL INSIGHTS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to investigate educators' and learners' perceptions of poor discipline at a primary school for boys in the Durban South region. The theoretical framework underpinning the investigation was based on social constructions of masculinity (Anderson, 2009; Russell, 2006; Kimmel *et al*., 2005; Reddy, 2003; Carter, 2002; Morrell, 1998; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996). Literature pertaining to the construction of dominant hegemonic masculinity formed the backdrop for the discussion of findings emanating from the data. The literature survey also covered delineations of poor learner discipline, and included excerpts from the media concerning the proposed national school pledge which was envisaged as a means of instilling values in children to improve upon learner behaviour. The participants were both female and male educators, as well as grade seven male learners. The critical questions addressed in this study were:

- What are the perceptions of educators regarding poor learner discipline at school?
- What are the perceptions of learners regarding poor learner discipline at school?

The study was underpinned by the interpretive paradigm in order to discover meaning and gain an understanding of the implications of the data (Somekh & Lewin, 2005, p.346). Accordingly, a qualitative method of enquiry was selected in order to explore educators' and learners' perceptions of poor learner discipline, as well as the approaches used to manage its associated challenges at school. Further, phenomenology was adopted as a means of enquiry as an interpretive process to better understand and make meaning of the human experiences of educators and learners, in terms of how they understood and managed poor learner discipline at school (Creswell, 2009, p.13). Non-probability purposive sampling, including the convenience sampling procedure, was employed in order to obtain more in-depth information from a smaller sample (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998, p.74).

In this study the findings are not intended to be generalised as the sample is limited. A thematic approach was utilised in the data analysis. The findings reveal, *inter alia,* that:

5.1.1   Female and male educators hold different views about what constitutes poor learner discipline, as well as how to maintain discipline;

5.1.2   Educators and learners suggest that poor learner discipline and the management thereof contribute to a poor teaching and learning environment that disadvantages all learners. This position is supported in the literature by De Lange and Mbanjwa (2008), who link poor learner discipline with low levels of academic achievement in schools;

5.1.3   Poor learner discipline in boys reflected their own constructions of dominant male gender identities, shaped and formed as a result of their life experiences in a world embedded with notions and practices of patriarchal hegemony. In particular, parents and educators perpetuated the construction of dominant male identities in their offspring / learners by adopting the 'boys will be boys' attitude. This finding was is in keeping with the theoretical framework on masculinities which underpins the study (Anderson, 2009, pp.230-240; Carter, 2002; Morrell, 1998, p.219);

5.1.4   Female educators often tend to relinquish their agency to successfully deal with poor learner discipline when they choose to let male educators handle their disciplinary problems instead of endeavouring to do so themselves - thereby becoming complicit in entrenching and supporting notions of male superiority;

5.1.5   Male educators tend to resort to the use of corporal punishment when they deal with poor learner discipline, even though they are aware that corporal punishment in schools has been outlawed since 1996. Anderson (2009, pp.239-240) points out that severe punishment continues to be meted out to boys by male educators at schools;

5.1.6   Parents may tacitly support the use of corporal punishment at school as it is commonly used in their home contexts. Morrell (2001) concurs, stating that parents generally resort to the use of violence in the form of corporal punishment at home;

5.1.7   Violence experienced in the home, at school and in the wider community may well be reproduced in learners at school. Anderson (2009, pp.239 -240) asserts that violence experienced at the hands of educators legitimises its perpetuation in boys, who may then similarly respond to differences they might have with other people;

5.1.8   There is a perceived lack of parent support and cooperation for educators in matters dealing with poor learner discipline at school;

5.1.9   Educators and parents disagreed over the notion of who is responsible for curbing poor learner discipline;

5.1.10 In the management of learner discipline, both female and male educator participants subscribed to the notion that educators should role-model good parent attributes within the workplace. This finding echoes the position of Van der Merwe (2011, pp.771-778) and Anderson (2009, p.x), who call for the embracing of moral values in the teaching and learning environment in order that male learners, in particular, can internalise the value of academic success, cultivate peaceful relationships and discard violence;

5.1.11 Educators may be susceptible to the trivialisation of serious incidents of poor learner discipline that ought to be deemed criminal, and consequently miss the opportunity of resolving these issues successfully, to the extent that such behaviour on the part of the learners responsible may manifest itself in increasingly more violent ways;

5.1.12 The implementation of the proposed national school pledge is unlikely to be successful in attaining better learner discipline in schools because of its complex wording, as well as its content, which seems to be out of sync with the experiences of the present generation of learners – the present 'born-free' generation of learners may not be as conscientised into the stigma of apartheid as those who were born prior to 1994. Morrell (2008) also holds the view that formal declarations are unlikely to work. Furthermore, educators and learner participants felt that the poor example set by leaders in the wider community did not bode well for the success of the school pledge, if implemented.

5.2   IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The following discussion is presented in the understanding that the researcher is also a school principal, who felt the challenge of being 'silent' in the process of analysing and understanding the data a difficult one. Consequently, the discussion may be informed by the researcher's experience (42 years) in the field. The implications of the study, as well as insights and suggestions for improved school organisational practices, are underscored by the views of researchers who indicate that, whilst schools (by virtue of the ways in which they tend to be organised) create conditions that encourage the construction of dominant male masculinities in learners and educators, they also possess the means by which to effect meaningful and welcome change to bring about emancipation (Frosh *et al*., 2002, p.75; Morrell,1998, p.219; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996, p.104).

5.2.1   School culture

The school culture can be transformed to reflect values of fairness, respect, nurturing, peace, transparency and accountability in all spheres of its organisation, for learners and educators, as well as parents. This approach should not only connect with policy statements, but also extend to the quality of infrastructure. The school site can be set up in welcoming ways so that everyone feels safe, valued and contented in terms of being at school. In setting about to achieve this, successful implementation depends on the office of the principal role-modeling the values embodied within the culture embraced at the school. Van der Merwe (2011, pp.771-778) maintains that the quality of education found in a school is a reflection of the moral agency of the principal and the teaching staff. The principal, educators and parents should collaborate in seeking to establish a culture that actively works against perpetuating dominant notions of masculinity that are rowdy, daring, disobedient, rude, arrogant, unjust, discriminatory, defiant, rebellious and destructive.

Attention, where possible, could be focused on:

5.2.1.1 Policies with regard to the maintenance of good learner discipline, as well as the responses to poor learner discipline, the language of which should be equally understood by all educators, in order that learners do not receive 'mixed messages' from female and male educators. The use of corporal punishment (including other forms of damaging strategies that may be substituted for the use of corporal punishment, such as the use of offensive language) must, of necessity, be completely eliminated at the school. It is noted that this is a weighty and challenging problem to resolve, as corporal punishment is widely used in the homes of learners (Morrell, 2001), and educators, by and large, are also products of a society skewed in favour of adhering to patriarchal behaviour patterns. Yet, everything possible needs to be done to excise this scourge from school practice. Strategies to change beliefs around this phenomenon may include foregrounding 'immersion messaging' to educators and parents at meetings and workshops. Educators and parents may also consider taking a verbal pledge (in an open forum at a meeting) to stop the use of corporal punishment.

5.2.1.2 The state of safety and security of the premises, pleasant gardens and playing fields, play equipment for learners, as well as hygiene and optimum functionality of classrooms and toilets – these all constitute facets which require regular inspection and maintenance on the part of school managers.

5.2.1.3 Policies that ensure the safety of learners, particularly as pertains to leave-taking, day trips and overnight excursions, as well as procedures to follow in the event of sickness or injury, nutrition schemes (in addition to other support programmes which handle the use of the appropriate school uniform, stationary and the provision of travelling assistance), which could be implemented especially amid contexts in which there are indigent learners.

5.2.1.4 Policies that promote fair-play, inclusiveness and justice in the areas of learner admission, employment and management of ground staff, administrative assistants,

educator assistants and educators, allocation of work schedules, teaching time, as well as which address the distribution of non-teaching time and relief periods, construction of time-tables, and allocation of ground and other duties such as text book distribution, examination scheduling, the organisation of excursions, sports events, stock control and the formation of finance committees.

5.2.1.5 Having a vibrant, well-equipped and efficiently managed library. Reading material selected for the library should include books, magazines and board games that promote human values and character-building education. It is advisable that the school policy in respect of reading be understood and advanced by all educators, parents and learners. In this regard, the use of the library should enjoy high status at the school.

5.2.2   Curriculum

Principals, educators and parents should be cognizant of how the formal and hidden curricula tend to work towards reinforcing hegemonic masculinities. Learners in the South African context continue to remain excluded from a well-balanced curriculum which advances their academic, as well as aesthetic development, with equal importance accorded to these aspects. Sadly, learning areas such as Music, Speech and Drama, Art, Hand Craft, Guidance and Right Living, as well as Physical Education, have become marginalised in many public schools in South Africa, due to national policies which were erroneously informed by financial implications. Some of these subjects have been conflated into the Arts and Culture / Creative Arts learning area and are taught by non-specialist educators. Moreover, very limited time is allocated to teach these subjects. Learners thus remain excluded from the opportunity to develop in depth within a creative and character-building milieu in the hands of specialist educators. Those responsible for curriculum change at schools should consider reinstating these subjects into the curriculum in such a way that they may be accorded the same high status as that generally given to other subjects (*e.g.* those that may be empirical or technical in nature). Further, arrangements to train specialist educators for this development should be made.

Learners also continue to remain disadvantaged in the absence of appropriate facilities such as science laboratories, libraries and venues (learning spaces) for teaching specialist subjects. In the area of physical education, sport and games, equal opportunities for boys and girls should be available at school.

Where possible, in the absence of official policy about the reinstatement of specialist subjects, schools should endeavour to include some, if not all, of these character-moulding subjects into their curriculum offering. It is noted, however, that public schools may not have the financial resources to do this.

Additionally, it is sad that the teaching of Life Skills, which incorporates among other things, social development and the inculcation of values in the Foundation phase, has recently been relegated to a lower status in terms of time allocation, as a result of the implementation of the CAPS document in 2012 (DoE, 2011). Life Skills should enjoy equal status to Mathematics and Language teaching at this crucial stage of education, which forms the foundation upon which the superstructure of education is built. It is during these formative years that the groundwork for character-building through the inculcation of human values is laid. A solid foundation in this regard will impact the building of a nation which espouses human values that will culminate in a better quality of life for all. This, in turn, may help to rebuild the moral fibre of our society.

5.2.3   Parents and community

The data revealed that there is a need for deeper involvement on the part of parents in the teaching and learning environment at schools, not only with regard to the area of academic achievement, but also in the attempts by the school to find solutions to the issue of poor discipline among children. Schools therefore have the responsibility to engage with parents in a manner in which parents feel respected, affirmed and welcome at the school. Effective communication between educators and parents is possible in this context. A partnership approach between schools, parents and the community could reinforce the maintenance of good learner discipline.

5.3   CONCLUSION

Poor learner discipline continues to be a problem plaguing schools. The findings from this study suggest that this has negative effects on educators, learners, as well as on teaching and learning. Boys' schools have particular challenges due to the ways in which dominant constructions of masculinity, that condone and sometimes encourage defiant behaviour among boys, and which are prevalent in the wider society, are perpetuated in schools. There needs to be a realisation among all role players within education that 'violence begets violence'. The reproduction of harmful masculinities within male learners can be stemmed if schools change from a rigid, authoritarian style of organisation and management to one that instead exemplifies caring; a positive change here can result in a caring ethos in which learners feel valued, safe and comfortable (Ngakane *et al*., 2012; Van der Merwe, 2011, pp.771-778; Kimmel *et al*., 2005; Morrell, 1998, p.219; Salisbury & Jackson, 1996, p.110). Schools therefore have a significant role to play in diminishing the hegemony of masculinities that seem to circumscribe and infuse their day-to-day practice.

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ANNEXURES

ANNEXURE 1

Ethical Clearance

RESEARCH OFFICE (GOVAN MBEKI CENTRE)
WESTVILLE CAMPUS
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 – 2603587
EMAIL: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za

30 JUNE 2008

MR. SEV JOHN (205520725)
EDUCATION STUDIES

Dear Mr. John

ETHICAL CLEARANCE APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0283/08M

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been approved for the following project:

"Will it work?" A gendered consideration of the School Pledge as a means of addressing discipline in a Primary and Secondary School in Durban"

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years

Yours faithfully

Ximba
....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA

   cc. Supervisor (Prof. R Morrell)
   cc. Mr. D Buchler

Founding Campuses: ■■ Edgewood ▓ Howard College Medical School ■■ Pietermaritzburg ▓ Westville

ANNEXURE 2

Permission from DoE to interview participants

PROVINCE OF KWAZULU-NATAL
ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS

Telephone: 033 341 8610
Facsimile: 033 341 8612

Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg, 3200
228 Pietermaritz Street
Pietermaritzburg, 3201

RESOURCE PLANNING

INHLOKOHHOVISI	HEAD OFFICE	PIETERMARITZBURG
Enquiries: Mr S Alwar	Reference: 0025/2008	Date: 01 July 2008
Imibuzo:	Inkomba:	Usuku:
Navrae:	Verwysing:	Datum:

Mr SEV John

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW LEARNERS AND EDUCATORS

The above matter refers.

Permission is hereby granted to interview learners and educators in selected schools of the Province of KwaZulu-Natal subject to the following conditions:

1. **You make all the arrangements concerning your interviews.**
2. **Educators' programmes are not interrupted.**
3. **Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.**
4. **Learners, educators and schools are not identifiable in any way from the results of the interviews.**
5. **Your interviews are limited only to targeted schools.**
6. **A brief summary of the interview content, findings and recommendations is provided to my office.**
7. **A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers and principals of schools where the intended interviews are to be conducted.**

The KZN Department of education fully supports your commitment to research: **"Will it work?" A gendered consideration of the School Pledge as a means of addressing discipline in a primary and secondary school in Durban.**
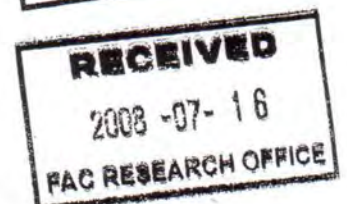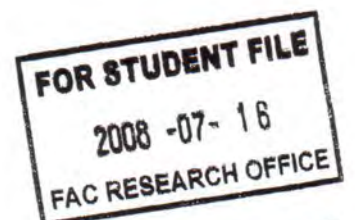
It is hoped that you will find the above in order.

Best Wishes

R Cassius Lubisi, (PhD)
Superintendent-General

1

ISIFUNDAZWE SAKWAZULU-NATALI
PROVINSIE KWAZULU-NATAL

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UMNYANGO WEMFUNDO
DEPARTEMENT VAN ONDERWYS

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RESOURCE PLANNING

INHLOKOHHOVISI	HEAD OFFICE	PIETERMARITZBURG
Enquiries: Mr S Alwar	Reference: 0025/2008	Date: 01 July 2008
Imibuzo:	Inkomba:	Usuku:
Navrae:	Verwysing:	Datum:

Mr SEV John

RE: "Will it work?" A gendered consideration of the School Pledge as a means of addressing discipline in a primary and secondary school in Durban

Your application to conduct the above-mentioned research in schools in the attached list has been approved subject to the following conditions:

1. Principals, educators and learners are under no obligation to assist you in your investigation.

2. Principals, educators, learners and schools should not be identifiable in any way from the results of the investigation.

3. You make all the arrangements concerning your investigation.

4. Educator programmes are not to be interrupted.

5. The investigation is to be conducted from 01 July 2008 to 31 July 2009.

6. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s) please contact Mr Sibusiso Alwar at the contact numbers above.

7. A photocopy of this letter is submitted to the principal of the school where the intended research is to be conducted.

8. Your research will be limited to the schools submitted.

9. A brief summary of the content, findings and recommendations is provided to the Director: Resource Planning.

10. The Department receives a copy of the completed report/dissertation/thesis addressed to

The Director: Resource Planning
Private Bag X9137
Pietermaritzburg
3200

We wish you success in your research.

Kind regards

R. Cassius Lubisi (PhD)
Superintendent-General

ANNEXURE 3

Letter of consent to participate in research – educators and learners

18 March 2009

Dear _____

I am presently conducting research in completion of a Masters in Education degree through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The research focuses on the current state of discipline in public schools in South Africa. The general media continues to report a bleak scenario in this regard. My research will investigate the underlying reasons for this breakdown and, hopefully, make recommendations for better management of discipline in schools.

Having selected you as a participant in the study, **it would be appreciated if you could consent to do so.** Please understand that:

1) Your participation will be treated with confidentiality. The anonymity of all participants will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Your name and the name of the school will not appear in the data presented.
2) Participation is voluntary and there is no obligation to participate.
3) Participants reserve the right to withdraw at any stage during the research process.
4) You will participate in a focus group interview, which will last approximately 30 to 35 minutes. If necessary, as determined by the researcher, you may be requested to participate in a one-on-one interview as well.
5) The interview will be audio-taped, transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and the data will also be destroyed upon completion of the research project.
6) The study conforms to ethical guidelines and therefore, there are no risks involved with respect to your participation.

If you are willing to be a participant in this study, please complete and return the section below in the envelope provided.

Yours faithfully,

_____
SEV John

--------✂--------------✂--------------✂--------------✂--------------✂-------

Mr John,

RE: PERMISSION FOR EDUCATOR TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I, _____ , am willing to participate in your research project.

_____   _____
   SIGNATURE   DATE

[School letterhead details omitted in accordance with ethical considerations]

16 March 2009

PARENT OF: _____ GRADE: _____

Dear _____

I am presently conducting research in completion of a Masters in Education degree through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The research focuses on the current state of discipline in public schools in South Africa. The general media continues to report on a breakdown in this regard. My research will investigate the underlying reasons for this breakdown and, hopefully, make recommendations for better management of discipline in schools.

I have selected your son / ward, _____ , to participate in my research. **I request your permission for him to be a participant.** Please understand that:

1) His participation will be treated with confidentiality. The anonymity of all participants will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms. His name and the name of the school will not appear in the data presented.
2) Participation is voluntary and there is no obligation to participate.
3) Participants reserve the right to withdraw at any stage during the research process.
4) He will participate together with 9 other learners in a focus group interview, which will last approximately 30 minutes.
5) The interview will be audio-taped, transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and the data will also be destroyed upon completion of the research project.
6) The study conforms to ethical guidelines and therefore, there are no risks involved with respect to your son's participation.

If you are willing to give permission for him to participate in this study, please complete and return the section below in the envelope provided.

Yours faithfully,

_____
SEV John

--------✂--------------✂---------------✂---------------✂--------------✂---------------✂-------

Mr John,

RE: PERMISSION FOR MY SON / WARD TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I, _____ , am willing to allow my son / ward to participate in your research project.

_____   _____
    SIGNATURE   DATE

[School letterhead details omitted in accordance with ethical considerations]

16 March 2009

Dear _____ Grade: _____

I am presently conducting research in completion of a Masters in Education degree through the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The research focuses on the current state of discipline in public schools in South Africa. The general media continues to report a bleak scenario in this regard. My research will investigate the underlying reasons for this breakdown and, hopefully, make recommendations for better management of discipline in schools.

Having selected you as a participant in the study, **it would be appreciated if you could consent to do so**. Please understand that:

1) Your participation will be treated with confidentiality. The anonymity of all participants will be ensured through the use of pseudonyms. Your name and the name of the school will not appear in the data presented.
2) Participation is voluntary and there is no obligation to participate.
3) Participants reserve the right to withdraw at any stage during the research process.
4) You will participate in a focus group interview, which will last approximately 30 minutes. If necessary, as determined by the researcher, you may be requested to participate in a one-on-one interview as well.
5) The interview will be audio-taped, transcribed verbatim by the researcher, and the data will also be destroyed upon completion of the research project.
6) The study conforms to ethical guidelines and therefore, there are no risks involved with respect to your participation.

If you are willing to consent to be a participant in this study, please complete and return the section below in the envelope provided.

Yours faithfully,

_____
SEV John

-------✂-------------✂--------------✂-------------✂--------------✂------

Mr John,

RE: PERMISSION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

I, _____ , am willing to be a participant in your research project.

_____   _____
        SIGNATURE   DATE

ANNEXURE 4

Educator focus group interview schedule

QUESTION SCHEDULE FOR EDUCATOR FOCUS GROUP
(SEMI-STRUCTURED)

(A short discussion on the current state of discipline in South African schools, particularly with regard to learner attitudes toward discipline, will take place prior to the questioning.)

1) Can you reflect on cases of disobedience in school, the forms that this disobedience take, their severity and frequency?

2) How do you maintain discipline at school and in the classroom?

3) Which methods of discipline do you think have worked best, and can you tell me why you think one form of discipline works better than others?

4) Do you think that there are key differences between the misbehaviour of boys and that of girls? Can you offer reasons for your response?

5) What role do you think parents, learners and educators generally play in upholding school discipline?

(At this point, I will show the participants the proposed school pledge and ask them to reflect on it in light of the questions above.)

6) Do you think that the school pledge can work in restoring or reinforcing an ethos of discipline amongst learners in South African schools? What do you think would be the extent of its influence, if any? Why do you think it would or wouldn't work?

ANNEXURE 5

Learner focus group interview schedule

QUESTION SCHEDULE FOR LEARNER FOCUS GROUP
(SEMI-STRUCTURED)

*(A short discussion on the current state of discipline in schools
in South Africa will take place prior to the questioning.)*

1) What is your understanding of disobedience at school? Can you give examples of what you think disobedient behaviour is and share with me the occasions when you have been disobedient?

2) How were you disciplined when you were disobedient at school? Did this form of discipline help you to see the error of your ways, or was it ineffective? Do you feel that the form of discipline used, in the case that you have just described, was fair? Why?

3) What do you think causes boys (yourself included) to be disobedient?

4) Can you think of occasions when you believe in school rules and obey them, as well as occasions when you don't agree with school rules and ignore them?

5) Is the type of discipline or correction you receive at home (when you are disobedient there) similar to the form of discipline or correction you receive at school? If different, can you share with me what these differences are?

6) Which approach to discipline do you think works best? Can you tell me why you think one form of discipline works better than others?

(At this point, I will show the learners the proposed school pledge and ask them to comment on it in light of the questions already asked.)

7) Do you think that the school pledge can work in bringing about good discipline amongst learners at schools in South Africa? Why do you think it would or wouldn't work?

ANNEXURE 6

National school pledge

The national school pledge

We, the youth of South Africa,

recognising the injustices of our past,

honour those who suffered and sacrificed

for justice and freedom.

We will respect and protect the dignity of each person,

and stand up for justice.

We sincerely declare that we shall uphold the

rights and values of our constitution,

and promise to act in accordance with the

duties and responsibilities that flow from these rights.

Nkosi Sikelel' iAfrika.