

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND, PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The chapter serves to introduce the focus of this research. It provides a brief historical perspective of the post-apartheid South African education system with primary emphasis placed upon the management of discipline in secondary schools. A historical perspective is used to shed some light on current policy and practice. This discussion is necessary in order to locate current developments within a historical context.

The management of discipline in South African schools is briefly reviewed. The chapter moves on to discuss more specifically the role of the learner in the management of discipline in secondary schools. Specific emphasis will be placed on the role of learners in the Representative Council of Learners. The chapter also includes the formulation of the problem, the aims of the research and the research methodology.

1.2 DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

Discipline is a problem experienced throughout the world. According to Blandford (1998: ix), there is a widespread breakdown in school discipline throughout the world. Since the banning of corporal punishment in schools under the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa (RSA) 1996b:10), hereafter referred to as the SASA, many educators claim that problem behaviour has increased in intensity and frequency in schools. The use of corporal punishment in the past was part of an authoritarian approach to managing the school environment, which was based on the view that children need to be controlled by adults. Likewise, many measures used to maintain discipline were reactive, punitive, humiliating and punishing rather than corrective and nurturing (Department of Education 2000: 9). Moreover, discipline in education was often incorrectly equated with punishment (Porteus, Vally & Ruth 2001: 5). A broader view of discipline is to define it as the development of self-

control, character, orderliness and efficiency. According to Savage (1991: 2), this definition reflects a philosophy that discipline is much more than a response to misbehaviour. These positive outcomes result in a satisfying and productive life, not fear and blind conformity to arbitrary rules. These outcomes are consistent with accepting the responsibility of living in a democratic society as well as with the highest and noblest goals of education (Savage 1991: 2). Disciplining is an active teaching and learning process of helping children become cooperative people who can acquire the ability to become self-disciplined themselves (Wolfgang & Wolfgang 1995: ix). Discipline must be maintained in the school to ensure that the education of learners proceeds without disruptive behaviour and offences. Its goal is to teach and lead learners to self-discipline (Boshoff & Morkel 2003: 2B-24).

Thus, in managing the school environment, a system of disciplining proactively and constructively should be implemented rather than punishment. In such a system, learners experience an educative, corrective approach in which they learn to exercise self-control, respect others and accept the consequences of their actions (Department of Education 2000: 9). In this regard the SASA (RSA 1996b:11) provides for greater participation by learners in the democratic functioning of schools. This also underlines the fundamental constitutional principles of 'co-operative governance and participative management' (Department of Education 1999: 9). This means that learners are now placed in leadership positions and are given the task of helping to maintain and improve school discipline. The ultimate goal of strategies for management and discipline is the empowerment of students to develop self-direction and self-control in school and in the totality of their lives (Fennimore 1995:171).

1.3 MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

South African society has undergone major social, economic and political changes over the past few years as it has sought to establish a democratic and humane nation. Among the changes in the education sector has been the banning of corporal punishment in all schools. This prohibition was challenged in the Constitutional Court in 1999 but the appeal was dismissed (Boshoff & Morkel 2003: 2A-12). Therefore, corporal punishment no longer has a place in South African schools. Failure to comply with this prohibition could result in educators facing charges of assault

(Department of Education 2000: 1). After 1994, when South Africa stepped out of isolation and adopted a new democratic Constitution guaranteeing the right to dignity, equality, freedom and security to all citizens, it followed the path of most other democracies by passing legislation to outlaw corporal punishment (Department of Education 2000:1). The sentiment expressed by Sacred Heart College (1999: 17) echoes that of many schools: “We need an education system which is based on the principles and values of the new Constitution”.

The SASA (RSA:1996b) also takes a more democratic approach to managing schools. Its aim is to change the manner in which schools are run and to encourage schools to take responsibility for their own matters. The schools are given the responsibility of identifying and implementing alternative disciplinary practices and procedures. The SASA (RSA 1996b:10) clearly states that no person can administer corporal punishment to a learner at a school. Likewise Section 12 of the Constitution states that everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way. Therefore, applying corporal punishment to a learner at school is both a violation of human rights and is illegal (Grey 1998:4). In spite of this, many schools are still using corporal punishment as a means of discipline (Dlamini 1998: 2).

In the pre-democratic era, Christian National Education was designed to support the apartheid system by schooling children to become passive citizens who would accept authority unquestioningly (Department of Education 2000: 5). Educators were encouraged to use the cane as a way of keeping control and dealing with children who stepped out of line. Beating children to discipline or to punish them was simply taken for granted in a society so familiar with violence. However, during the 1970's when resistance to apartheid swelled, student organisations began to demand an end to abuse in the classrooms. At the same time international thinking about corporal punishment began to change (Porteus et al 2001: 6).

In a society like South Africa's, with a long history of violence and abuse of human rights, it is not easy to make the transition to peace, tolerance and respect for human rights. According to Porteus et al (2001: 6), research increasingly shows a direct link between corporal punishment and levels of violence in society. Communities around the world began to see the scrapping of corporal punishment in schools as an

important step towards creating a more peaceful and tolerant society. Most countries support this and corporal punishment has been banned in Europe, North America, Australia, Japan and in many other countries (Department of Education 2000:5).

Punishment is based on the belief that if children are made to suffer for doing wrong, they will probably not repeat their inappropriate behaviour. However, this approach has done untold damage to a number of children, often resulting in feelings of alienation, entrenched patterns of anti-social behaviour and even acts of violence (Department of Education 2000: 1). The reality of the situation is that many educators face daily struggles in their school environment with issues of discipline. Educators find themselves in a situation of not knowing what to do in the absence of corporal punishment. Whilst many educators are comfortable with the changes and have managed to identify and implement alternative strategies, others are battling to find effective alternatives to corporal punishment in the classrooms (Department of Education 2000: 1).

The SASA (RSA 1996b) introduced far-reaching changes in schools in terms of discipline and punishment. When corporal punishment was outlawed in schools, principals and educators found it difficult to manage discipline. Some principals and educators disagree with the abolition of corporal punishment, but they have no choice, but obey the law or face consequences for their actions (Sacred Heart College 1999:83). Therefore it is crucial that school managers and educators understand the approach which is accepted in most democracies. All stakeholders need to understand that discipline and punishment are aimed at educating and correcting learner's behaviour. The schools must develop clear and consistent ways of handling discipline and punishment. The learning environment must be safe, orderly and conducive to learning if we are to have a positive culture of teaching and learning at our schools (Sacred Heart College 1999: 83). The onus of the implementation of the methods discussed here, rests not only with the educator, but is also dependent on the active involvement of the learner to ensure the success of a practical system that addresses the management of discipline.

There have been various concerns about the belief that the abolition of corporal punishment will result in transformation and social change. One concern has been around the extent to which the new system will impact learner's lives, their identities, their self- confidence and self- esteem. Another concern revolves around the question: Are learners' voices taken into account to make the process of change inclusive and participatory?

1.4 DISCIPLINE AND THE ROLE OF LEARNERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The South African Schools Act of 1996 abolishes corporal punishment in schools. Educators who use corporal punishment are liable for prosecution SASA (RSA 1996b: 10). Corporal punishment was an essential ingredient in the brutalising social treatment of a patriarchal, racial and authoritarian apartheid system (Porteus et al 2001: 6). The pervasiveness of violence in South African society today is seen by some as partly a consequence of this. According to Porteus et al (2001: 6), corporal punishment both fed off this violence and reproduced it through the education system. Socio-economic factors, which give rise to poverty, unemployment, conflict over resources, alienation and particular notions of masculinity, are also listed as causes of violence. All attempts at addressing social relations at school will in the long term be largely in vain if the causes of violence in society are not addressed (Porteus et al 2001: 6).

Since 1994, when South Africa stepped out of isolation and adopted a democratic constitution, many changes have taken place in the educational sector. One such change is that learners play an active role in their education. Learners are afforded the opportunity to participate and become involved in various management areas through the Representative Council of Learners (RCL), which was mandated in the SASA (RSA 1996b: 11). One crucially important area within the school, in which learners should be actively involved, is the management of discipline. Two mechanisms involving learners have been put into place to deal with learners' discipline in schools:

- a) The code of conduct: Through the SASA (RSA 1996b: 8), schools are empowered to develop their own Disciplinary Code, which is drawn up by the School

Governing Body (SGB) which includes a learner component. The code of conduct is essential for the successful implementation of an alternative to corporal punishment as it establishes the framework and consequences for misbehaviour in such a way that all parties have clarity on where they stand with regard to discipline problems. “The purpose and importance of the code of conduct is to equip learners with the expertise, knowledge and skills that they would be expected to evince as worthy persons, to promote the civic responsibilities of the school and to develop leadership of all learners” (KZN Department of Education 1997: 1).

- b) The RCL: This body has major responsibilities placed upon it. Members of the RCL must liaise and communicate with the learners, professional school management and the SGB at the school. Because the RCL represents the learners they must accept that the well being of the school and learners is their primary task. The body must foster a spirit of mutual respect, good manners and morality amongst the learners. Furthermore, they must promote and maintain discipline amongst learners and uphold the general welfare of the school. Learners must be led to develop high ideals of personal conduct, promote orderliness and not disrupt the order in the school. The RCL must assist the school management in implementing the school policy and attempt to democratise activities at the school (Department of Education 1999: 13).

Likewise, it is important that educators allow learners to become accountable and responsible for their own behaviour. “ Educators and students together must create a meaningful and positive behavioural climate” (Fennimore 1995:135). The school is accountable to the public for helping every child develop his/her full potential. Problems and challenges do exist, but they cannot be used to absolve the school of its basic purposes and responsibilities. Preparation for the development of student-centered management must include recognising certain critical social challenges. Educators need to look at questions such as: what are the lives of learners really like outside school, what is it that learners should experience in the social life of classrooms, and what are learners ultimately being prepared for? An educational programme should focus on two central concerns, namely: how can we raise the achievement of all students and thus provide them with an equal and equitable

education and how can we give students the opportunity to become critical and productive members of a democratic society (Fennimore 1995: 26-29).

1.5 DISCIPLINE IN KWA-ZULU NATAL SCHOOLS

Kwa-Zulu Natal (KZN) is one of the nine provinces of South Africa. Educational provision in South Africa is controlled centrally by the Department of Education and administered by the nine provincial departments. In KZN there are approximately 5578 public schools of which 1380 are secondary schools. There is an estimated amount of 2 737 669 learners of which 867 330 are at secondary school level (KZN Department of Education 1998).

KZN is one of the most densely populated provinces and seems to have the largest proportion of young people of school going age. KZN also seems to have the greatest number of schools with approximately 74719 educators employed by the Department of Education (Internet: <http://education.pwv.ac.za:1>) There are many different types of schools, both rural and urban types (KZN Department of Education 1998).

Schooling in KZN is similar to other provinces in that it has learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. However, it is interesting to note that the majority of learners in KZN are Zulu speaking.

Many learners in KZN have become disadvantaged because of socio-economic deprivation or political violence. A survey undertaken in Imbali near Pietermaritzburg by Butler, Harley and Artchison (1993: 1) showed that learner numbers dropped by 25% over a one-year period (between 1992-1993) because of political violence. However, today there is less violence in the province. Moreover, the youth and society in KZN are severely affected by HIV/AIDS. Many learners in KZN still attend poorly resourced schools in rural areas due to poverty and financial constraints. According to Christie (cited in Van Wyk 2001: 196) these schools share commonalities: poorly kept school facilities; disputed and disrupted authority relations among principals, educators and learners; poor attendance of learners and often educators; lack of motivation and morale of learners and educators; conflict and often vandalism, criminality, gangsterism, rape, and substance abuse in and around schools. This together with the poor socio-economic conditions and the country's

recent turbulent history, negatively influence school discipline in KZN. Lack of discipline has undoubtedly led to poor academic results, which in turn seems to create greater discipline problems.

1.6 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Management

Management is defined as that aspect of teaching that focuses on creating an environment and establishing conditions that facilitate student success in achieving both academic and social goals. This involves classroom leadership, facilitation of student motivation, arrangement of physical environment, management of time and lessons and attendance to principles of group dynamics (Savage 1999:7).

Management is often related to controlling and directing behaviour of others, and it is equated with a top down hierarchical power relationship. However, this definition is inappropriate for the educational environment. According to Savage (1999: 8), classroom management should refer to the process of organising the environment in order to help learners achieve worthwhile and important goals.

1.6.2 Discipline

Discipline in education is a complex phenomenon and it is a difficult concept to define. The general use of the term discipline is synonymous with the word control. According to Savage (1999: 9) “discipline is frequently viewed as an unfortunate by-product of education”. For the purposes of this research discipline refers to order or an absence of behavioural problems. Discipline is seen as being ultimately about learners developing a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour.

1.6.3 Representative council of learners

The SASSA 84 of 1996 (RSA 1996b: 11) stipulates that every public school enrolling learners in grade eight and higher must establish an Representative Council of Learners (RCL). An RCL is therefore an official body representing all learners in secondary schools. It is the duty of an RCL to elect the learners who must serve on the School Governing Body (SGB). The body is made up of learners elected by their

fellow learners to represent them. It is constituted in accordance with the South African Schools Act and is the only body that represents every learner and in which every learner can participate. Teacher Liaison Officers are educators in schools who have been tasked with guiding RCLs in understanding and fulfilling their tasks.

1.6.4 Code of conduct

A code of conduct for learners, refers to an official document as stipulated in the SASA (RSA 1996b: 8). A school's code of conduct should reflect the views of parents, educators and learners on how the learners should conduct themselves and to what end. It should express the collective will of the school community and give legal force to the development of standards of conduct conducive to the betterment of all the learners (KZN Department of Education 1997: 2).

1.7 PROBLEM FORMULATION

Since 1994, there have been several legislative initiatives to outlaw the physical and psychological abuse of learners within schools. Many people see this as a victory for human rights, while others feel that the decision was too hasty and does not reflect the realities that exist in schools. Most educators observe that although corporal punishment is now a criminal offence, it remains a prevalent and pervasive practice. The debate about corporal punishment, often emotional, is regularly fuelled by both the perceived lack of discipline in schools and sensational cases involving the application of corporal punishment (Porteus et al 2001: 1).

Given the high stakes that are frequently associated with the management of discipline in secondary schools, it is important to investigate the ways in which these problems are being manifested and addressed in the real world of teaching and learning, and to establish the extent to which they appear amenable to resolution. In my position as an educator at a secondary school in KwaZulu- Natal, I have personal experience of situations where educators are faced with tensions, dilemmas and problems in managing discipline in their classrooms. The major issue is that educators are having great difficulty in finding suitable alternatives to corporal punishment.

In the light of the above a need exists to research the role of learners in secondary schools in KwaZulu- Natal in maintaining and improving discipline. The following questions help to demarcate the problem more clearly:

- What are the current theories on management of discipline in secondary schools?
- What roles can learners play in the management of discipline in secondary schools in KwaZulu- Natal?
- What are the perceptions of learners and educators of the role of learners in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools in KwaZulu- Natal?
- How can these findings contribute to improving the role of learners in the management of discipline in secondary schools?

1.8 AIMS OF RESEARCH

In the light of the above problem, the following objectives for this research may be identified:

- To provide a theoretical background to the management of discipline in secondary schools.
- To examine educational policies dealing with learners' conduct and misbehaviour in secondary schools, and the roles of learners in the management of discipline in secondary schools in KwaZulu- Natal.
- To determine the perceptions of learners and educators of the role learners play in the management of discipline in secondary schools.
- To determine how these findings can be used to improve the role learners can play in the management of discipline in secondary schools.

1.9 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In an attempt to determine the place and role of learners in the management of discipline in secondary schools, a literature study of a wide range of journals, booklets, educational legislation and official documents concerning South African education in general is undertaken. Special attention is given to provisions in the South African Schools Act dealing with the responsibilities of the RCL. Furthermore, attention is also given to the banning of corporal punishment, which some argue has led to the discipline dilemma in secondary schools.

A qualitative approach is the research methodology used to explore how schools are currently managing discipline, the role learners play in this and the meaning they attach to events or actions associated with current practices. Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 14) regard qualitative research as research that presents facts in a narrative with words. This approach is used because as Hoberg (1999: 76) suggests, qualitative research is mainly concerned with understanding the problem from the participants' perspective as they (the participants) experience the problem as it is related to their reality (the school and education). Moreover, qualitative research views reality as multi-layered and interactive. Qualitative researchers become 'immersed' in the situation, present or past, and the phenomenon being studied (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 15). It is hoped that the study will yield meaningful insights into educators' and learners' experiences, beliefs and judgements about the management of discipline in their own context of teaching and learning.

The research site for this study will focus upon three specific schools in the greater urban area of KwaZulu- Natal. A range of differing environments was chosen encompassing an urban community school reluctant to acknowledge the changes on the ruling of corporal punishment, a common schooling environment caught in limbo somewhere between application of the new legislation and ignorance of it, and a modern developing community school embracing the new legislation and trying to incorporate the new ideals of the fast developing democratic society. The reasoning behind the specified research sites is to produce a variable spectrum of results dealt

with on a regular basis rather than a confined set of results that ignore more complex or diverse environments. The researcher will identify information-rich participants because they are likely to be “knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating” (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 378). Thus purposeful sampling is used.

The methods that the researcher uses are interviews, which include both individual and focus, group interviews. Individual interviews are conducted with the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB learner representatives from each of the respective schools under study as they are considered to be particularly information rich, and may have unique problems and experiences that they would not be able to share with others present. Moreover, Van Dalen (1979: 159) suggests that individual interviews enable the subjects to feel free to express themselves fully and truthfully. These interviews are carried out to determine whether learners are involved in the management of discipline at their respective schools. An attempt is also made to discover what are learners’ perceptions of the management of discipline at their schools and if they have been trained to carry out their roles effectively.

Focus group interviews are conducted with class representatives from different grades, at each of the specified schools under study because it is envisaged that when learners assemble in a group to discuss a particular problem/topic, they will stimulate each other thus exploring the topic more fully. According to Hoberg (1999: 136), this informal group situation and the largely unstructured nature of the questions encourage participants to disclose behaviour and attitudes they might not disclose during individual interviews. These interviews are conducted to establish to what extent the class representatives are having an impact on the learners within the classroom and encouraging them to observe the rules of discipline stipulated in the code of conduct.

Individual interviews with the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) at each of the schools under study conclude the research. The TLO is usually an educator at the school who is in charge of the RCL. He or she must create a sincere and trusting relationship with the RCL, the principal as well as the school management (Department of Education 1999: 16). The TLO is interviewed to determine if there are good communication

links between himself/herself, the principal, staff and RCL. Also, an attempt will be made to ascertain whether the TLO is guiding and organising the RCL in an effective manner as well as developing a sense of leadership in members of the RCL.

Thus, in total three learners who serve as the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB representatives are interviewed. A total of thirteen learners who serve as class representatives were included in three focus group interviews and three educators in charge of the RCL. This means that nineteen participants are included in this study.

All interviews are recorded on audiotape and the tapes are later transcribed for closer examination. The data is finally analysed by a process of identifying, coding and categorising the primary patterns in the data (Patton 1990: 381).

This research is designed to be exploratory and descriptive. The primary aim of the study is to understand and describe how learners and educators interviewed are managing discipline in their school communities, from their own frame of reference.

1.10 CHAPTER DIVISION

Apart from the orientation in chapter one, the research programme will be structured as follows:

Chapter 2

In this chapter prevailing theories and studies on the management of discipline in secondary schools are examined. Emphasis is placed on the role of the learner in the management of discipline in secondary schools, as this is considered more relevant to the present study. Books, journals, educational legislation and the internet were consulted. Furthermore attention is also given to the banning of corporal punishment and how this has impacted on the management of discipline in secondary schools.

Chapter 3

This chapter contains the research methodology and the procedures followed in the study. It discusses how the study is designed and conducted. The chapter describes the selection of participants and includes the data collection and data analysis procedures used in this study.

Chapter 4

The findings of the investigation are presented in this chapter. The major themes and categories that emerged from the data analysis are discussed. Related literature is cited as a control mechanism to mirror or refute the perceptions that participants have of the management of discipline in secondary schools.

Chapter 5

This chapter contains a synopsis of the findings. This is followed by conclusions that are drawn from the findings and recommendations on ways in which the finding can be used to improve the role learners can play in the management of discipline. The limitations of the study are put into perspective and finally further research is suggested.

1.11 SUMMARY

This study has been initiated by an awareness of the increases in the prevalence and gravity of discipline problems in schools universally. Since the banning of corporal punishment, there have been major concerns as to how discipline can be effectively managed at secondary school level. Legislation and literature indicate that learners can and should play key roles in the management of discipline in secondary schools. This is conducted mainly through the RCL in order to develop learners' abilities to practice self-control and self-discipline. If South African schools are to have a positive culture of teaching and learning, the learning environment must be safe, orderly and conducive to learning. Therefore, educators and learners need to be introduced to proactive and constructive alternatives to the use of corporal punishment.

This study is motivated by the need to improve the schooling experience for educators and learners in KwaZulu -Natal. A proven method is that by allowing learners to become actively involved in decision-making and in helping in management areas, can lead to better schools. Finally, this study was designed to address the lack of research on the role of learners in the management of discipline in secondary schools.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW: MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA

2.1 INTRODUCTION

More than a decade ago, the apartheid system was dismantled. Under the 1993 Interim Constitution, nine non-racial provincial departments replaced the former ethnically based structures. This was reinforced by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA 1996a) and the SASA (RSA) 1996b), which are geared towards providing non-racially based education in the country (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 108-109). It is in this climate of political change and support of human rights that the issue of discipline and punishment in schools needs to be addressed.

Discipline underpins every aspect of school life. According to Blandford (1998: 39), a school without an effective discipline policy that encompasses strategies and support mechanisms which are available to all members of the school community will not function as a centre for teaching and learning. Mokwana (1994: 16) echoes these sentiments by stating that “a school without discipline rules is like a car without a steering wheel”, meaning that there will be no control and direction. The process of developing and implementing a discipline policy will involve collaborative decision-making. Therefore, all members of the school community should have the opportunity to participate in decision-making as appropriate (Blandford 1998: 39). Participation in decision-making is a relatively new phenomenon in schools. In previous generations, educators have been autonomous in their classrooms and have been responsible for the management of their classrooms. Devolution of power through the local management of schools and the national curriculum has led to a greater level of participation in decision-making in schools.

It is against this background that the SASA (RSA 1996b) provides for greater participation by learners in the democratic functioning of schools. This also underlines the fundamental constitutional principles of co-operative governance and participative management (Department of Education 1999: 9). It has been noted that

learners can and should play key roles in the management of discipline in secondary schools through their involvement with the RCL and SGB. Therefore, this section looks at the management of discipline in secondary schools as set out in both the international and local literature. This literature study will also focus on the role played by the learner in the management of discipline in schools.

2.2 DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT

Discipline is not a new or recent phenomenon. Discipline has been a problem for many years. According to Tauber (1995: 242) for as far back as one can research, educators have been concerned with discipline in schools. Charles (in Tauber 1995: 3) points out the harsh realities of today's classrooms:

Discipline, class control, classroom management- by whatever name you call it- keeping order in the classroom is an educator's greatest concern. You may not like that fact, you may wish it were not true. But it is. That's a given in the daily life of teachers. Discipline is so crucial, so basic to everything else in the classroom, that most educators agree, it is the one thing that makes or breaks educators.

This sums up the fact that discipline has been, and continues to be a problem for many educators. However, Tauber (1995: 4) believes that "discipline does not have to be a problem in the future". Educators need to guide learners to take responsibility for their own behaviour. The ultimate goal of strategies for management and discipline in the future is to empower students to develop self-discipline and self-control (Fennimore 1995:171).

According to Blandford (1998: ix), there is a widespread breakdown in school discipline universally. Educators respond by blaming the decline on family and societal values which makes their task in schools difficult, sometimes impossible. In agreement, Tauber (1995: 211) believes that discipline problems do not just occur out of no where, they are precipitated. Home and other out-of-school environments exert major influences upon children that, in turn, affects their readiness to learn when they come to school. Savage (1991: vii) argues that in the age of educational reform,

discipline continues to emerge as an area needing immediate attention. The economic, social and educational costs related to discipline are enormous, and parents, educators, and policymakers continue to search for solutions. The sobering fact is that the discipline problem in schools is a complex one and will not be solved with simple solutions. Short, Short and Blanton (1994: ix) further argue that administrators typically spend a great deal of time struggling with student discipline problems. Many educators express frustration over the energy they expend controlling learners in the classroom – time and energy that could be used for instruction.

According to Gootman (2001: 5), discipline often poses a great challenge in today's schools because of the pressure society has imposed on individuals and families. The effects of drug abuse, spouse abuse, child abuse and neglect, community and media-generated violence, poverty and single parenting reverberate in schools. Many children bring the baggage of dysfunction straight into the classroom and unpack their pain masqueraded in the wraps of misbehaviour and underachievement. They push educators to their limits and render discipline all consuming, overshadowing and threatening to academic learning (Gootman 2001: 5).

Student misconduct and how to promote better discipline in schools are serious concerns not only of educators and the public, but also of students (Moles 1990: 2). Discipline problems may range from crimes in the school committed by students such as robbery and drug dealing, to lack of respectful behaviour toward educators and classmates (Moles 1990: 3). These problems affect the learning environment in schools universally. Many educators believe that student misbehaviour interferes with their teaching and with effective student learning. Thus, discipline problems experienced universally at schools discourages educators (Moles 1990: 5). This problem is particularly relevant to South Africa as the country is trying desperately to upgrade the quality of educators, and retain and develop highly capable educators. According to Moles (1990: 5), a recent national study carried out with high school students indicates that misbehaviour predicts a drop in grades and achievement test scores, and low grades also lead to greater discipline problems.

There are different perspectives on discipline and punishment. According to Parker-Jenkins (1999: 82), the term discipline can be employed in a negative or positive

sense within educational settings. The term discipline often carries a negative connotation equated with punishment administered by educators in response to misbehaviour. This negative definition is a narrow and restrictive way of viewing the topic and limits the search for productive solutions to misbehaviour (Savage 1991: 2). Discipline can also be perceived as development of the individual promoting self-actualisation and empowerment. This is along the lines of Dewey, who wrote in 1916 that “a person who is trained to consider his actions, to undertake them deliberately, is in so forth disciplined” (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 82). This positive approach to discipline contrasts markedly with the connotation of discipline as used to subordinate or to compel obedience. Wilson (in Parker-Jenkins 1999: 82) further argues that discipline should be seen as a recognition of a need for order and working together, and in such situations “punishment and reward are educative rather than just obeying authority”. Wolfgang and Wolfgang (1995: ix), see discipline as an active teaching and learning process of helping young children become co-operative people who can acquire the ability to become self-disciplined.

According to Savage (1999: 205), punishment is something that is undesirable, painful, or discomfoting that results from misbehaviour. In agreement, Parker-Jenkins (1999: 76) sees punishment as the intentional infliction of pain on an offender against their will in response to a misdemeanour or moral wrongdoing. Punishment is often related to such terms as sanctions, penalty, chastisement, correction and control (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 76). Punishment is based on the belief that if children are made to suffer for wrong, they will not repeat their inappropriate behaviour (Department of Education 2000:1). Hence, in the school context punishment is an action taken against an individual as a consequence of deviation from school rules. Because it is an undesirable outcome of behaviour, punishment weakens or decreases the probability that a behaviour will recur.

Punishment can be effective for stopping unwanted behaviour, however research indicates that the use of punishment may have several undesirable side effects (Savage 1999: 205). Historically, schools were founded on an authoritarian model (which is still alive and well today) that promotes a punitive approach to discipline and produces little self-discipline (Short et al 1994: 1). A strategy based on a punitive approach that is still used in many schools today is corporal punishment. Corporal

punishment has many negative consequences on learners and often hinders their progress in education (Short et al 1994: 84). Research clearly shows that corporal punishment has a destructive effect rather than an uplifting effect on children.

Jackson (1991: 76) sees punishment as a controversial issue that demands the highest degree of responsibility on the part of the educator. Punishment must be applied circumspectly, moderately and justly. The educator should act on behalf of the parents in the interests of the child, who is being prepared to take his/her place in society. As members of society, children need to learn, even while still at school that their freedom cannot be allowed to interfere with the rights and freedom of others. They have to learn that they will be held accountable for their actions, not only by the school, their parents and society, but also by God himself (Jackson 1991: 76).

2.3 CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE

Managing discipline in schools is one of the most debated issues in education, moreover since the SASA (RSA 1996b) has abolished corporal punishment. Surprisingly, it is widely reported that many schools in South Africa still use corporal punishment as a means of discipline (Dlamini 1998:2). Educators and administrators have been using corporal punishment with complete disregard to explicit rules which must be followed (Dlamini 1998:6).

Sogoni (1997: 22) maintains that the lack of discipline in the family and in society is perceived as a growing problem and its effects are reflected in the school. Various dimensions of social life are so closely interwoven that the interactional problems in one area frequently spill over into other areas. This becomes true when viewing the rapid changes in many spheres of life, with the school functioning as an educative partner of the home, in service of the community. It is not possible to specify exactly what constitutes wrongdoing on the part of the learner because schools are complex organisations with intricate social interactions. What may be perceived as offensive behaviour by one educator may be considered as admissible by another. Part of the difficulty in researching the issue of managing discipline is the range of attitudes and perceptions of all those involved. Offences in school are difficult to specify and define

as they happen within the context with many dimensions and nuances (Dlamini 1998: 6-7).

Blandford (1998: i) states that the management of discipline is an essential element in educational practice. At a time when educators and managers are anxious about reported increases in violence and other forms of anti-social behaviour, there is a need for practical guidance and a review of current thinking. According to this study it is believed that by placing the learner at the centre of the management of discipline in schools and by focussing on educator and learner esteem, a disciplined environment is not only “desirable but also achievable”(Blandford 1998: x). Managing discipline in schools as a whole school responsibility of the school is based on shared beliefs and values, clear expectations and boundaries, and consistency as reflected in collaborative policies, procedures and practices.

According to Parker- Jenkins (1999: 75), schools cannot resort to physical punishment and alternative sanctions are needed, which are effective but which do not contravene children’s legal or moral rights. “Abolition of corporal punishment has caused us to reconsider how we perceive children generally, and creates the concerns surrounding children’s rights”(Parker-Jenkins 1999:173). The school is expected to respond to the needs of society as an enforcer of discipline, yet it cannot perform what the law does not allow. Alternatives to corporal punishment have always existed and have been used to varying degrees in schools (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 87). The value of providing opportunities for educators to network and the importance of support through pre-service and in-service training should be recognised.

Short et al (1994: 93) state that of all the problems facing educators, student discipline continues to be the most challenging. They see discipline as the single greatest source of frustration for principals and educators and it is a self-perpetuating source of negative feelings among students, parents and the general public. Yet methods of control used in schools are generally punitive. Such punitive approaches treat discipline as a matter of employing ‘techniques’ to control behaviour and these techniques produce little self-discipline and only short-term compliance. Short et al’s (1994: 84) suggestion is to look at discipline as part of the larger learning system, a long term training that is expected to produce mental as well as moral improvement.

An effective school administrator must establish a school environment that supports good student behaviour and sees discipline as an organisational issue that requires a school wide approach to be successful (Short et al 1994: 9). These authors believe that by taking a proactive and preventative approach, the alternative view of discipline incorporates a balance between punishment and positive reinforcement that promotes the development of self-discipline or the use of appropriate behavior in a given situation.

According to Cumming, Lowe, Tulips and Wakeling (1981:1) in February 1979 the Secretary of State for Scotland asked the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) to consider the position of corporal punishment in schools. The investigation found in all the schools included in the survey, that when corporal punishment was replaced by a new system of sanctions, disciplinary standards were no different from those observed in comparable schools that retained corporal punishment. Though the new systems of sanctions introduced varied somewhat, a common feature of them all was an increase in organised reporting and referral procedures that secured support for teachers in dealing with disciplinary problems (Cumming et al 1981: 14). Consequently, there was a reduction in the need for educators to act in isolation. Thus, these authors believe that schools need to be guided and supported with clear guidelines and principles to make the change from corporal punishment successful.

The Elton committee which was set up at the University of Birmingham in 1989 to consider “what action can be taken to secure the orderly atmosphere necessary in schools for effective teaching and learning to take place”, gives an interesting account of discipline in schools (Wheldall 1992: i). In this collection of papers, ten leading figures in the field of psychology of education reflect on some of the issues raised by the Elton Report and provide a series of psychological models for tackling problems of discipline, disorder and disruption in schools. This committee focussed on the following areas: whole school approaches to discipline, the connection between learning difficulties and discipline problems, the effectiveness of positive behavioural methods of classroom management, the possible uses of techniques derived from family therapy in classroom discipline situations and the good relationship between educator and student as an agent of change (Wheldall 1992: i). The emphasis

throughout this investigation was on establishing a way forward for schools that will be valid and workable both in institutional terms and for the individual educator in the classroom.

Currently many educators are experiencing difficulties in disciplining learners at school. Educators need support and guidance in developing positive techniques to deal with discipline problems in their classrooms. However, it is important to bear in mind that when using positive techniques to deal with discipline problems, the educator must be consistent, clear, structured and compassionate in their approach.

2.4 DISCIPLINE AND PUNISHMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

The lack of discipline in secondary schools throughout the country has long been a matter of great concern for educators in South Africa. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:35) believe that the present situation in South African schools shows that a lack of discipline and self-discipline among secondary school learners has led to a continuation of unsuccessful learning and teaching. Many attempts have been made to solve the problem and to re-establish a culture of effective learning and teaching in the schools (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000: 34). Therefore, there is a need for learners to become actively involved in the management of discipline in secondary schools through their involvement in the RCL and SGB.

Furthermore, many educators argue that discipline problems seem to have intensified with the banning of corporal punishment in all schools by the SASA (RSA 1996b) (Porteus et al 2001:1). The SASA (RSA 1996b) introduced far-reaching changes in schools in terms of discipline and punishment (Sacred Heart College R&D 1999: 83). When corporal punishment was outlawed in schools, managers and educators found it even more difficult to manage discipline. Many disagreed with the abolition of corporal punishment, but they have to obey the law (Porteus et al 2001: 1). It is vitally important that school managers and educators undertake to understand the more democratic approach taken by the SASA (RSA 1996b). South African educators need to understand that discipline and punishment are aimed at educating and correcting a learner's behaviour not giving punishment because 'we are angry' or because 'the

child deserves it' (Sacred Heart College R&D 1999: 83). Thus, schools must develop clear and consistent ways of handling discipline and punishment.

2.4.1 Putting corporal punishment into perspective

The South African education system has historically used corporal punishment to maintain discipline. Corporal punishment was an integral part of schooling for most educators and students in twentieth century South African schools (Morrel 2001: 292). The use of corporal punishment in society has been associated with both authoritarian and non-democratic societies. These authoritarian systems suggest that most people in society are not capable of critical thinking and self-discipline, and must be closely controlled by those in power through physical punishment (Porteus et al 2001: 5). The use of corporal punishment has been directly linked to the maintenance of unequal power relations where people are taught to fear disobedience rather than think for themselves.

Corporal punishment became entrenched in the classroom during the apartheid years. The apartheid system was based on a non-democratic and authoritarian philosophy and hence the education system was designed according to this philosophy. Young black South Africans were considered as not being capable of becoming critical and responsible citizens but they were educated to become obedient low-wage workers within a racial capitalist system (Porteus et al 2001: 5). Even white South African children were educated within an authoritarian ethic. During the apartheid years Christian National Education and the educational philosophies that guided it encouraged educators to believe that corporal punishment was the way to educate children. During these years corporal punishment was sanctioned by law and encouraged by teacher training institutions (Department of Education 2000: 5, Porteus et al 2001: 5). Over time many educators and parents have come to believe deeply in the effectiveness of corporal punishment. Along the way the practice of corporal punishment became deeply woven into the fabric of South African society (Porteus et al 2001: 5).

It seems that advocates of corporal punishment are still largely unaware of the ill-effects of this kind of degrading, inhuman behaviour. According to Maree (2000: 5) in

the light of the spiral of violence in South African schools, “it should be stated unequivocally that authoritative research on the topic has, time and again shown that corporal punishment is significantly linked to a rise in subsequent anti-social behaviour, in child-parent violence and dating violence”. Furthermore corporal punishment is significantly linked to a decrease in cognitive performance and in development of the neural connections in the brain (Strauss cited in Maree 2000: 5). Thus, all European countries abolished corporal punishment a long time ago. Russia did so as early as 1917, England followed and more than half of the states in the USA have done likewise (Maree 2000: 5). Therefore, in 1996 South African legislation regarding corporal punishment in schools finally came in line with this worldwide tendency. Since 1996 corporal punishment is not allowed in public schools. The SASA (RSA 1996b: 10) specifically states that the administration of corporal punishment at a school amounts to an offence and that the perpetrator is liable on conviction to a sentence.

Porteus et al (2001:6) believes that corporal punishment was an essential factor in the brutalising social treatment of a patriarchal, racial and authoritarian apartheid system. The pervasiveness of violence in South African society is partly seen as a consequence of this. Corporal punishment both fed off this violence and reproduced it through the education system. Socio-economic factors which give rise to poverty, unemployment, conflict over resources, alienation and particularly the notion of masculinity are causes of violence (Porteus et al 2001: 6). Corporal punishment is by its very nature, anti-human and ultimately an abusive practice that entrenches the idea that violence provides a solution to every problem in the classroom. The removal of corporal punishment and the elimination of other de-humanising practices in schools are necessary steps towards the development of a culture of human rights in the country (Department of Education 2000: 1).

In many South African schools corporal punishment was and still is a popular means of disciplining pupils (Morrel 2001: 292). Some parents and teachers strongly believe that using corporal punishment is the way to maintain moral standards. Many educators have used corporal punishment without stopping to think of the possible effects it can have on learners. Since we are living in changing times, culture is dynamic and because of the newly formulated laws of this country, there are

conflicting ideas about the execution of corporal punishment (Dlamini 1998: 10). Some educators think of it as an integral part of the teaching and learning situation. They think that fear has to be instilled into the minds of learners in order to compel them to co-operate. Many educators believe that corporal punishment must be retained, as they maintain that it is effective. However, others concur with the act, as they say that a culture of violence manifests itself in the form of corporal punishment. As corporal punishment has been an accepted practice, it has been abused by some educators, who because of their own inability to maintain discipline tended to be vindictive and abusive (Sogoni 1997: 16).

2.4.2 Alternatives to corporal punishment

Educators from various schools both private and public feel that learners are becoming more disruptive and less respectful. Educators argue that the lack of discipline among learners is making it very difficult to promote a culture of teaching and learning within the school situation (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000: 34). A few educators have found creative, non-violent ways to approach classroom discipline but the majorities are struggling to find effective solutions. This problem stems from the fact that neither alternatives nor in-service training on discipline were provided to educators. Thus, many have come to believe that there are no effective alternatives. These educators feel that corporal punishment is the only strategy to maintain discipline in the classroom effectively. Many educators believe that while there are alternatives for other learners in other contexts, these possible solutions will not work for learners in their classrooms.

The constitutional court decided on 9 June 1995 that a legal system which employs corporal punishment as a penal measure demonstrates that “an element of cruelty” has been incorporated in the judicial system (Benson 1995: 18). The legal implications of this verdict for education resulted in the Department of Education suspending all forms of corporal punishment in schools. Also the Bill of Rights prohibits any form of abuse. Thus corporal punishment is against the law, as it may contribute to growing social violence. Furthermore, it is harmful to children and is in essence anti-educational (Department of Education 2000: 9). However, it is important to bear in mind that:

- many educators have to deal with disruptive learners;
- corporal punishment has been part of the history of many learners and teachers;
- change is in itself often a difficult process, and;
- discipline is a recognised area of struggle for many educators.

Thus, it is not surprising that there are educators and parents who find this a difficult shift to make (Department of Education 2000: 9). There are also many educators who believe that corporal punishment is wrong, but they do not always know what to use instead of physical force to maintain discipline and a culture of learning in the classroom. Discipline is a part of the daily life of learners and educators, but it is not a simple issue, it demands a great deal of time, creativity, commitment and resources. Hence, even though alternatives to corporal punishment do exist and are being sought out by educators, they require a commitment to long-term processes (Benson 1995: 18 ; Department of Education 2000: 9).

According to Benson (1995:19), the banning of corporal punishment in schools has made educators desperate to find alternative, effective methods of discipline. Authority structures have banned what was, for many schools, the only form of discipline, and left nothing in its place. Educators have been forced to look around for organisations which can offer assistance and some relief. Thus, looking for and trying out alternatives can no longer be an issue of choice, but are necessities. Educationists, NGOs, teachers, student organisations and parents have attempted to provide some support and guidance to educators. However, discussion has made it clear that there is not yet consensus that corporal punishment is an ineffective and degrading form of punishment. Thus, before people look at alternatives, they must first be committed to abandon the traditional way of punishing learners and understand why they should and want to find an alternative (Benson 1995: 19).

According to the Department of Education (2000: 12), a classroom climate based on mutual respect where learners feel safe and affirmed will decrease the need for disciplinary action and develop a learner's ability to practice self-discipline. By implementing a proactive approach, educators can put things in perspective which

will safeguard the culture of learning and teaching in their classrooms. Educators need to look at simple things such as:

- preparing lessons;
- exercising self-discipline;
- having extension work available;
- ensuring that teaching and learning happen consistently;
- ensuring that learners are stimulated;
- establishing class rules with learners;
- making a space for time out or a conflict resolution corner;
- affirming learners;
- providing a rationale for all classroom activities;
- building positive relationships with learners.

All these strategies can set the stage for a positive learning environment and can significantly reduce problems with discipline in the classroom (Department of Education 2000: 12).

Benson (1995: 19) believes that the alternatives of conflict resolution, whole school development, child management and so on, require hard work and dedication, fuelled only by a belief in the approach and commitment to its implementation. These approaches often necessitate challenging the behaviour patterns of educators, parents and learners alike. For example; rather than viewing learners as irresponsible youngsters who need to be policed, they are taught and challenged to be responsible for their own actions and the consequences thereof (Benson 1995: 19).

The positive aspect of the banning of corporal punishment is that educators are forced to explore other, often ignored, methods of discipline. They could perhaps find new solutions to old problems and these alternatives may even present them with challenges they will enjoy. However, the negative aspect is that the element of choice has been removed. The exploring of alternatives has become a desperate, unavoidable measure to prevent chaos. Furthermore, some educators will undoubtedly view the training they need in order to implement alternative methods of discipline as an added burden on an already pressurised schedule (Benson 1995: 19). Thus, resentment and resistance may set in.

“The real challenge lies in the implementation and maintenance of disciplinary measures and procedures that uphold order in schools with understanding and compassion”(Department of Education 2000: 1-2). It requires energy, insight, consistency and rigour on the part of educators and commitment and understanding on the part of learners and parents. Through the SASA (RSA 1996b) schools are empowered to develop their own disciplinary code. This code of conduct is essential to the successful implementation of an alternative to corporal punishment as it sets up the framework and consequences for misbehaviour in such a way that all parties will have clarity on where they stand with regard to discipline problems.

2.4.3 The code of conduct

Section 8 of the SASA (RSA 1996b) provides that a governing body of a public school must adopt a code of conduct. The code of conduct must aim at establishing a disciplined and purposeful environment to facilitate effective education and learning in schools (Boshoff & Morkel 2003: 2B-18). The code of conduct must be subject to the Constitution of South Africa (RSA 1996a), the SASA (RSA 1996b), and provincial legislation. It must reflect the constitutional democracy, human rights and transparent communication which underpins South African society (Boshoff & Morkel 1999: 2B-18). According to Sacred Heart College (1999: 70) the code of conduct must inform the learners of the way in which they should conduct themselves at school in preparation for their conduct and safety in civil society. It must set a standard of moral behaviour for learners and equip them with the expertise, knowledge and skills they would be expected to display as worthy and responsible citizens. It must promote the civic responsibilities of the school and it must develop leadership. The main focus of the code of conduct must be positive discipline , it must not be punitive and punishment-orientated but facilitate constructive learning (Sacred Heart College 1999: 70). The code should be based on a culture of reconciliation, teaching, learning and mutual respect, and the establishment of a culture of tolerance and peace in all schools (Boshoff & Morkel 2003: 2B-19; Sacred Heart College 1999: 70).

According to the Department of Education (2000:20), the code of conduct is as much about the schools values, ethos and mission as it is about rules and regulations. It

should be a positive document. When the SGB draws up a code of conduct for learners, it is essential that they involve learners, parents and educators at the school. The process must be democratic and all stakeholders must agree (Sacred Heart College 1999: 70). No two schools are identical, thus schools should not just copy a code from another school. Each school should develop its own code. The SGB should take the whole school community through the negotiation process, and then provide a unique code for learners in the school. The code should provide appropriate channels for learners to air their grievances, as well as a basis for disciplinary procedures.

“Educators undoubtedly play a crucial role in the transformation and growth of our society through constructive and understanding work with children, by embracing change and working to create a school environment in which learners are safe and respected, where their voices are heard and they are able to learn without fear”(Department of Education 2000: 2). Therefore, finding an alternative to corporal punishment is not just an academic exercise, nor is it something that must be done because the law demands it, it is ultimately what must be done for the sake of the children in question.

2.4.4 Self-discipline and self-control

An important part of the educational process is helping young people become aware of their rights and the responsibilities that accompany those rights. The school has the duty to create an atmosphere in which self-discipline, as an aspect of responsibility, is approached both positively and productively. Parents must be the first to foster self-discipline within the child at home. The school provides an environment in which this training can be developed further, enabling all students to have the right to pursue their own educational needs without unnecessary disruption by others (National School Boards Association 1979: 25).

Good discipline certainly requires that learners experience the consequences of their misbehaviour. According to Gootman (1997:2), the caring educator’s discipline approach is that discipline should help children develop self-control. By focussing on self-control rather than on external control, a tremendous burden is lifted from educator’s shoulders. Children must be taught how to do the right things. This goal is

accomplished by setting limits, giving learners responsibility, helping them develop confidence in their abilities, and teaching them how to solve problems and make good judgements, as well as by correcting misbehaviour (Gootman 1997: 3).

The organisation of a school and the classroom environment established by the educator have an important impact on the behaviour of learners (Ridley & Walther 1995: 70; Savage 1991: 6). When learners do not find the school environment attractive they see the school as an irrelevant place where their needs are not met. Thus, learners do not develop a positive self-concept or a success identity. Savage (1999: 34) maintains that adopting a democratic approach (shared decision-making) to the management of discipline allows students a voice in establishing school rules. This democratic approach has the advantage of giving learners at least partial ownership of the rules, which in turn is more likely to develop a commitment to follow the rules. It also communicates to learners a respect for their needs and their ideas. Furthermore, Savage (1999: 34) argues that the democratic approach to the establishment of school rules is more consistent with the democratic goals of education. This approach also provides increased opportunities for helping students learn essential elements of self-control.

Ridley and Walther (1995: 106) maintain that if educators are to be successful in fostering meaningful learning, they must strive to meet students' affective/motivational needs. Savage (1991: 6) adds that if these needs cannot be satisfied through productive and positive channels, students will seek to satisfy them in ways that may be counter to the goals of the school and destructive to themselves. Thus, pupils need educators who are concerned about their welfare. They also need educators who allow them some power and voice in decision making, and most importantly they need educators who are concerned with helping them discover the relevance of their studies and help them to develop their unique abilities and interests (Savage 1991: 6). In agreement, Ridley and Walther (1995: 106-107) believe that students can self-regulate their behaviour if educators and schools take the time to teach students how to self-regulate their behaviour. Students who experience a classroom where there are both love and discipline learn to become responsible individuals who are able to make wise choices about their lives (Glasser in Savage 1991: 7).

Discipline has a purpose that extends beyond merely controlling the classroom and responding to misbehaviour. The most fundamental purpose of discipline and management in the classroom is the promotion of self-control. Self-control is seen as one of the most important outcomes of education and one of the basic prerequisites for a democratic society (Savage 1991: 7). Students who lack self-control are unable to take control of their lives and are unable to fulfil their own needs. Self-control is not an innate characteristic, it is learned. Thus, students need to be involved with responsible, caring individuals who will help them understand the relationship between behaviour and consequences, to develop self-control and self-discipline (Savage 1991: 9).

2.5 THE ROLE OF LEARNERS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Many schools in South Africa have had a tradition of Student Representative Councils (SRCs) which played a major role in the birth of the new South Africa. Other schools have a long school prefect tradition. Some schools used both systems. All these traditions needed to be brought together within the new context of consolidating democracy at school level. The best elements of these traditions had to be considered in order to see what was appropriate. This resulted in the SASA (RSA 1996b) stipulating that RCLs must be established in schools with learners in grade eight and higher (Department of Education 1999: 11).

Learners quickly realise the significance of their role in an RCL once they understand the connections between the struggle for democracy in the past, and the present need to consolidate and broaden democracy in the process of nation building. Section 11 of the SASA (RSA 1996b) determines that an RCL must be established at every public school enrolling learners from the eighth grade and higher. The new RCLs are representative bodies that have a more definite function, because they have a greater say in fundamental policy matters. For example, an RCL will participate in developing a code of conduct for learners (Department of Education 1999: 11). Therefore, the RCLs play a key role in the management of discipline in secondary schools.

Learners in secondary schools are also officially represented in SGBs in terms of the SASA (RSA 1996b). As part of the democratisation process in South African society, decision making power has been decentralised to the local level, where all role-players in the school and the community can contribute to its management. The important role of learners in the SGB must be seen against the background of learner's involvement since 1976 in the anti-government struggle to improve the conditions in black schools (Heystek 2001: 207).

2.5.1 Reasons for learners' participation in the governance of schools

The adoption of a supreme Constitution with a justifiable Bill of Rights (chapter 2 of the 1996 Constitution) has not only brought about fundamental changes in society as a whole, but has radically changed the way in which South African schools are governed and managed (Squelch 2000: 308). The Bill of Rights, in particular, has significantly impacted on all areas of school governance and management, but especially in areas such as school discipline.

Democratic principles became more important after the change in government in 1994. However, there is no uniformity in understanding the meaning and application of the concept of democracy. In general, it implies that every person has the right to be involved in matters directly concerning him/her. This vision already formed part of the struggle against the previous education system (Cobbet & Cohen in Heystek 2001: 209). The presence of parents, learners and community members on SGBs may be seen as resulting from the struggle. Previously it was not possible for everybody to be involved in the democratic process in the country, however, now more emphasis is placed on including all role players in decision-making procedures. This democratic principle is consequently also put into practice in schools, where every role player has to be part of governance. Therefore, learners are supposed to be the main focus and the most important persons in schools and must be included (Heystek 2001: 210).

One of the first demands emanating in 1984 from the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) was that the government recognise Student Representative Councils (SRCs). The SRCs represented learners and those at black schools were among the leading groups in the struggle against the apartheid government, hence

playing an important role in changing the political and education systems of the country (Heystek 2001: 210). Thus, learners were rewarded for their struggle against apartheid by being included on SGBs. Through the SRCs, learners controlled schools to a significant extent and they were granted representation in SGBs to acknowledge this role (Ngaso 1999: 2).

According to Heystek (2001: 210), one of the main aims of education is to educate learners to be well-balanced, skilled adults. After they leave school, they will have to make important independent decisions regarding their income, residence, marriage, as well as to maintain successful relationships with those they live and work with. If such criteria are set for learners as young adults, they should also be able to participate in decision-making at school. Outcomes-based education is designed for learners to acquire skills, and participation in school governance will enable them to learn management and other skills (Heystek 2001: 210).

Management, governance and decision-making have been decentralised to local school governing structures instead of national or provincial education departments. One of the main reasons for decentralisation is that schools know their own needs and can thus make the best decisions. Learners are important role-players and must be part of the decision-making process. They wish to articulate their feelings and concerns in a forum with the power to act. They also want to contribute to the decisions that may affect them (Heystek 2001: 211). According to Chinsamy (1995 iv), learner involvement in the management of educational institutions is crucial for the creation of a climate conducive to learning and teaching which could result in stability in educational institutions.

2.5.2 The role of the RCL and SGB in school discipline

The SASA (RSA 1996b: 11), stipulates that every public school enrolling learners in grade eight and higher must establish an RCL. It is the duty of an RCL to elect the learners who must serve on the SGB. An RCL is an official body representing all learners in secondary schools. It is the most prestigious official representative structure of learners in the entire school. The RCL is made up of learners elected by their fellow learners to represent them. The election process must be carried out in a

fair and democratic manner. The RCL is the only body that represents every learner and in which every learner can participate (Department of Education 2002: Chart on RCL).

The main objective of establishing an RCL is to create a sense of co-responsibility in learners. It is an attempt to create the opportunity to identify and train future leaders. Furthermore, it is an attempt to create a sound and healthy relationship between learners, educators and non-educators, as well as parents. The RCL must foster sound interaction among learners and educators and aim to keep learners abreast of events at school and in the community. It represents learners in the SGB and provides a voice for learner expression. In appropriate cases, an RCL provides learners with an opportunity to participate in decision-making regarding the school. Most importantly the RCL must promote and maintain discipline among learners and promote the general welfare of the school (Department of Education 1999: 12-13).

The RCL has major responsibilities placed upon them. They must liaise and communicate with learners, professional school management and the SGB at the school. Because the RCL represents the learners they must accept that the well being of the school and learners is their primary task. The body must foster a spirit of mutual respect, good manners and morality amongst learners. Learners must be led to develop high ideals of personal conduct and promote orderliness and not disrupt the order in the school. The RCL must assist the school management in implementing the school policy and attempt to democratise activities at the school (Department of Education 1999: 13).

The SGB plays a major role in drawing up the schools code of conduct and also sets out the procedures to deal with misconduct. The SGB also has to deal with any misconduct of learners which is referred to them. After a hearing, the SGB can suspend the learner or recommend that the learner be expelled. Therefore, the learner representative on the SGB is part of these processes mentioned above and hence should play an important role in school discipline. Moreover, some schools have elected to have prefects in addition to RCLs and learner SGB representatives to help in the management of discipline the school. Prefects are chosen by the learners as well as the educators involved with the learners. The criteria used to choose prefects may

vary from academic performance to extra-curricular activities. Many schools have recently included a prefect representative to sit in on important decision- making meetings.

2.6 DISCIPLINE IN KWA-ZULU NATAL (KZN) SCHOOLS

As mentioned in chapter 1, KZN is one of the nine provinces in South Africa. It is a densely populated melting pot of diverse cultures. The most prominent identifiable cultural group present is the Zulus. With such a large population to cater for, inevitably has led to the large number of schools in KZN. There are rural and urban types of schools as well as both public and private schools to cater for the specific needs of the immediate communities present.

The level of discipline found in schools in KZN is variable. In many urban schools learners have an active role in the management of discipline and the principle of democracy is highly prevalent. Alternatively in many rural schools learners show little or no involvement in the management of discipline. In fact the concepts RCL and SGB are non-existent in these schools. These schools are run on authoritarian models where learners are not given the opportunity to exercise their democratic rights as stated in the Constitution and the SASA. Moreover, according to Morrel (2001:295), corporal punishment is still practised in these schools.

The Department of Education both nationally and provincially have programs and guidelines in place to train learners to become involved in school management. In turn, many schools have their own structures in place to train learners to become actively involved in their education and to exercise their full democratic rights as stated in the Constitution (RSA 1996a) and in the SASA (RSA 1996b). Unfortunately, in many schools in KZN the training programs and guidelines set out by the Department of Education has not been implemented due to a variety of influencing factors such as:

- financial constraints;
- lack of resources;
- time constraints;
- lack of knowledge/information;

- educators being overburdened with work.

Moreover, according to Heystek (2001: 215-216) there is a possibility that there are no such training programs on the market to train learners, such information does not reach schools, or that principals do not convey such information because they think it is not worth training the learners.

Due to the numerous cases of human immune-deficiency (HIV) positive students present in the KwaZulu-Natal schooling system there is an expected impact on the management of discipline. Moreover, one can anticipate an increase in problems at school as children who are affected by HIV are often left in the care of grandmothers or older siblings. Furthermore, the exposure of the student body to inherent political violence and in general a violent society as whole has negatively impacted on discipline in KZN.

2.7 SUMMARY

This chapter has given a snapshot of the management of discipline in South African schooling from a historical as well as a current perspective. Furthermore, the role of the learner in the management of discipline in secondary schools was explored. The appeal to the history in the discussion is intended to encourage the reader to appreciate the difficulties of transforming a management system from an historical base which has potentially contradictory elements to the system to which a country aspires. This was illustrated by the historical conception of corporal punishment as a means of managing discipline as opposed to more positive alternatives to corporal punishment. The issues of developing self-discipline and self-control within learners were given special attention.

Here, both the local and international literature have been reviewed in order to determine how the role of the learners in the management of discipline in schools is viewed. Special attention is given to learner's participation/involvement within the RCL and SGB as well as reasons for their involvement in school governance.

The next chapter deals with the research methodology and the strategies that will be followed in the study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter presented a literature review that focussed on the theoretical foundations of the management of discipline in South African schools with specific reference to the role of the learner in the management of discipline at secondary school level. Special attention was given to the role of learners within the RCL, prefect body and SGB as well as reasons for their involvement in the management of discipline at secondary schools. Thus, it is necessary to investigate how learners perform their management roles by means of an investigation of the perceptions of educators, RCL/Senior prefects and SGB representatives regarding the management of discipline in schools.

The research emanated from educational change that occurred in South Africa with the adoption of a new education system. One of the major changes in the education system is the abolition of corporal punishment and a movement to more democratic and humane ways of disciplining learners at school. This leaves schools with the responsibility of identifying and implementing positive alternative disciplinary practices and procedures and by actively involving learners in the process.

This chapter deals with qualitative research methodology and a description of the design of this study. The main steps in the gathering of the data and the analysis thereof are included.

3.2 THE USE OF A QUALITATIVE APPROACH TO RESEARCH

3.2.1 Qualitative research

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 2) qualitative research is an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. The data collected has been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places and conversations,

and not easily handled by statistical procedures. Ary, Jacobs and Razavich (1990: 444-445) argue that qualitative inquiry begins from a different methodological assumption, namely, that the subject matter of the social or human sciences is fundamentally different from the subject matter of the physical or natural sciences and therefore, requires a different goal for inquiry and a different set of methods for investigation. Patton (1990: 39) further argues that qualitative designs are naturalistic in that the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the research setting. Moreover, Sherman and Webb (1990: 5) add that qualitative researchers want those who are studied to speak for themselves, and experience is to be taken and studied as a whole, or holistically.

Qualitative research seeks to understand human and social behaviour from the insider's perspective, that is, as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting. It is an intensely personal kind of research, one that freely acknowledges and admits "the subjective perception and bias of both participants and researcher into the research frame" (Ary et al 1990: 445). McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 373) maintain that the qualitative researcher is concerned with understanding the social phenomenon from the participants' perspective. Understanding is acquired by analysing the many contexts of the participants and by narrating participants' meanings for these situations and events. Participants' meanings include their feelings, beliefs, ideals, thoughts, and actions (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 373). Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 2) add that the qualitative researcher strives to understand behaviour from the participant's own frame of reference. This implies that the researcher needs to interact with the participant's as closely as possible in order to acquire such understanding. Hoberg (1999: 25) further adds that qualitative research is concerned with life as it is lived, things as they happen, situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment- to- moment course of events. Thus, qualitative researchers seek an understanding of lived experiences in real situations.

According to Van Maanen (1979: 10), qualitative methodology represents "a mixture of the rational, serendipitous, and intuitive in which the personal experiences of the organisational researcher are often key events to be understood and analysed as data". He goes on to say that qualitative researchers tend to describe the unfolding of social processes rather than the social structures. They also seek to derive 'contextual

understanding' which cannot be achieved without direct, first-hand and intimate knowledge of a research setting (Van Maanen 1979: 10). Miles (1979: 117) says of qualitative data that they are "rich, full, earthly, holistic, real; their face value seems unimpeachable; they preserve chronological flow where that is important; they tend to reduce a researcher's trained incapacity, bias, narrowness and arrogance".

The researcher selected a qualitative approach for data collection and analysis as this study investigates the perceptions and experiences of learners and educators of the role of learners in the management of discipline in secondary schools. Johnson (1999: 79) notes that qualitative methodologies are powerful tools for enhancing our understanding of the teaching and learning situation. This paradigm rejects the viewpoint of a detached, objective observer and believes that the researcher must understand the subjects' frame of reference. Data was gathered through engaging with the research subjects and getting their perspectives on their current management practices. Thus, the aim of qualitative research is to inform our understanding of educational practices and to expand our frames of reference. It is not a "verification of a predetermined idea, but discovery that leads to new insights of a phenomenon" (Sherman & Webb 1990:5). Qualitative research aims to give meaning to people's experiences (Cresswell 1998:199); furthermore, it is stressed that the methods of an inquiry must be appropriate and aligned to the objectives and the aims of an investigation.

Fundamental to the qualitative, interpretivist tradition is the concept of *verstehen*, a convention which, according to Patton (1990: 57):

....stresses understanding that focuses on the meaning of human behaviour, the context of social interaction, an empathetic understanding based on subjective experience, and the connections between subjective states and behavior. The tradition of **verstehen** or understanding places emphasis on human capacity to know and understand others through sympathetic introspection and reflection from detailed description and observation.

The research was conducted in the qualitative, naturalistic paradigm. There is a growing body of literature devoted to qualitative research in education some of which is synthesised here. The goals of this chapter are to elaborate on the reasons for choosing the qualitative methodology, and to provide a basic introduction into features of this type of research.

3.2.2 The role of the researcher

According to Hoberg (1999: 25), in qualitative studies the researcher is seen as the key 'instrument': much depends on what he/she sees and hears and much rests on his/her powers of observation and listening. In agreement, Ary et al (1990: 447) believe that in qualitative studies, the researcher is the data-gathering instrument. The researcher talks with people in their natural setting, observes their activities, reads their documents and written records, and records this information in field notes and journals. Therefore, validity in qualitative methods hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork (Patton 1990: 14).

Hoberg (1999: 27) maintains that qualitative researchers should interact with their subjects/informants in a natural and unobtrusive manner. The main aim of a researcher's investigation is not finding 'truth' or 'morality' but understanding other people's perspectives. Qualitative researchers should attempt to get well acquainted with the people they study and their circumstances (Hoberg 1999:27). Measor (1985: 57) adds that in qualitative research the researcher must strive to build a relationship of reciprocal trust and rapport with his/her subjects.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 374) maintain that qualitative researchers become 'immersed' in the situation and the phenomenon studied. They further maintain that the importance of the researcher's social relationship with participants requires that studies identify the researcher's role and status within the group. The preferred research role is that of a person who is unknown at the site or to the participants. A researcher who is a participant or already has status within the social group being observed limits reliability (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 386). However, other researchers do not agree with this and believe that a researcher who is known to the participants can still yield reliable data. Thus, it is important that the qualitative

researcher should have the necessary skills to carry out the research in a professional manner in order to be able to acquire the required information.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 58), a strategy that qualitative researchers should employ in a study is to proceed as if they know very little about the people and places they will visit. Thus, the researcher should not come to the field as an expert. Qualitative researchers attempt to mentally cleanse their preconceptions (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 58). In this study the researcher attempted to put all preconceived ideas aside to allow the participants to explain their experiences and perceptions from their own point of view.

3.2.3 Data collection strategies

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 106), data refers to the rough materials researchers collect from the world they are studying. They argue that data includes materials the people doing the study actively record. McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 42) maintain that qualitative techniques collect data in the form of words rather than numbers. There is an in-depth verbal description of phenomena. While there are different qualitative techniques that can be used to provide verbal descriptions, the goal of each is to capture the richness and complexity of behaviour that occurs in natural settings from the participants' perspective (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 43). Patton (1990: 31) argues that the data do not include judgments about whether what occurred was good or bad, appropriate or inappropriate, or any other interpretive judgments. They believe that the data simply describes what occurred.

According to Patton (1990: 10), qualitative methods consist of three kinds of data collection. These include the following:

- In-depth, open-ended interviews: the data from interviews are made up of direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings and knowledge.
- Direct observation: the data from observations include detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviours, actions, and the full range of interpersonal

interactions and organisational processes that are part of observable human experience.

- Written documents: document analysis in qualitative inquiry yields excerpts, quotations, or entire passages from organisational, clinical, or programme records, memoranda and correspondence, official publications and reports, personal diaries, and open-ended written responses to questionnaires and surveys.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 40) also list these methods of data collection and add that all research uses a variation of one or more of these, depending on the strengths and limitations of each. Thus, it is important for the researcher to determine which data collection techniques would be best suited to obtain the information required. Likewise, the researcher should choose techniques that are likely to elicit data needed to gain understanding of the phenomenon in question, contribute different perspectives on the issue and make effective use of time available for data collection (Glesne & Peskin 1992: 24). Individual interviews and focus group interviews were chosen for the purpose of this study. The reasons for choosing these data collection techniques are discussed below.

According to Patton (1990: 12), data-collection options and strategies for any particular research inquiry depend on answers to several questions:

- Who is the information for and who will use the findings?
- What kinds of information are needed?
- How is the information to be used?
- When is the information needed?
- What resources are available to conduct the evaluation?

Answers to these questions will determine the kinds of data that will be most useful to a particular research (Patton 1990: 13). In agreement, Best and Kahn (1993: 190) maintain that the choice of strategy “depends on the focus of the research and the desired time frame for the study”. Therefore, the researcher has to choose data collection strategies that will enable him/her to be in close interaction with the participants. This, in turn will allow the researcher to elicit more information from the

participants. For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose individual interviews and focus group interviews as she thought that these would be most suitable to gather the required information.

3.2.3.1 Individual interviews

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 250) interviews are essentially vocal questionnaires. They maintain that the interview technique is flexible and adaptable. Interviews can be used with many different problems and types of persons, such as those who are illiterate or too young to read and write, and responses can be probed, followed up, clarified, and elaborated to achieve specific accurate responses (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 250).

Many people are more willing to communicate orally than in writing, and, therefore will provide data more readily and fully in an interview than on a questionnaire (Van Dalen 1979: 158). Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 250) contend that nonverbal as well as verbal behaviour can be noted in face-to-face interviews, and the interviewer has an opportunity to motivate the respondent. They argue that interviews result in a much higher response rate than questionnaires, especially for topics that concern personal qualities or negative feelings. Against this background the researcher chose to use individual interviews as an appropriate data collection strategy for eliciting data from the educators (TLO's) who are in charge of the RCL.

Individual interviews will also be carried out with the head RCLs/senior prefects and SGB learner representatives. It must be noted for the purposes of this research the head RCL/senior prefect and SGB learner representative is the same person.

The researcher used interviews because they bring the researcher and the participants into direct contact. Moreover, this enables the researcher to acquire rich data filled with words that reveal the respondents' perspectives (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 97). Patton (1990: 278) further argues that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is in and on someone else's mind. They maintain that the purpose of an interview is not to put things in someone's mind, but to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. People are interviewed to find out from them those things which cannot be directly observed (Patton 1990: 278). Thus, the researcher felt that interviewing the

role players could reveal their perceptions on the management of discipline in the respective schools under study and the role played by learners.

As indicated in chapter one (cf 1.9) individual interviews were conducted with the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB learner representatives and Teacher Liaison Officer, from each of the respective schools under study as they are considered to be particularly information rich, and may have unique problems and experiences that they would not be able to share with others present. The primary aim of the study is to understand and describe how learners and educators interviewed are managing discipline in their school communities from their own frame of reference.

3.2.3.2 Focus group interviews

Focus group interviews are interviews with a small group of people on a specific topic (Patton 1990: 335). According to Hoberg (1999:29), the groups are generally composed of seven to ten people who are unfamiliar with one another and have been selected because they share certain characteristics that are relevant to the question of study. The researcher asks focused questions in order to encourage discussion and the expression of differing opinions and points of view (Hoberg 1999: 29). Patton (1990: 335) further adds that the participants are typically a relatively homogenous group of people who are asked to reflect on questions asked by the interviewer. Furthermore, McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 432) regard focus group interviews as a strategy for obtaining a better understanding of a problem or an assessment of a problem, concerns, a new product or idea by interviewing a purposefully sampled group of people rather than each person individually.

Patton (1990: 335) maintains that participants in the group get to hear each other's responses and to make additional comments beyond their original responses as they hear what other people have to say. It is not necessary for the group to reach any kind of consensus, or for people to disagree, but the object is to get high quality data in a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others (Patton 1990: 335). Likewise, McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 432) add that by creating a social environment in which group members are stimulated by the

perceptions and ideas of each other, one can increase the quality and richness of data through a more efficient strategy than one-on-one interviewing.

Thus, focus group interviews were used to interview class representatives serving on the RCL body. Focus group interviews were also used to interview groups of learners serving on the RCL because, as Krueger (1994: 19) puts it, a focus group produces qualitative data that provides insights into the attitude, perceptions and opinions of participants. Krueger (1994: 19) also argues that the focus group presents a more natural environment than that of the individual interview because participants are influencing and influenced by others, just as they are in real life. Moreover, group interviews can be useful in bringing the researcher into the world of the participants (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 100).

However, Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 100) warn that the researcher should be aware of the following problems: starting focus group interviews, controlling the person who insists on dominating the session, and reconstructing tape-recorded interviews. The researcher must try and minimise these problems. The researcher must ensure that no one person in the group dominates and that all participants are given an opportunity to voice their opinions. The data that has been tape-recorded must be transcribed immediately or else the interview will be difficult to reconstruct. Also, by doing this the researcher will be able to identify who is speaking, as there is a likelihood that several people will speak at once (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 100). These precautions were taken in this research to ensure that these problems were minimised.

3.2.4 Reliability and validity of research

Patton (1990: 11) maintains that validity and reliability of qualitative data depends to a great extent on the methodological skill, sensitivity, and integrity of the researcher. Skilful interviewing involves much more than just asking questions. Thus, generating useful and credible qualitative findings through interviewing requires discipline, knowledge, training, practice, creativity, and hard work (Patton 1990: 11).

Reliability and validity of research are crucial in all social research regardless of disciplines and methods employed (Shimahara 1988: 86). McMillan and Schumacher

(1993: 385 &157) argue that reliability in qualitative research refers to consistency of researcher's interactive style, data recording, data analysis, and interpretation of participants meanings from data, while validity means the degree to which scientific explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world. Reliability, therefore, is immensely difficult to researchers interested in a naturalistic event or phenomenon. The qualitative process is somewhat personal, no investigator interviews exactly like another. Thus, reliability issues are handled within the actual study to obtain consistency of research strategies (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 386).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 38), in qualitative research issues of instrument validity and reliability depend largely on the skills of the researcher. They maintain that essentially a person is observing, interviewing, and recording, while modifying the observation, interviewing, and recording devices from one field trip to the next. Thus, you need to ask, about yourself and colleagues, how valid and reliable is this person likely to be as an information-gathering instrument (Miles & Huberman 1994: 38). Patton (1990: 14) sums this up nicely by stating that "in qualitative inquiry the researcher is the instrument", and therefore validity hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing fieldwork.

Measures to enhance reliability involve a complete description of the research process, so that independent researchers may replicate the same procedures in comparable settings (Shimahara 1988: 87). Patton (1990: 461) further adds that the credibility issue for qualitative inquiry depends on three distinct but related inquiry elements:

- Rigorous techniques and methods for gathering high-quality data that is carefully analysed, with attention to issues of validity, reliability, and triangulation;
- The credibility of the researcher, which is dependent on training, experience, track record, status, and presentation of self; and
- Philosophical belief in the phenomenological paradigm, that is, a fundamental appreciation of naturalistic inquiry, qualitative methods, inductive analysis, and holistic thinking.

Wiersma (1991: 4) argues that regardless of the form research takes or the ends to which it is directed, researchers want their research to be valid, that is possess validity. The strength of qualitative study that aims to explore a problem or describe a setting, a process, a social group or pattern of interaction will be its validity (Marshall & Rossman 1995: 143). Marshall and Rossman (1995: 99) add that using a combination of data types increases validity as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another approach.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 31), research design refers to the plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions. Ary et al (1990: 110) add that design is a description of the procedures to be followed in testing the hypotheses. They maintain that it is very important that an appropriate testing method be chosen. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 58) further add that design is used in research to refer to the researcher's plan of how to proceed.

McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 31), maintain that the design describes the procedures for conducting the study, including when, from whom, and under what conditions the data will be obtained. In other words, design indicates how the research is set up, what happens to the subjects and what methods of data collection are used. In agreement, Ary et al (1990: 110) argue that the design should include a listing of the measures or instruments to be used in gathering the data. Investigators must identify appropriate tests, scales, and other tools required to measure the variables and must assess the reliability and validity of these questions. Thus, the aim is to choose measures that are as objective and reliable as possible.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 31), the purpose of the research design is to provide the most valid, accurate answers possible to research questions. They argue that since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the question. Research design is a very important part of an investigation, since certain limitations and cautions in interpreting the results are related to each design, and also because the research design determines how the data should be analysed (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 31).

Patton (1990: 61) warns that qualitative inquiry designs cannot be completely specified in advance of fieldwork. They maintain that while the design will specify an initial focus, plans for observations and interviews, and primary questions to be explored, the naturalistic and inductive nature of the inquiry makes it both impossible and inappropriate to specify operational variables, state testable hypotheses, finalise either instrumentation or sampling schemes. A qualitative design unfolds as fieldwork unfolds (Patton 1990: 6).

This research is qualitative in nature and is conducted in a natural setting. There are no manipulation of variables, stimulation, or externally imposed structure on the situation (Wiersma 1991: 219). The research embodies the three characteristics of ethnographic interviews as suggested by McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 37).

3.3.1 Statement of subjectivity

According to Patton (1990: 54), critics of qualitative inquiry have charged that the approach is too subjective, because the researcher is the instrument of both data collection and data interpretation, and because a qualitative strategy includes having personal contact with and getting close to the people and situation under study. However, they maintain that any credible research strategy requires that the investigator adopt a stance of neutrality with regard to the phenomenon under study. This means that the investigator does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths (Patton 1990: 55).

Babbie (2001: 141) argues that in social research, reliability problems crop up in many forms. Reliability is a concern every time a single observer is the source of data, because we have no certain guard against the impact of that observer's subjectivity. It is difficult to tell for sure how much of what is reported originated in the situation observed and how much in the observer (Babbie 2001: 141). However, subjectivity is not only a problem with single observers. Thus, the researcher should gain some understanding, even empathy, for the research participants in order to enter into their world. The success of the qualitative research depends on the willingness of the participants to participate. The researcher should therefore gain the trust and

confidence of the participants. Trust should be developed before people are willing to divulge certain kinds of information (Glesne & Peshkin 1992: 35). Moreover, Patton (1990: 472) maintains that because the researcher is the instrument in the qualitative inquiry, a qualitative report must include information about the researcher.

A methodological issue that I was very much aware of, and had to engage with emanated from the tension of being a researcher on one hand, an educator in one of the schools under study and a colleague and educator of the participants in the study. Firstly, as a researcher I had to deal with the issue of ‘insider- outsider’ dialogue (Babbie,2001: 279) – this relates to the tension between description (inside perspective) and interpretation (outsider). As a researcher, I had not only to understand but also actively interpret the voices of the participants who are my colleagues and learners. Secondly, I was concerned that as an educator involved with the management of discipline I might have brought my own conscious and unconscious ‘baggage’ to the process, in particular when I conducted the interviews and analysed the data.

Several methods were used to eliminate researcher bias. These included transcription of interviews and subsequent checking. The researcher then provided each participant with a copy of the interview in which the individual participated. The interviewees were allowed to make changes to clarify their opinions or thoughts. The researcher then made changes to the transcripts prior to analysis. Also the researcher entered the field as a ‘learner’ and tried not to impose her opinions on the research. She allowed all participants to speak freely and to tell her everything about the management of discipline from their own frames of reference. The researcher was able to convince the participants that the study was for academic purposes and that they would not be identified in the report on the research.

3.3.2 Choice of schools

The research site for this study focussed upon three specific secondary schools in the greater urban area of Kwa Zulu-Natal. The reasoning behind the specified research sites was to produce a variable spectrum of results dealt with on a regular basis rather than a confined set of results that ignore more complex or diverse environments. Two

of the three schools that were selected are co-ed schools while the other is an all boys school. All three schools are racially mixed schools. A range of differing environments was chosen encompassing an urban community school reluctant to acknowledge the changes on the ruling of corporal punishment, a common schooling environment caught in limbo somewhere between application of the new legislation and complete ignorance of it, and a modern developing community school embracing the new legislation and trying to incorporate the new ideals of a fast developing democratic society.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 24) maintain that the researcher should select a site where he/she would be accepted and where he/she would feel comfortable working. Thus, the researcher selected schools that she is familiar with. Also the selected schools are within easy reach. Hence, communication with the participants involved in the research was not difficult. However, the principals of the schools made it clear that the research project should not interfere with the teaching-learning activities. The researcher adhered to this, interviewing participants after school hours. Although the schools were chosen because of their proximity and accessibility, they can also be said to be similar to other urban schools in KwaZulu Natal.

The researcher had to request permission from the principal of each school to interview the participants because educational research data gathering involves some invasion of privacy. Informed consent was obtained by providing the educators with an explanation of the study. The researcher had to explain the purpose, objectives and ethics of the study to the principal. The names of the participants were not recorded as confidentiality and anonymity are central to the ethical aspects of research. The ethics of the research was explained to educators and learners prior to the commencement of each interview; I promised full confidentiality of the interviewees and the institution.

3.3.2.1 The three chosen schools

For the purposes of this research I refer to the schools under study as schools A, B and C. School A is a secondary school in KwaZulu- Natal with a learner population of 1572 ranging from grade 8 to grade 12. The school which historically catered for coloured learners, now has the following learner population ratios: 50% Black

learners, 30% Coloured learners and 20% Indian learners. It is a co-ed English medium school. The school is fairly large with a teacher population of 50. The school buildings are in good condition and are neat. Facilities at the school are modern and up to date. The school is properly fenced and has good security. Most of the learners attending this school live in the vicinity. However 30% of learners travel by taxi to school. The school has a fully- fledged school Governing Body in place as well as a Representative Council of Learners. However due to the fact that this school is situated in a poor socio-economic environment, it is described by staff as having poor discipline and little collaborative management.

School B is an 'ex-model C' school and is situated in the heart of an up-market urban area in KwaZulu-Natal. It is an all boys school with very traditional core values. The school is a fairly large school with a learner population of 1300 ranging from grade 8 to grade 12. The school has 65 educators on its staff. The historically white school currently has the following learner population ratios: 70% White learners, 15% Black learners, 10% Indian learners and 5% Coloured learners. The school is in excellent condition. The buildings are well kept and the entire school is well cared for. The school has outstanding facilities and the most modern resources. Parents are actively involved in their children's education and therefore the teaching and learning environment is very conducive. The School Governing Body and Representative Council of Learners are selected along democratic lines. Moreover, these bodies are fully functional at all levels of management and play a major role in decision-making at the school. Learners are actively involved in the management of discipline at this school and have had a major influence in creating a disciplined learning environment at the school.

School C is an urban secondary school that is situated in a poor socio-economic environment in KwaZulu-Natal. This school is a fairly small school and has a learner population of 550 learners ranging from grade 8 to grade 12. Teaching staff at this school comprises of 16 members. The historically Indian school has the following learner population ratios: 50% Indian learners, 48% Black learners and 2% Coloured learners. It is a co-ed school and the medium of instruction is in English. The learner population at this particular school has dropped tremendously recently due to the fact that it is situated in a poor socio-economic area. Many learners dropped out of school

for reasons such as poverty, lack of parental involvement, financial constraints etc. Moreover, this historically Indian school was one of the first schools in the area to open its doors to Black learners, hence there was an influx of Black learners during this period. However, after a while it was observed that these learners left due to experiencing major problems with transport, long travelling distances, lack of finances and so on. Another contributory factor was that due to the high rate of delinquent behaviour at the school, the more disciplined learners moved into more disciplined schooling environments. Thus, the majority of classrooms at this school lie vacant due to the high drop out rate in recent years. The school is in good condition, buildings are fairly new and well cared for. The school has fairly modern equipment and is generally well resourced, however, there is a serious lack of human resources. The class sizes are generally large and teachers are overburdened with heavy workloads. The school does have proper structures in place regarding the School Governing Body and the Representative Council of Learners. However, these bodies are not fully functional at all levels of management.

Particulars of the three schools selected are provided in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Characteristics of schools

Characteristics	School A	School B	School C
Medium of instruction	English	English	English
Number of learners	1572	1300	550
Number of educators	50	65	16
Learner population: Black	50%	15%	48%
Coloured	30%	5%	2%
Indian	20%	10%	50%
White	None	70%	None
Formal structures: RCL	Yes	Yes	Yes
Prefects	Yes	Yes	Yes
Class representatives	Yes	Yes	Yes
SGB learner reps.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Socio-economic	Poor	Upper-middle	Poor

Teacher Liaison Officers (TLO)	One	Two	Two
Code of Conduct	Yes	Yes	Yes
Security at school	Good	Good	Good
Type of school	Co – ed	All boys	Co – ed
Facilities	Good	Very good	Good

3.3.3 Choice of participants

One of the most important tasks for a researcher is the selection of educational settings and negotiation of access to participants (Measor 1985: 55). Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 80) further add that the first problem to face in research is getting permission to conduct your study. The research is based on the role of learners in the management of discipline at the respective schools. Negotiating for and gaining access was relatively easy for the researcher. The researcher obtained permission for conducting research at the schools from principals.

The primary participants of this study include:

- head RCL, senior prefect and learner SGB representatives from each of the respective schools under study. The head RCL, senior prefect and SGB learner representative at each of the schools under study is the same learner;
- Teacher Liaison Officers (TLO) at each of the schools;
- Class representatives from different grades, at each of the schools under study.

The purpose of the study was discussed and terms of access were negotiated. The researcher oriented all the participants to the purpose of the study and what was required of them. The participants were all given letters asking for their assistance and explaining the value of the study.

Participation of all participants was voluntary, and no coercion was used. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time, but none of them chose to do so. The TLO of each school were asked to participate in a 45 to 60 minute semi-structured individual interviews. Furthermore, the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB learner

representatives of each school were asked to participate in 45 to 60 minute individual interviews. The class representatives from different grades at the respective schools were asked to participate in 60 minutes focus group interviews. All information was kept strictly confidential. No names were used in data reporting. Each participant was provided a copy of the results. After data was transcribed, tapes were destroyed.

Thus in total in total 19 participants will be included in this research.

3.3.4 Interview guide

An interview guide is a list of questions or issues that are to be explored in the course of an interview (Patton 1990: 283). Patton (1990: 283) adds that an interview guide is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material. The interview guide provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject (Patton 1990: 283). In agreement, McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 426) argue that in the interview guide, topics are selected in advance but the researcher decides the sequence and wording of questions during the interview. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 97) further add that when an interview guide is employed, qualitative interviews offer the interviewer considerable latitude to pursue a range of topics and offer the subject a chance to shape the content of the interview. When the interviewer controls the content too rigidly or when the subject cannot tell his or her story personally in his/her own words, the interview falls out of the qualitative range (Bogdan & Biklen 1992: 97).

According to Patton (1990: 283) the following are some of the advantages of an interview guide:

- It makes sure that the interviewer has carefully decided how best to use the limited time available in an interview situation.
- It helps make interviewing across a number of different people more systematic and comprehensive by delimiting in advance the issues to be explored.

- It is especially useful in conducting group interviews: it keeps the interactions focused but allows individual perspectives and experiences emerge.

Therefore, for the purposes of this research, an interview guide was used with a list of questions to explore during each interview. Although it was prepared to ensure that basically the same information was obtained from each person, there were no predetermined responses and the interviewer was free to probe and explore within the predetermined inquiry areas. The interview guide ensured good use of limited interview time; it made interviewing the subjects more systematic and comprehensive and it helped to keep interaction focused. In keeping with the flexible nature of qualitative research designs, the interview guide could be modified over time to focus attention on areas of particular importance, or to exclude questions were found to be unproductive for the goals of the research.

3.3.5 Data gathering

For the purpose of this study the researcher chose to use individual and focus group interviews as data collection strategies. Qualitative methods such as focus groups or individual interviews enable the researcher to get in tune with the respondent and discover how that person sees reality (Krueger 1994: 29). Qualitative interviewing utilises open-ended questions that allow for individual variations (Patton 1990:279)

3.3.5.1. Individual interviews with teacher liaison officers (TLO)

The researcher conducted individual interviews with three KwaZulu-Natal secondary school TLOs who have been involved with the RCL for the past few years. The TLO is an educator at the school who is in charge of the RCL. The TLO of each school was interviewed to determine if there are good communication links between himself/herself, the principal, staff and RCL. Also an attempt was made to ascertain whether the TLO is guiding and organising the RCL in an effective manner as well as developing a sense of leadership in members of the RCL.

The researcher and the participants agreed on time, date and venue for interviews. The interviews with TLO went well and no problems were experienced. TLOs were very eager to be involved in the process. The interviews were carried out in the TLOs classrooms after school hours thus ensuring that there were no interruptions. The setting provided for privacy and TLO's were able to communicate freely in an environment where they felt at ease and were comfortable.

Certain basic questions were asked as a framework. However, the TLOs were given scope to voice their opinions on any issue they deemed to be of importance. The educators were allowed to digress from the given open-ended questions in order to express their complete opinions. These interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim. Notes were taken during the interview. Informal discussions with the teachers helped generate data that was used to prompt them during the interviews, and to broaden the study's perspective on certain issues about the role of learners in the management of discipline.

3.3.5.2 Individual interviews with head RCL and learner SGB representatives

The researcher conducted individual interviews with the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB learner representatives from each of the respective schools under study. Individual interviews were carried out with the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB learner representatives from each school as they are considered to be particularly information rich, and may have unique problems and experiences that they would not be able to share with others present. The interviews were carried out to determine whether learners are involved in the management of discipline in their respective schools and the extent of their involvement. An attempt was also made to discover what are learner's perceptions of the management of discipline at their schools and if they have been trained to carry out their roles effectively.

The researcher and participants agreed on the time, date and venues for interviews. All interviews were carried out after school hours so that it did not infringe upon teaching/learning time. Interviews were carried out in classrooms where the participants felt comfortable and at ease and there was no invasion of privacy. Generally there were no problems experienced and participants were very co-

operative and willing to be involved in the process. Interviews were tape recorded with the permission of the participants. Recording allowed the researcher to be actively involved during the interviews. The researcher, however also took notes during the interviews. Although the researcher had prepared possible interview questions, these were used as guides and participants were encouraged to reveal as much as they could on the topic.

3.3.5.3 Focus group interviews with class representatives

Focus group interviews were conducted with class representatives from different grades, at each of the specified schools under study. In other words the researcher conducted three focus group interviews comprising of five participants and in some cases four participants in each group. Thus a total of thirteen class representatives participated in the three focus group interviews. Focus group interviews were carried out because it was envisaged that when learners assemble in a group to discuss a particular problem/topic, they will stimulate each other thus exploring the topic more fully. These interviews were conducted to establish to what extent the class representatives are having an impact on the learners within the classroom and encouraging them to observe the rules of discipline stipulated in the code of conduct.

The interviews were conducted at a time, date and venue agreed upon by the researcher and the participants. Interviews were carried out after school hours in specified classrooms where the participants were comfortable and at ease. The interviews generally went well and participants were very happy to be involved in the research project. However, it took the researcher a long time to convince the participants at one of the specified schools to agree to remain at the school after school hours. The researcher had to make the participants understand that it was important that the project does not interfere with the teaching/learning activities at the school. These interviews were audio taped and then transcribed verbatim. Notes were also taken during the interviews. However, the researcher ensured that note taking does not interfere with the spontaneous nature of the group discussion (Hoberg 1999: 141). Informal discussions with the participants helped generate data that was used to

prompt them during the interviews, and to broaden the study's perspective on certain issues about the management of discipline in their respective schools.

3.3.6 Transcribing the data

According to Patton (1990: 347), “no matter what style of interviewing is used, and no matter how carefully one words interview questions, it all comes to naught if the interviewer fails to capture the actual words of the person being interviewed”. Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 128) add that when a study involves extensive interviewing or when interviewing is the major technique in the study, using a tape recorder is recommended. Therefore, the researcher used a tape recorder and transcribed all tape-recorded interviews verbatim immediately after the interviews had taken place.

According to Patton (1990: 379), verbatim transcription is regarded as the essential raw data for qualitative analysis. Babbie (2001: 295) warns that even tape recorders cannot capture all relevant aspects of social processes. Thus in interviewing, it is vital to make full and accurate notes on what goes on. If possible it is important to take notes while interviewing. When this is not feasible, notes should be written down as soon as possible afterwards (Babbie 2001:295). Therefore, for the purposes of this research the researcher recorded all aspects during and immediately following the interviews.

3.3.7 Analysis of the data

There are various ways of handling and analysing data. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 153), data analysis is:

The process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field notes, other materials which were accumulated by the researcher to increase his or her understanding of the mind which enables the researcher to present that, which was discovered by others.

According to Babbie (2001: 358), qualitative data analysis is the non-numerical assessment of observations made through participant observation, content analysis, in-

depth interviews, and other qualitative research techniques. Meanwhile, Marshall and Rossman (1995: 111) argue that data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating process. McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 480) further add that qualitative analysis is a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest. Qualitative data analyses vary widely because of different research foci, purposes, and data collection strategies (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 480).

Data analysis according to Fetterman (1988: 229) is data reducing whereby data is selected, focused, simplified, abstracted and transformed to enable the researcher to manage it. In this research the data consists of the transcripts and notes taken during and immediately after the interviews. In analysing the data, I initially read the transcripts and the notes repeatedly in order to gain familiarity with them. I also listened to all recordings of the interviews, at the same time checking the accuracy of the transcriptions. Marshall and Rossman (1995: 113) maintain that reading, reading and reading once more through the data force the researcher to become familiar with those data in intimate ways.

I searched through the data for regularities and patterns as well as for topics in the data and wrote down words and phrases to represent these topics and patterns. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992: 166), these words and phrases are “coding categories”. Taylor and Bogdan (1984: 136) maintain that in qualitative research, coding is a systematic way of developing and refining interpretations of the data. The coding process involves bringing together and analysing all the data bearing on themes, ideas, concepts, interpretations and prepositions. Thus, the data was divided into categories and this was done in order to work more easily with the data. The categories and subcategories were identified as natural themes. As categories and themes emerged, they were colour coded (Van Wyk 1996: 166). Glesne and Peshkin (1992: 134) recommend that there should be as many major codes as needed to subsume all of the data, appreciating that more may develop than will hold up as separate codes.

Marshall and Rossman (1995: 111) regard qualitative data analysis as the search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. This builds grounded theory. Thus, the process embodied in the research programme was one of moving between data already gathered, relevant existing theory and further data collection and analysis (Van Wyk 1996: 166).

The researcher used a word processor to transcribe the sets of audio taped data. The transcriptions were then checked against the audio-tapes to ensure that all the data was accounted for. The data sets were then printed for analysis.

3.3.8 Reliability and validity of the study

Reliability and validity are essential to the effectiveness of any data gathering procedure (Best & Kahn 1993: 208). McMillan and Schumacher (1993: 386) maintain that reliability and validity issues are handled within the actual study to obtain consistency of research strategies (cf 3.2.5)

3.3.8.1 Reliability in data collection

Babbie (2001: 140-141) maintains that reliability is a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result each time. According to Mcmillan and Schumacher (1993: 388-389), qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of strategies to enhance reliability in data collection. Thus, I used these strategies to ensure that data was reliable: verbatim accounts of conversations; transcripts and direct quotations were used as data; mechanically recorded data (a tape recorder was used during all interviews); low-inference description: concrete, precise descriptions from field notes, interview elaborations were used and member checking. I then provided each participant with a copy of the interview in which the individual participated. The interviewees were allowed to make changes to clarify their opinions or thoughts. I made changes to the transcripts prior to analysis.

3.3.8.2 Internal validity

Internal validity refers to the degree to which the explanations of phenomena match the realities of the world (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 391). In other words, internal validity of qualitative designs is the degree to which the interpretations and concepts have mutual meanings between the participants and the researcher (McMillan & Schumacher 1993: 391). Thus, the researcher and the participants should agree on the descriptions and meanings of different events. Bless and Higson Smith (1995: 82) maintain that internal validity examines the extent to which a particular research design has excluded all other possible hypotheses which could explain the variation of the dependent variable. In this study I used these strategies to enhance internal validity: participants' verbatim language: participants' words were transcribed as they were spoken; triangulation: multi data collection techniques were used; comparison of data: all data collected was compared to check validity; and feedback from participants: each participant was given a copy of the transcript of the interview to check if it was valid.

3.3.9 Triangulation

According to Patton (1990: 466), triangulation of qualitative data is a form of comparative analysis. Triangulation involves triangulating data sources. This means comparing and cross-checking the consistency of information derived at different times and by different means within qualitative methods (Patton 1990: 467). The triangulation approach can definitely strengthen the reliability and validity of evaluation data. Best and Kahn (1993: 203) further add that triangulation is the use of multiple data collection techniques. In other words the researcher is able to study the data from more than one perspective.

All data collection techniques have strengths and weaknesses (Best and Kahn 1993: 202). Thus, triangulation helps to emphasise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of the chosen data collection techniques. Against this background Best and Kahn (1993: 203) argue that good qualitative research will often include multiple methods of data collection. By selecting complimentary methods, a researcher can cover the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another. For the purposes of

this study, the data collected has been triangulated by comparing data from all the different interviews with each other. Moreover, the literature and circulars on the management of discipline issued by the Department of Education were used to validate statements made by the participants.

3.4 SUMMARY

This chapter covers the use of a qualitative approach to research, which was used in this study. The data collection tools namely, individual interviews and focus group interviews are described. The design of the research such as choice of schools and choice of participants was also described. A detailed description of the data collection procedures was given as well as the analysis processes. The themes that emerged from the analysis of data will be outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings derived from the data generated during individual interviews with three TLOs and three head RCLs/senior prefects/SBB learner representatives, as well as three focus group interviews with class representatives from the various schools under study. Firstly, schools included in the research are briefly discussed. The characteristics of participants are summarised in tables below and the significance of the experiences of the participants is discussed. All participants are from urban schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The researcher had assured participating schools as well as the participants of confidentiality and anonymity. For this reason the names of the schools and participants are not included in the discussion.

The ensuing sections (4.4 to 4.9) present significant themes that emerged from the interviews. All interviews were carried out in English. The researcher used the participants' words verbatim and no alterations were made. Quotations are presented in indentations and comments are in brackets.

4.2 SCHOOLS INCLUDED IN THE RESEARCH

The school is a social institution entrusted with the responsibility of continuing and supplementing the process of socialisation begun at home. As an institution, the school has to have rules and regulations which facilitate socialisation and effective learning (Mwamwenda 1995: 319). Therefore, schools do not operate in isolation. They form part of the social structures that are found within communities and are, thus, influenced by both communities and the context of their environment. Hence to understand what is happening in the school, one needs to also understand what is happening in the community that the school serves.

4.2.1 The context of the schools

KwaZulu–Natal is situated on the East Coast of South Africa. It is one of the nine provinces of South Africa. The demographic, geographic and economic characteristics of South Africa's provinces vary due to natural, but mainly historical, factors. The geographical distribution of different population groups and the allocation of resources to these populations within what are now nine provincial boundaries, have their roots in the history and politics of the country. Before 1994 the system of government in South Africa was centralised, but fragmented along racial lines. In total there were seventeen systems of government for education in the country. Since 1994, the process of merging these seventeen administrations into one coherent national education system while simultaneously redressing the imbalances of the past has been a challenge concerning the delivery of public services such as education and training in South Africa (Demographic Profile of South Africa 1999: 1).

Provinces containing former homelands, like KwaZulu-Natal, tend to have a larger proportion of their population in more rural settings and a higher than average population density. These populations are further from education, training and employment opportunities present in urban areas, and the challenge to the education system is to improve access to such opportunities for non-urban populations (Demographic Profile of South Africa 1999: 1). However, presently in KwaZulu-Natal the majority of the learners from the rural areas endeavour to attend schools in the urban areas so that they can receive a better education.

KwaZulu-Natal is one of the three most densely populated provinces, and has the largest proportion of young people of school going age (cf 1.5). It is significant to note that Africans form the majority of the population in KwaZulu-Natal (Demographic Profile of South Africa 1999: 1). In a survey carried out in 1999 it was noted that there are 5578 public schools and 138 independent schools in KwaZulu-Natal and the learner-to-educator ratio is 37.1. Also there are 74 719 educators in ordinary schools in KwaZulu-Natal, which is the highest of all the provinces (Demographic Profile of South Africa 1999: 1).

Statistics show that KwaZulu-Natal has a high crime rate and political violence still occurs frequently. Moreover, the number of HIV-positive learners in KwaZulu-Natal continues to escalate (CDC –Global AIDS Program Countries 2003: 1-4). These factors have negatively impacted on the schooling in KwaZulu-Natal. For the purposes of this study, I shall only be focus on urban schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

4.2.2 The schools in the research

Three secondary schools from the greater urban area of KwaZulu-Natal were chosen for this study. Although the schools have been discussed in detail in (cf 3.3.2.1) the following factors need to be stressed. School A serves a very poor socio-economic community. Hence school fees at this school is fairly low in comparison to other schools in KwaZulu-Natal. However, school A has sufficient classrooms that are well kept. There is also a basic library and computer room available to learners. All learners wear uniforms, although not all are able to afford the suggested uniforms. Academic achievement at this school is low and discipline is generally poor. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

School B is an ex-model C school and serves a more affluent community. School fees are very high and the school is in excellent condition. The school has the most modern and up to date facilities available to the boys. The boys wear uniforms and the school has many traditions that have become part of the very fabric of the school itself. Discipline is generally good and the academics are strong. Most of the learners at school B take great pride in their school.

School C also serves a poor socio-economic community and school fees are reasonable the buildings and classrooms are in good condition as the school is still fairly new. In fact school C has many vacant classrooms because the learner population has dropped tremendously recently due to the fact it is situated in a poor socio-economic area (cf 3.3.2.1) and many parents send their children to ex-model C schools in the belief that they will get a better education. School C is a co-ed school and it has a library and computer facility available to learners. The learners wear uniforms, but their uniforms are generally worn in a very disrespectful manner for example girls were their skirts too short and boys were their shirts out of their pants.

Discipline at the school is said to be “not too bad”, but the academics is generally of a poor standard.

4.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF PARTICIPANTS

This section presents responses by participants that are related to personal characteristics. Attention is also given to the experience of the participants in the education system.

4.3.1 The Teacher Liaison Officers (TLO)

Three TLOs from the schools under study were interviewed in this research. Their personal characteristics are included in Table 4.1. This information is necessary in order to understand the background of the participants in relation to their responses.

TABLE 4.1 : THE TLOs FROM SCHOOL A,B &C

TLOs	School A	School B	School C
Gender	Female	Male	Female
Age	42	48	42
Academic qualification/s	BA	BA	BA, B. Com.
Professional qualification/s	PTD	HED	HED,B Ed & M Ed
Further field of study	B Ed (incomplete)	None	None
Years of experience as an educator	20	24	21
Years of experience as a TLO	2	2	5
Training course for TLO	Yes	None	Yes
Who offered training	Dept. of Education	None	Dept. of Education

Key:

BA	:	Bachelor of Arts
B. Com	:	Bachelor of Commerce
B Ed	:	Bachelor of Education
Dept.	:	Department
HED	:	Higher Diploma in Education
M Ed	:	Master of Education
PTD	:	Primary Teachers' Diploma

The TLOs who participated in this study included one male and two females who fall within the age group of 42 and 48 and all have twenty or more years of teaching experience (Table 4.1).

TLOs from school A and C have attended training sessions on RCL's, whereas the TLO from school B had no training at all. Both the TLO from school A and C attended training courses offered by the Department of Education.

4.3.2 Head RCL/senior prefect

Individual interviews were carried out with the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB representative at each of the schools under study. Altogether three head RCL / Senior prefect/SGB representatives were interviewed. Their personal details are included in Table 4.2.

TABLE 4.2 : HEAD RCL /SENIOR PREFECT/SGB LEARNER REPRESENTATIVES FROM SCHOOL A, B & C

Head RCL/Senior prefect	School A	School B	School C
Gender	Male	Male	Female
Age	20	17	17
Grade	12	12	12

Racial group	Black	Indian	Black
Number of years serving on RCL	2	3	2
How was selection done	Voting by all learners of school	Vote by all learners of school	Volunteered
Training received	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who carried out training	Department of Education & TLO	Headmaster, TLO & some educators	TLO
Developmental programmes at school	No	Yes	No

The head RCLs that were interviewed included two males and one female that fall within the age group of 17 and 20. All head RCL's are senior prefects as well, and are in grade 12. They all received training of some sort. The head RCL from school A received training from the Department of Education and TLO, while the head RCL from school B received training from the headmaster, TLO and some educators and the head RCL from school C only received training from the TLO. The RCL from school B has had more than one session of training whereas the RCL 's from school A and C only had one session of training. Furthermore, the head RCL from school B is involved in developmental programmes at school, while the other two head RCLs at school A and C are not involved in any sort of developmental programmes at school. These developmental programmes are run by the prefects, RCL body and TLOs and sometimes by school management to help learners cope with their tasks and thus enhance their leadership skills. Head RCL's from school A and C have two years of experience as RCL's while the head RCL from school B has three years of experience as an RCL.

4.3.3 Class representatives serving on the RCL body

Three focus group interviews were conducted with class representatives in the three schools under study. In total thirteen class representatives were interviewed in this study. Their personal details are included in Tables 4.3 to 4.5.

TABLE 4.3 : CLASS REPRESENTATIVES AT SCHOOL A

LEARNER	1	2	3	4	5
Gender	Female	Female	Female	Female	Male
Age	13	14	15	17	20
Grade	8	9	10	11	12
Racial Group	Black	Black	Black	Black	Black
Number of years serving as class Reps.	1	2	3	1	2
Selection of class reps.	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted
Training received	No formal training	No formal training	No formal training	No formal training	Yes – one workshop
Who carried out the training	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Dept. of Education and TLO
Developmental programmes at school	No	No	No	No	No

Key:

- Dept : Department
Reps : Representative
TLOs : Teacher Liaison Officer
N/A : Not Applicable

In school A the focus group interview with class representatives included representatives from grade 8 to 12. They fall within the age group 13 and 20 and have between 1 and 3 years of experience in serving as class representatives. Participants

from school A included four females and one male and were all selected by the class to represent them. Four of the class representatives from school A received no formal training while one of the class representatives received training from the Department of Education and the TLO. However, none of the representatives has been involved in any developmental programmes at school.

TABLE 4.4 : CLASS REPRESENTATIVES AT SCHOOL B

LEARNER	1	2	3	4
Gender	Male	Male	Male	Male
Age	13	14	16	17
Grade	8	9	11	12
Racial group	Black	White	White	Indian
Number of years serving as class reps.	1	2	4	5
Selection of class reps.	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted
Training received	No formal training	No formal training	Yes	Yes
Who carried out training	N/A	N/A	TLO/Educator	Headmasters/ TLO/Educator
Developmental programmes at school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Who offers these programmes	Prefects/head RCLs	Prefects/head RCLs	Prefects/ head RCLs	TLOs/ Management

Key:

Dept : Department

- Reps : Representatives
 RCLs : Representative Council of Learners
 TLOs : Teacher Liaison Officers

In school B the focus group included four male learners ranging in age from 13 to 17 years old. Class representatives who participated in the focus group were from grade 8 to 12 respectively. Participants included two white learners, one Black learner and one Indian learner and they were all selected by their class to represent them. Two of the class representatives from school B received formal training while the other two class representatives had no formal training. Training for these two representatives was carried out by the headmasters of the school, the TLOs and a few educators on the staff. All class representatives are involved in developmental programmes at school. These programmes are run by the prefects, head RCLs and TLOs and sometimes by the school management.

TABLE 4.5 : CLASS REPRESENTATIVES AT SCHOOL C

LEARNER	1	2	3	4
Gender	Male	Male	Female	Male
Age	13	14	16	17
Grade	8	9	10	11
Racial Group	Indian	Indian	Black	Indian
Number of years serving as class rep.	1	2	2	3
Selection of class reps.	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted	Class voted
Training received	No formal training	No formal training	One workshop	Yes, had a few training sessions

Who carried out training	N/A	N/A	TLO &Head RCL	Dept. of Education, TLO, head RCL
Developmental programmes at school	No	No	No	No

Key:

- Dept : Department
- Reps : Representative
- RCLs : Representative Council of Learners
- TLOs : Teacher Liaison Officers

The focus group interview with class representatives from school C included three males and one female ranging in age from 13 to 17 years old. Participants from the focus group were from grade 8 - 11 respectively. The participants included three Indian learners and one black learner and they were all selected by their class to represent them. The voting procedure was used for selection of class representatives. Two of the participants received no formal training, one attended one workshop only, while the other one received some training. The one representative received training from the Department of Education, TLO and Head RCL, while the other attended one workshop that was carried out by the TLO and the Head RCL. None of the class representatives attended any developmental programmes offered by the school.

4.3.3 The significance of the experiences of the participants

As indicated in Table 4.1 all the TLOs only have between 2 and 5 years of experience as TLOs. This is probably because this is still a fairly new concept in education. However, all three TLOs have a tremendous amount of experience as educators. They all have 20 years and above experience hence they probably use this experience to help them to cope with their responsibilities as TLOs effectively. Also the TLOs are

suitable qualified as educators and two of the TLOs have received some training for their jobs as TLOs while one received no formal training at all.

The head RCLs/senior prefects/SGB representatives only have between 2 to 3 years of experience as RCLs/prefect/SGB representatives. This is not much experience because the whole concept of learner involvement in education is still a fairly new one. Head RCLs /senior prefects/SGB representatives have had training for their jobs that was offered by the Department of Education, TLOs and some educators. However, they are not involved in any developmental programmes at school to reinforce this training. Thus, it would be unlikely that they would be adequately prepared for their task with only a few training sessions.

All thirteen class representatives have between 1 to 5 years of involvement with the RCL, mainly because the whole RCL concept is still a fairly new one and learners still have a lot to learn. Also many of the participants seem to have had no training to help them to deal with their tasks effectively. Furthermore, there seems to be a lack of developmental programmes that are offered to learners at school A and C to enhance their leadership qualities. However, at school B there are programmes to help learners cope with their tasks. If learners do not receive proper training and guidance to perform their duties on the RCL then the whole concept of learner involvement is not likely to be successful.

4.4 DISCIPLINE

Discipline and management are central to effective schools. In fact discipline underpins every aspect of school life (Blandford 1998:39) (cf 2.1). However, discipline continues to be a problem in many schools universally. Moreover the management of discipline in schools has become a complex problem since the banning of corporal punishment by the South African Schools Act of 1996. Many educators are frustrated and do not know how to handle the discipline problems that they are faced with. It is against this background that the SASA (RSA 1996b) provides for greater participation by learners in the democratic functioning of schools. Learners can and should play key roles in the management of discipline in secondary schools through their involvement with the RCL, prefects and SGB (cf 2.1).

4.4.1 Perceptions and experiences of discipline

Participants from all schools under study consider discipline as an important aspect in the life of the school. All agree that effective teaching and learning cannot take place effectively if the school environment is not a disciplined one. This is confirmed by the head RCL from school B who sees good discipline as:

Reasonable behaviour, in other words when learners do not prohibit educators teaching activities in class and also deprive their fellow classmates from their right to be taught without disruptions.

The head RCL from school A adds that good discipline is:

... when learners obey instructions from educators/RCL/prefects, learners must take their work seriously and it is important for them to dress in full school uniform, attend school regularly as well as be punctual for school.

Furthermore, the TLO from school C felt that “respect for authority was a crucial factor in helping to maintain a disciplined environment”. The TLO from school B sums up the idea of good discipline as: “adherence to certain basic values and principles”. He maintains that certain aspects are non-negotiable, such as adherence to the dress code, greeting staff and respect for authority.

Based on their definitions of what constitutes good behaviour, the participants all admitted to varying problems with discipline at their respective schools. The TLO from school A was quite explicit and viewed discipline as a major problem at their school. She went on to say that:

Our learners are very disruptive and we experience many discipline problems. In fact many of the educators are feeling very frustrated with the bad behaviour of the majority of our learners.

The extent of the problem was confirmed by one of the RCL representatives at the school during the focus group interviews who added that: “there is a serious lack of discipline at our school”.

During the interviews it became apparent that although school B is experiencing minor discipline problems, these problems are not to the extent where educators and learners cannot manage and cope with these problems. In fact the head RCL from school B felt that, discipline at their school was generally much better than at other schools because they have proper procedures in place to sort out discipline matters quickly and effectively and he confirms that learners are actively involved in the management of discipline. In contrast to the opinions of the RCL, the TLO from school B expresses reservations about discipline at the school:

I think we as a school are struggling with discipline. Educators, prefects and the RCL are finding it difficult to maintain the high standard of discipline that the school used to have.

The increase in disciplinary problems at school B could be related to the school admitting more students from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to the school, which in the past had served an affluent community. The TLO from school B explains the problem as follows:

I have been associated with the school for 24 years now and the school population and discipline has definitely changed over the past few years. In fact the school has just embarked on a new program to try and limit their discipline problems.

Participants from school C feel that the discipline at their school is at an acceptable level. This is confirmed by the TLO from school C who states that: “discipline at our school is okay, we do not have any serious problems as such. We have a few minor problems of course, as often happens in most schools”. The head RCL of the school adds that: “the discipline at our school is not bad but there are a few people who lack discipline”. It is interesting to note that school C caters for a very disadvantaged community and yet their discipline problems are not so intense. However, an

important factor to consider here is that school C is a fairly small school in comparison to the other schools under study.

Discussion

According to Short et al (1994: 93) student discipline continues to be the most consistently discussed problem in public schools and a problem that most plagues educators. In schools where discipline is a problem there is little chance of students receiving an education that meets their needs (Blanford 1998: 8). The economic, social and educational costs related to discipline are enormous and parents, educators and policy makers continue to search for solutions (Savage 1991: vii) (cf 2.2). According to this study, the schools under study have confirmed that discipline is a problem in the school environment. All schools have indicated that they experience a fair amount of discipline problems, which impacts negatively on the teaching and learning situation.

According to Gootman (1997: 2), good discipline requires that students experience the consequences of their misbehaviour and that discipline should help children develop self-control. The main aim of discipline is to teach children how to do the right thing. Thus, it is important that learners become active participants in maintaining a disciplined environment at school to ensure that they benefit from the teaching/learning situation.

4.4.2 Types of misconduct

Misconduct for the purposes of this research refers to misbehaviour or disruptive behavior. It is vitally important that learners behave appropriately at school to allow for the smooth and effective running of the school. Often even though educators have planned and prepared their lessons well, they still experience learner misbehaviour in class. The findings of this research indicate that the schools under study experience many different types of misconduct that they have to deal with on a daily basis.

Misconduct is classified by the head RCL of school A as being: “ disruptive in class, not listening to and obeying educators, not wearing proper school uniform, not doing homework and assignments, smoking/fighting/drugs/alcohol etc”. He adds that:

This year has been an exceptionally difficult one thus far. Learners have been involved in all sorts of disruptive behaviour. These include stealing, smoking, fighting, drugs, late coming, not wearing proper uniform and continuously disrupting classes.

Class representatives from school A expressed great frustration because they continually had to deal with a number of disruptive learners in class. One of the class representatives from school A confirmed that: “ learners are rude and arrogant towards educators and they often repeat what educators are saying and tend to mock educators”. Another class representative stated that fighting and stealing have become common practice in their class. All class representatives who were interviewed from school A are of the opinion that misconduct within the classroom is difficult to manage.

School B also experiences learners who misbehave in class. However, the head RCL of school B says that these are minor discipline problems like homework not being done and learners not wearing proper uniform. Also one of the class representatives from school B expressed concern over the fact that when learners are not kept busy, they tend to be very disruptive, rude and arrogant. Another class representative added that learners sometimes tend to backchat the educators. It was interesting to note that one of the class representatives felt that: “a lot depends on the educator when it comes to misbehavior in class”. He went on to say that if the educator is not strict and firm, learners tend to take advantage and misbehave in class. Class representatives of school B are of the opinion that even though they experience learner misconduct at their school, these problems are not too serious.

In spite of claiming that discipline at school C is good, when asked to provide some examples of poor discipline, participants mentioned serious incidents of misbehaviour. For example, the head RCL from school C confirms that they often have learners coming to school under the influence of alcohol and many learners tend

to play truant and get into unnecessary trouble like shoplifting, taking drugs etc. Class representatives from school C also indicated that they have a few learners who are disrespectful to educators, are often absent and have a poor attitude towards their schoolwork. The class representatives who were interviewed at school C also perceive discipline problems within the class as difficult to resolve.

Discussion

The types of misbehaviour found in schools today are many and varied. According to Fennimore (1995: 171), the behaviour of students in school is always related to the context of all that is taking place in the process of education. Research indicates that schools have different opinions as to what constitutes serious discipline problems and what are petty problems. For example, school B in this study sees small offences as being major problems, whereas school A do not consider these to be serious issues.

4.4.3 Perceptions of causes of discipline problems

Tauber (1995: 211) argues that discipline problems do not just occur out of the blue, they are precipitated. He maintains that home and other out-of-school environments exert a major influence upon children that, in turn, affects their readiness to learn when they come to school. Educators cannot do much about these out-of-school factors, however those in-school factors that influence a child's willingness to learn can be addressed. Thus, it can be concluded that the causes of misbehaviour are varied. Misbehaviour in school and the classroom may originate in the child himself, the school, the society, the curriculum, the child's parents or the teachers.

Participants interviewed in this study suggest that there are a number of reasons why learners tend to be disruptive at their schools. For example, the TLO from school A indicated that their learners are very badly behaved because:

Many of our learners come from poor socio-economic backgrounds with the result we find that learners have very little guidance and support from their parents. In fact many of our learners live away from their parents, thus learners are left on their own to do as they please. Educators try to discipline at

school but if there is a lack of parent involvement then it is difficult to achieve the goals of education.

In addition to these external problems which lead to disciplinary problems at schools, mention was made of the fact that few parents are involved in school activities or their children's learning. This was further confirmed by one of the class representatives from school A who went on to say:

I think that there seems to be a breakdown in the family that is causing a lot of discipline problems at school. Many learners now days have to live alone, their parents are working out of town and therefore there is no one to teach learners the right and wrong. Also there is no communication between the school and parents.

Another important cause for discipline problems was brought up by one of the class representatives from school A who remarked: ".....Sometimes we have some educators that are absent too often and this causes learners to become very disruptive because there is no educator in class for some lessons". This was further confirmed by the TLO from school A who felt that some educators tend to lack discipline at their school and hence this has a negative impact on learner discipline at the school. Thus the findings of the research suggest that school A has some major issues to deal with when it comes discipline problems. It seems that these issues are having a negative impact on discipline at the school.

The TLO from school B shared some of his views of the causes of discipline problems at his school by stating:

Previously the traditions of the school were held in high regard by the boys, but now there seems to be a lack of commitment and respect to the traditions of the school. This obviously stems from the fact that modern society has changed drastically over the past few years and there seems to be a lack of parent involvement in their children's education. Also the banning of corporal punishment has had an impact on the discipline problems at schools.

Once again we note that the lack of parent involvement in education has been highlighted as a major cause of discipline problems at schools.

In agreement, the TLO and head RCL from school C also view the lack of parent involvement as an important cause of discipline problems at their school. In addition, they include 'peer pressure' as another cause of discipline problems.

Discussion

According to Wolfgang and Wolfgang (1995: 206) what has clearly changed in recent years has been the family, with the explosion in the number of single parents and households in which both parents work. They further add that large numbers of the recent generation of students in schools have not spent their early formative years in the kind of 'traditional' families that many of today's teachers experienced in their own childhood. As a result of economic realities, many children essentially have been raised in an environment, which was totally inadequate. Therefore, parents are completely out of touch with their children and there is a serious lack of parent involvement in important aspects in a child's life.

Parents must be the first to foster self-discipline within the child at home. The school provides an environment in which this training can be further developed, enabling all students to have the right to pursue their educational needs without unnecessary disruption by others (National School Boards Association 1979: 25). A child who does not receive love and good care from his or her parents is likely to have no respect for them and may well extend this perception of adults to all the other figures of authority in his or her life, including his teachers and school itself (Mwamwenda 1995: 312). Thus, it is vital that parents become actively involved in working with educators to educate their children. Tauber (1995: 158) agrees that when parents become "supportively involved" in the discipline of a child, the chance of success increases because of consistent cooperation between home and school. If parents are not willing or unable then unfortunately the school struggles to maintain and manage the teaching/learning activities effectively.

According to Gootman (1997: 5), discipline poses a great challenge in today's schools because of the pressures society has imposed on individuals and families. The effects of drug abuse, spouse abuse, child abuse and neglect, community and media-generated violence, poverty, and single parenting reverberate in contemporary schools (cf 2.2).

Mwamwenda (1995: 313) argues that teachers seldom acknowledge their culpability for disciplinary problems at school. He goes on to say that the blame is usually laid on the pupils and their parents, however teachers can cause children to misbehave as a result of the way in which they interact with them at school. Furthermore, some teachers come to class unprepared, drunk, late or improperly dressed, which is highly unlikely to engender respect for them among their pupils (Mwamwenda 1995: 314).

4.5 DEALING WITH MISCONDUCT

4.5.1 Code of conduct

A code of conduct is central to discipline of a school. Participants from all three schools confirmed that they have a code of conduct in place at their schools to deal with misconduct, although they may vary slightly with the way misconduct is dealt with. They indicated that the school code of conduct has different categories of misconduct and grade misconduct according to how serious the incident is.

However, the head RCLs from school A and C openly stated that they are not involved in the drawing up of the schools code of conduct. In fact they expressed the view that the code of conduct at their school's was drawn up a few years ago and it has not recently been reviewed or amended. This was confirmed by the TLOs of both school A and C. Also the RCL of both schools have no idea as to who was involved in the drawing up of the school's code of conduct. In contrast, the head RCL of school B indicated that they were actively involved in drawing up the school's code of conduct. Moreover, their code of conduct is reviewed annually and adjustments are made whenever necessary. They indicated that all major stakeholders have an active role in the drawing up of the school's code of conduct.

Discussion

All schools must have a proper code of conduct in place to deal with learner misconduct. When the code of conduct is drawn up, it is essential that learners, parents and educators become involved. The process must be democratic (Sacred Heart College R&D 1999: 70). Each school should develop its own code of conduct because no two schools are identical, and it is not advisable to just copy another school's code of conduct. The code should provide appropriate channels for learners to air their grievances, as well as a basis for disciplinary procedures (Sacred Heart College R&D 1999: 70). Participants from all schools under study have indicated that the school's code of conduct is of utmost importance in the management of discipline.

4.5.2 Procedures for dealing with misconduct

Of significance in this study is that the participants of all schools indicated that corporal punishment is not used at their schools. However, the head RCL from school A went on to say:

Detention has become a popular means of disciplining learners at this school. Also learners are made to clean the school eg. clean toilets, pick up papers, sweep verandahs etc. However, some educators still use degrading forms of punishment like hitting, punching, insulting, swearing, etc.

The head RCL further added that some educators have been taken to task at school A for not following legislation as educators are not allowed to use degrading forms of punishment. Participants from school B indicated they have proper structures in place to deal with misconduct. The head RCL of school B also went on to say that:

The SGB and learners are actively involved in managing discipline at our school and in drawing up the code of conduct. In fact we have various committees to try and maintain discipline at our school. These committees have a great amount of knowledge and expertise on how to deal with discipline problems.

Furthermore, the head RCL from school B also indicated that the RCL and prefects are involved in punishing learners at the school. For example, they are allowed to allocate errands to the learners for disobeying the school rules. Some of these errands involve going to the tuckshop during the breaks for the prefects or cleaning up a section of the school.

Meanwhile, at school C the head RCL indicated that they do not have any cases of corporal punishment at the school as they are trying to use more positive solutions to deal with misconduct. She adds that presently the school enforces suspension for serious cases of misconduct and detention for the minor cases of misconduct.

Furthermore, the head RCL of school C felt that it was very important that the school have proper activities/structures to motivate and encourage learners at all times. The RCLs of schools A and C openly stated that they are involved in helping educators manage discipline within the class to a certain extent, but they feel that they are not given enough opportunities to become actively involved in helping draw up the code of conduct and classroom rules. Moreover, the RCLs from school A and C felt that they should become involved in punishing learners. However, these RCLs did indicate that they try and advise learners to follow the school rules and be respectful and obedient to their educators.

Class representatives from schools A and C also indicated that they are in control of the log book system which is used to help deal with misbehaviour. These log books are used to monitor attendance and behaviour of learners within the classroom. In other words class representatives write down the names of all learners who are disruptive during the course of the day and hand in the logbook to the class educator at the end of the day who then deals with these learners. However, the class representatives from both school A and C stated that this system is often not very effective because educators are too busy and often tend to ignore comments that are made in this log book. In fact, some educators do not even bother to look at the logbook. Learners are aware of this and seem to take advantage of the class representatives and completely disregard their instructions.

Discussion

According to Mwamwenda (1995: 311), a school can be regarded as a social institution, and an important one for that matter. As an institution, it has to have certain basic regulations governing, controlling and directing the behaviour of its learners. In such a setting discipline is important, since without it the purpose of the school cannot be achieved effectively (Mwamwenda 1995: 311).

Therefore, it is important to bear in mind that educators and school managers have a great responsibility placed on them when it comes to dealing with misconduct. Fennimore (1995: 171) maintains that however skilled and concerned educators may be, they will undoubtedly be called upon to solve discipline and behaviour problems on a regular basis in their classrooms. Furthermore, educators need to realise that no matter how much planning and preparation they do, they are still going to have to deal with misconduct at some time or the other. Thus, certain techniques need to be learned or acquired in order for educators to improve the quality of discipline and control in their classrooms (Jackson 1991: 9).

4.6 STRUCTURES INSTITUTED TO DEAL WITH DISCIPLINE

Many schools have a tradition of Student Representative Councils (SRC) which played a major role in the birth of the new South Africa. Other schools have a long school prefect tradition, while some schools had both systems. All these traditions needed to be brought together within the new context of consolidating democracy at school level (Department of Education 1999: 11) (cf 2.5).

This resulted in the SASA (RSA 1996b), section 11, stipulating that every public school enrolling learners in grade eight and higher must establish an RCL (cf 2.5.2). This means that the SASA provides for greater participation by learners in the democratic functioning of schools. The SASA (RSA 1996b), section 23(2), also provides for learners to be represented on the governing body of their school. It is compulsory for all schools to have learners on their SGB if they provide education for learners in the eighth grade and higher. This will provide the learners with legitimate roles to play in school governance and management.

4.6.1 School policy on learner involvement in discipline

The findings of the research indicate that all schools under study do have an RCL body, SGB learner representatives as well as a prefect body in place to allow for learner participation in school management. It is interesting to note that at all three schools the head RCL is also the SGB learner representative as well as the senior prefect. However, this is not the case at all schools. In fact some schools may have different learners serving in these positions.

The head RCLs from all three schools confirmed that they have a written policy on the role of learners in school management/discipline at their respective schools. Moreover, participants from school B indicated they have a very “proactive policy” at their school and learners are actively involved in managing discipline issues. The TLO from school B confirms this by saying that they have an RCL and prefect body in which learners are actively involved and have two learner representatives sitting on the SGB. Participants at school C also indicated that they have strong learner representation in the management of discipline at their school. The TLO from school C emphasised how well the prefects control the school during the breaks and RCL representatives are very committed and dedicated in helping educators to maintain a disciplined environment within the class.

In contrast, the head RCL from school A expressed concern that their policy on learner involvement is not fully functional by adding that:

We do have a policy in place at our school, but this policy is actually not fully functional at our school. In fact often we find that problems are brought to the RCL too late. In other words there is not sufficient communication between school management, the TLO and RCL representatives.

He further added that “it is a written policy, but it is merely a formal structure with no collaboration and co-operation from senior management and educators”. This evidently makes it difficult to deal with disciplinary problems at this school.

All participants from the various schools expressed the view that they would like to be given more authority to help deal with discipline issues at their schools.

Discussion

According to Heystek (2001:209) democratic principles became more important after the change in government in 1994. These democratic principles were also put into practice in schools where every role-player has to be part of governance. The most important role-players are official structures such as the department of education, staff members, the parents, the learners, and community members and institutions who are assured of being represented in decision-making procedures. Learners are supposed to be the main focus and the most important persons in schools and are therefore included (Heystek 2001:210). In agreement, Short et al (1994: 47) maintain that even young students often can play an active role in making decisions about acceptable classroom functioning. These authors add that student involvement in formulating and negotiating classroom rules and contingencies frequently increases their commitment to conforming to classroom expectations. Furthermore, such shared decision making can model effective group process skills and teach self-judgement in monitoring and evaluating behaviour. Thus, learner involvement in education is a non-negotiable issue. It is compulsory for all schools to have proper structures in place to allow for learner involvement in managing the school.

4.6.2 RCL/prefects/SGB representatives – as chosen representatives of learners and staff

The process of selecting learners to become involved in school management is an important one and should be based on democratic principles. Participants from school A indicated that learners are democratically elected to serve as head RCL, prefect and SGB representative. The head RCL from school A sums up the selection process in the following manner:

Learners are democratically elected for these positions. The TLO is the election officer for the RCL election and prefect elections. Candidates are nominated and seconded by learners. The candidates nominated must

indicate acceptance of nomination. The top candidates deliver a speech and learners vote for the candidates they feel will be best suited for the job.

However, he adds that when it comes to the senior prefects educators are also involved in the selection process. Furthermore, he states that the head RCL also serves as the SGB representative as well as a senior prefect at the school.

Meanwhile, at school B the head RCL also states that they follow democratic principles, but their selection process is slightly different to school A. He explains it in the following manner:

Usually for prefects the whole school votes but this is not final as each grade is given a different weighting and also the educators have a say in the selection of prefects. Whereas for the head RCL/SGB representative each class votes for one representative. The RCL class representatives then get together and vote for head RCL who also serves as SGB representative.

In contrast, the selection process at school C was carried out in a different manner to the other two schools in the study. The head RCL from school C states the process as follows:

The head RCL was based on two volunteers and the other representatives agreed for these two girls to serve as head RCLs. Prefects were chosen by the educators and it just happened that the head RCL and SGB representative is also a senior prefect of the school.

The class representatives of schools A,B and C were selected by the voting process as well. Participants from all three schools indicated that a proper election process was held within the classroom to vote for the class representatives. They also felt that process was a fair and democratic process. This was confirmed by one of the class representatives from school C who say:

I think that the process was fair because we had a proper election

process with my class teacher as the electoral officer. Also if there were any problems/discrepancies our class could report the problem to the TLO who made sure that the whole process was carried out again with the TLO being present.

All class representatives interviewed indicated that they were selected because they displayed good leadership skills and their classmates saw them as someone whom they could trust and depend on. However, the TLO from school A felt that some learners were just selected because they were popular and lacked leadership skills required for being a class representative. This was confirmed by one of the class representatives from school C who states:

Well to be honest my classmates chose me because I am popular with them and they thought that they can have fun and get up to nonsense and I would not report them, but unfortunately they were surprised because I am taking my job seriously.

The TLO from all schools indicated that there was no election process for the TLO. They were just allocated their posts by the principal and the other educators did not mind because it is a heavy load to carry. The TLO from school A confirms that “other educators are reluctant to become involved because of the extra work involved”. School A only has one TLO whereas, schools B and C have two TLOs.

Discussion

The Department of Education (1999: 11) clearly states that schools are compelled to have learner representation at their schools. The selection of these learner representatives must be based along democratic principles. Also learners must have some sort of leadership skills that can be developed as they now have a greater say in fundamental policy matters. They will, for example, participate in developing a code of conduct for learners. Thus learners need to have a sense of responsibility, commitment and dedication to fulfil these roles. All three schools in this research have indicated that they do have learner representation at their schools.

4.6.3 Responsibilities of RCL/prefects/SGB learner representative regarding discipline

The main objective of involving learners in school management is to create a sense of co-responsibility in learners. The RCL/prefects/SGB learner representatives must know and understand their tasks and responsibilities clearly. Furthermore, school management also has to enable learners to contribute towards the improvement of the culture of learning, teaching and service in their school.

Participants in this study indicated they have a fair understanding of their tasks and responsibilities as RCL/prefects/SGB learner representatives. Participants at school B indicated that they have a proactive policy on discipline and the RCL/prefects/SGB representatives play an active role in the management of discipline. The RCL and prefects work very closely together to help maintain discipline. The head RCL of school B expressed their responsibilities in the following manner: “it is important to communicate well with the boys and work closely and collaboratively with the class representatives”. The head RCL of school B also felt that the boys must be constantly reminded of the school rules and code of conduct. Furthermore, it is very important to encourage and motivate the boys on an ongoing basis. The head RCL sums up their role on discipline as follows:

After every RCL and SGB meeting I give a full report back. Issues of discipline are usually addressed immediately. We have a pledge book that the boys sign to commit themselves to take pride in their school community and environment. This really helps the boys to stay focussed and dedicated to uphold the school name and tradition.

Participants from school C also indicate that the RCL/prefects/SGB representatives are actively involved in the management of discipline. The head RCL of school C sees their main tasks as “to ensure that learners are obeying the school rules and code of conduct and to be a voice for the students and to set a good example for others to follow”. She further adds that it is important to talk to learners politely and get them to know and understand the importance of maintaining discipline. Whereas, the class

representatives from school C felt that their main tasks/responsibilities with regard to discipline is to help keep learners well behaved and focussed in the class at all times.

Meanwhile, the head RCL of school A felt that they were not given enough opportunity to become involved in the management of discipline. When asked what their tasks are and how involved they are in discipline, he responded in the following manner:

Build unity among learners in the school. Address the needs of all learners in the school. Keep learners informed about events in the school community. Promote the interests of all learners. Support the principal and educators in the performance of their duties. However, we feel that we have no proper structures in place for discipline. This is because of a lack of support and guidance from educators as well as due to a lack of communication between RCL and prefect body.

However, he did add that the RCL/Prefects/SGB representatives make a concerted effort to try and maintain a disciplined environment at their school by “talking to learners often on the importance of following the school rules and code of conduct and obeying and respecting their educators”. One of the class representatives from school A further confirms this by adding that “we are constantly encouraging learners on the importance of good discipline for effective teaching and learning to take place. We do not hesitate to refer disruptive learners to the office”. The head RCL from school A suggested that learner involvement in the management of discipline can have a positive effect on the school environment. This is confirmed when he says:

It is very important for learners to be actively involved in the management of discipline. If they are allowed to become involved there will be more co-operation and better discipline from learners. Also learners will learn to become more self-controlled and self-disciplined.

Thus, the head RCLs as well as class representatives from schools A and C are of the opinion that they are trying to create a positive school climate where effective

teaching and learning can take place without too many disruptions. However, they feel that they lack empowerment to act on transgressions in the school environment.

Discussion

The RCL/prefects/SGB learner representatives are structures at schools that aim at developing learners to become good leaders and responsible members of our society. It is also a structure that is charged with the protection of the rights of learners to education and to ensure that schools operate in circumstances that are conducive to profitable learning. According to the Department of Education (1999:13), the RCL must serve the school willingly and encourage the voluntary co-operation of learners. Furthermore, they must foster a spirit of mutual; respect, good manners and morality among learners and promote and maintain discipline among learners and promote the general welfare of the school. They must attempt to assist school management in implementing the school policy and democratise its activities at the school (Department of Education 1999: 13).

However, the RCL needs to be empowered to perform all its responsibilities effectively. If they are not given the necessary guidelines and support, the RCL's attempts to help maintain discipline in a school will be futile. Furthermore, there must be opportunities available to them to become involved in helping to maintain a positive school climate.

4.7 THE NEED FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

4.7.1 Communication links between TLO and RCL

Communication links between the RCL and TLO are essential if learners are to become actively involved in the management of discipline in schools. The TLO must try to create and promote a trusting relationship with the RCL in order for the RCL to be fully functional at the school. Communication and co-operation becomes a problem when plans are not communicated effectively (Department of Education 1999: 28). If the TLO and RCL do not communicate with one another, then the school will definitely experience many problems.

At school A communication between the TLO and RCL is good. The TLO from school A confirms that: “they meet at least once a month, or when the need arises”. However, she did indicate that the RCL do come to her with problems/difficulties but was not sure if they report all problems/difficulties to her. Hence, according to the TLO of school A, communication between herself and RCL is sufficient but she gave a clear indication that there is room for improvement in this area. Moreover, the RCLs indicated that the TLO was not always available to them to report their problems. They felt that more time should be allocated to the TLO by the school management to help give them more guidance and support in their jobs.

The TLO from school B maintains that communication between himself and the RCL is fairly good. He indicated that they have formal meetings at least twice a term and sometimes more when problems arise. He adds that “the learners realise that there is nothing threatening in our relationship and they do not hesitate to approach me with their problems/difficulties”. He further adds that “...my experience in different areas of management has helped me give learners instant answers to problems and I think this is something they really appreciate and enjoy”. Therefore according to the views of the TLO, communication between the TLO and RCL at school B is good and is based on strong principles. Likewise, the RCLs of school A echoed the same sentiments as the TLO in saying that communication between the TLO and RCL is generally good.

The TLO from school C also indicates that communication links between her and the RCL are generally good. She confirms that they have regular meetings. She goes on to say that for the past month they have been meeting every Friday as they had urgent matters to discuss. She says that they meet whenever and however often they need to. She sums up by saying:

The RCL do not hesitate to come to me with problems /difficulties.

In fact we have a good working relationship. The learners have great confidence and trust in me. They are always consulting with me.

The head RCL of school C confirms that communication links between the TLO of the school and RCL are strong. In contrast to this class representatives from school C

were of the opinion that the TLO needs to work more closely with the class representatives in order for them to achieve a more positive environment in the classroom.

Discussion

What is most evident from the research is that the TLO and RCL cannot function in isolation from each other. Thus there must be effective communication and collaboration between them. The Department of Education (1999:28) argues that to ensure effective communication, there must be clear and precise communication structures and opportunities. The organisational structures must also provide the communication channels and the lines to be followed. Everybody in the school must know about these communication lines and use them (Department of Education 1999:28).

4.7.2 Communication between the RCL/Principal/school management

The role of RCLs/prefects/SGB representatives has become more important as far as the management of schools are concerned. An RCL is in a partnership with its school management team, which is made up of the principal, deputy principal and heads of department. The management team is primarily responsible for the management of the school and the RCL must play an important role in supporting the school management team. The support will start with a commitment of both groups to achieve the common aims and objectives of the school. The RCL must be part of the development of these aims and objectives of the school and to take ownership of them (Department of Education 1999: 26). Hence, in order for this to happen there must be good relationships and communication links between the RCL and school management team.

According to the findings of the research, the TLO from school B states that the principal of the school is not personally involved with the RCL. However, they do have regular management meetings where the TLOs give the management team an idea of the latest developments as far as the RCL body is concerned. One of the TLOs is a member of the management team. Moreover, the head RCL from school B agreed

that the school management team does not need to get involved because the school has a fully functional SGB which plays a major role in working towards making the RCL/prefect bodies a success. He further adds that: "... RCL are actively involved in drawing up the school rules and code of conduct. They also have a say in the punishment that is meted out to learners". The school/SGB has different committees that work with various aspects of school life. Human resources at school B is not a problem because all members of the school community are actively involved in making the school environment a disciplined and safe one.

The head RCL of school A indicates that communication between the school management and RCL is not sufficient. He further adds that there is no collaboration and co-operation from senior management and educators when it comes to matters pertaining to the RCL. The RCL was not involved in drawing up the school rules and code of conduct. However, the TLO from school A indicates that the principal of the school is involved with the RCL. He often meets them to discuss important issues. When the need arises, he makes time to address learners' problems.

At school C the TLO had this to say about the principal's involvement with the RCL:

His involvement is minimal. The RCL only interacts with the principal if the TLOs cannot resolve issues/problems, or if a matter requires the principals consent/authority. The principal is invited to our RCL meetings on occasions (full meeting and sometimes the TLO and RCL head have a meeting with the principal if we have urgent matters to discuss/resolve.

Hence, the TLO adds that, "there is not much communication and collaboration between the management team and the RCL in general". The TLOs are exclusively in charge of the RCL/prefect body at the school. The head RCL of school C further comments that the RCL is not involved in drawing up of school rules and the code of conduct. This is done by the management team.

Discussion

According to Blandford (1998: 5), good leadership and effective management are fundamental to effective schools. Principals who know their learners are essential in the management of discipline in schools. In practice, effective principals are democratic, sharing in the decision-making of developing and implementing discipline policy, procedures and practices (Blandford 1998: 5). Likewise, Cumming et al. (1981: 30) maintain that the ethos of the school is a direct reflection of the principal's personality and outlook. Wheldall (1992: 20) further points out that developing and implementing a school policy on behaviour management requires a major commitment of time and resources. This includes positive and active leadership from the principal and senior staff. Ultimately, principals are responsible for ensuring that all members of the community establish appropriate standards of behaviour in the school to which they belong (Blandford 1998: 6). Therefore, it is vitally important that the principal and management teams of schools become involved and active in the RCL so that the RCL/prefects can fulfil their roles and functions effectively within the school.

4.7.3 Communication between the RCL and class teachers

According to Blandford (1998: 165), schools should be places where all educators can teach and all pupils can learn. Therefore, it is important that class educators and RCL representatives work closely together to achieve the goals of teaching and learning. They need to get to know and understand each other and develop good communication links between them. Furthermore, educators and RCL representatives should respect their environment and demonstrate respect for each other. This can be achieved by listening and supporting each other.

However, the findings of this research indicate that often class educators are not actively involved with the class representatives for various reasons. This is confirmed by the TLO from school A who is of the opinion that:

There is not enough communication/collaboration between the educators and RCL representative. In fact educators do not play their part

when it comes to the RCL. Many educators are currently very frustrated with heavy workloads and the new assessment strategies (IQMS) set out by the department to assess educators that they do not want to become involved in anything else.

Furthermore, when the TLO from school A was asked during the interview whether educators are willing to co-operate and participate in involving learners in decision making within the classroom, she responded by saying:

Educators feel that they do not have the time and energy to become involved with the RCLs. However, there are some educators who are actively involved in gearing learners up to take on new responsibilities and challenges. Also these educators seem to have good discipline going in their classrooms. On the other hand we have some educators from the old school of thought who believe that they should be in total authority within their classrooms and learners should not be involved in decision-making.

One of the class representatives from school A further commented that “I find that my class educator sometimes has so many other tasks to perform that she does not really have the time to communicate effectively with me on important issues”. Another class representative from school A adds that “ I feel that because we have so many problem learners in our class my teacher gets so frustrated that she often just refuses to even hear about some problems”. The head RCL from school A sums up by saying that “some educators are very patient, tolerant, committed, etc. and handle learners well whereas others are nasty and degrading towards learners”. It is evident from the research that many educators at school A seem to be frustrated and overburdened and that this has a negative impact in their involvement with the RCL representatives.

The TLO from school B also indicates that there is not much collaboration between the educators and RCL. When asked whether educators are willing to co-operate and participate in involving learners in decision-making within the classroom, he went on to say:

Well, I think educators see it as a separate issue, they feel that they have many other tasks to perform and are sometimes reluctant to go that extra mile. There is definitely room for improvement in this area.

However, one of the class representatives from school B did state at times there is collaboration between the class teacher and class representatives. However, in general they handle problems on their own with the help of the head RCL and the TLOs. Thus according to the opinions of class representatives at school B, there is not much educator involvement with the RCL.

The TLO from school C indicated that most often there is communication/ collaboration between the educators and RCL at their school. However, she adds:

Some educators tend to have a negative attitude to the RCL in general. They believe that the learners are not mature enough to make important decisions and become involved in decision-making at school level. However, as the RCL is becoming more empowered, educators are adopting a more positive outlook/attitude.

Moreover, when the TLO from school C was asked whether educators are willing to co-operate and participate in involving learners in decision-making within the classroom, she stated: “Yes, most educators welcome the assistance of the RCLs. We have large class units and assistance from learners in promoting/maintaining good discipline is always welcome”. Furthermore, when the TLO was asked if educators are creating sufficient opportunities for learners to become involved in the management of discipline, she responded:

Most teachers are encouraging learners to become actively involved in the management of discipline. Some educators think that the learners are not ready to be given such a huge responsibility, but most agree that we need to teach our learners to become self-disciplined and self-controlled and to become good leaders. We can only do this if we create sufficient opportunities for them to display their leadership qualities.

However, class representatives from school C also commented that communication and collaboration between their class teachers and themselves is not always good because often they find that their teachers are too busy to talk to them. Hence, class representatives at school C are of the opinion that some educators are enthusiastic about the RCL, while others are too busy to get involved.

Discussion

According to Blanford (1998: 5) school managers should aim to create an atmosphere whereby educators are able to run organised and effective classrooms in which the abilities of individual pupils are given due opportunity for development, in which educators can fulfil their proper functions as facilitators of learning, and in which children can acquire the techniques for monitoring and guiding their own behaviour. In agreement, Ridley and Walther (1995: 107) argue that if educators are to be able to foster positive learning experiences for their students, the school in which they work must also provide educators the same positive opportunity. This opportunity comes through broad and open communication, consensus, and committed action for the purpose of reaching these goals. Therefore, according to Blandford 1998: 166), communication is essential in the development and implementation of an effective discipline policy. They further argue that educators and learners should have a voice in the development of policy, procedures and practices. Relationships with everyone are critical. Educators, managers and learners need to relate to each other positively. Thus communication/collaboration between the RCL and educators will be most beneficial for the teaching and learning situation.

4.8 TRAINING

For learners to become involved in school management, it is vitally important they be trained accordingly. Schools should try and develop programs for leadership training on an ongoing basis to equip all learners to become actively involved in their education.

4.8.1 Training of the RCL/class representatives

Most of the participants in the research indicated that they had not received formal training to perform their tasks. However, some did indicate that they attended workshops but that this was not sufficient to prepare them for their tasks/responsibilities. This was confirmed by participants of school C who stated that they have received no formal training but they do attend RCL meetings and are given advice by the head RCL and TLO on how to do their jobs. When the head RCL from school C was asked if she is equipped to carry out her tasks, she responded by saying: “to a certain extent”. Furthermore, one of the class representatives from school C had this to say: “I personally feel that I am not equipped to do this job, maybe if I had some proper training I would be able to handle it better”. Another class representative from school C sums up by saying that: “I think it would be good if all educators can get involved and help us. In this way I think that the learners will start to realise what exactly we are expected to do”.

However, the TLO from school C disagrees with the learners’ opinions of training and expresses her view in the following manner:

The learners have been trained, in fact their training is a continuous process. They have attended meetings organised by the Department of Education and Learner services. At present the other TLO at our school is involved in training TLOs in our district, and is providing further training for our RCLs. Thus, we are in a fortunate position at our school because our learners have proper training available to them.

It is obvious that the learners at school C feel that their training is not sufficient because their views are contradictory to the TLO’s point of view about training of learners.

Meanwhile, the head RCL from school A indicated that: “There is not sufficient training to carry out our tasks. We did attend workshops but this was not enough and not very practically orientated and also not helpful”.

The TLO of school A agrees that the learners are not properly trained. She feels that the learners need to receive frequent leadership training to help them cope with their responsibilities. In addition, she is concerned that when training for RCLs are offered, only two learners may attend and are then expected to come back and train the rest of the RCLs. She went on to state that this system does not work well and those learners that do not go, lose out on valuable information. The TLO from school A sums up by saying:

The Education Department is involved in training the RCL but we also need to do further training, but unfortunately this does not happen due to a lack of funds and time constraints.

This evidently indicates that learners at school A are not sufficiently trained to perform their roles within the school. As stated above by the TLO of school A, there are many factors that prevent proper training being done for learners and this has a negative impact on learner involvement in the management of discipline at the school. One of the class representatives of school A sums it up in the following way: “I think if we get some proper training we would be able to cope better. Also training should be on an ongoing basis if we are to be successful as RCLs”.

At school B the head RCL feels that he is properly trained and attends leadership courses on an ongoing basis. He confirms this by saying:

Initially I had training for the RCL, which entailed what the job is all about. I also have training and workshops for prefect duties on an ongoing basis. In addition I attend motivational meetings and watch videos and answer questionnaires.

He further adds that: “...because training is on an ongoing basis it helps me to continually reflect on my tasks/duties and see how I can improve”. Moreover, he maintains that training is absolutely essential if learners are to become actively involved in school management. Class representatives from school B also indicate that they are coping well with their tasks/responsibilities even though they did not

have any formal training as such. This is confirmed by one of the class representatives from school B who says:

As class representative we have had no formal training as such. But the head RCL and prefects give us the necessary help and guidance that we need to perform our tasks. We have regular meetings with head RCL.

Another class representative from school B adds that because of their love for and in pride their school they are able to cope well with their tasks/duties. Many of the class representatives at school B seem to have had some kind of leadership training and skills from previous years, which make them confident and good at their jobs.

However, the opinion of TLO from school B regarding learner training differs slightly from that of the learners version of training and he feels that in general learners are not properly trained for their roles. In spite of saying that learners are not properly trained, the TLO was able to point out examples of skills learners service on the RCL acquire.

It is evident that even though the learners at school B have not been sufficiently trained as confirmed by the TLO they do take the initiative to train themselves and become involved. Once again it is important to note that the learners from school B come from a more affluent background and seem to take more responsibility for their education.

Discussion

The responses of most of the learners confirm what Heystek (2001: 215) maintains that the majority of learner representatives at schools are not specifically trained for their tasks. Most learners interviewed in this study mentioned that they have not received sufficient training to perform their tasks/duties. The exception was one head RCL who was satisfied with the training he had received. Heystek (2001:216) argues that the training of learners should not be seen as a single event aimed at the year in which learners are serving as representatives. He further adds that training should be given to learner leaders in all grades over a number of years to enable them to grow in

the democratic process of participatory decision-making. With such a training model, learners may make a more valuable future contribution to the school as a whole.

4.8.2 Training of the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLO)

According to the Department of Education (1999: 16), the TLO must be an educator at the school concerned. He/she must be reliable, sympathetic and create a sincere and trusting relationship with the RCL, the principal as well as the school management. They must promote communication between themselves, the principal, staff and RCL. Furthermore, they need to guide and organise the RCL and develop a sense of leadership in the members of the RCL (Department of Education 1999: 16).

In order to perform all these tasks effectively it is important that the TLOs be trained accordingly. Therefore training for the TLO should be done thoroughly and on an ongoing basis. The findings of the research indicate that the TLOs interviewed for this study have been trained to a certain extent. However, the TLO from school B openly states that he has not received any formal training for his job. He went on to say:

Even though I did not receive any formal training I am well equipped to do my tasks because of the tremendous amount of experience I have in many different aspects of school life and therefore I feel that I am capable of handling any situation.

The TLO from school A indicated that she was trained by the Senior Education Manager from the KZN Education Department and training was designed specifically to equip TLOs in dealing with learner affairs. She further adds that “I do feel equipped to carry out my tasks but I believe that training should be on an ongoing basis. Also I often find it difficult to manage my time due to the numerous tasks I have to perform”.

Likewise, the TLO from school C also indicates that she has been trained for her job by the Department of Education and Learner services. She continues:

Moreover, I have all the necessary documentation at my disposal

so I am able to read and learn about all the responsibilities/duties of a TLO.
In other words a lot of my training comes from self-training.

It is interesting to note the TLO from school C seems have developed most of her knowledge and skills about her task from self-training. Hence, she feels confident and equipped to carry out her tasks/responsibilities.

Discussion

The findings of the study suggest that the TLOs play an important role in the life of the school. They constantly need to guide, support and train learners to fulfil their roles in school management. However, most TLOs are not sufficiently trained to perform their tasks effectively. It was observed that the participants who were interviewed for the purposes of this research did not feel fully equipped after being trained by the Department of Education and had to rely on their own experience and knowledge. However, Heystek (2001: 33) maintains that trained leaders should be able to make a better contribution to improving both school governance and management and make teaching and learning more effective. Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that the whole concept of the RCLs and TLOs is still fairly a new one and many schools are still waiting for information and training guidelines to be passed down to them from the Department of Education.

4.9 CHALLENGES FACED BY THE RCL/PREFECTS

The RCL structure aim at developing learners to become good leaders and responsible members of our society. It is also a structure that is charged with the protection of the rights of learners to education and to ensure that schools operate in circumstances that are conducive to profitable learning (Singh 2004: 1). Hence, it has become evident that it is not only the challenge facing the government to ensure that there is proper education in schools, but it is also the responsibility of the RCL/learners as well as the responsibility of SGB. However, the RCL and SGB components face many challenges within the school environment in order to fulfil their functions effectively. The findings of this research confirms this.

The head RCL of school A reiterates:

Our task is very challenging. Often there is a lack of time to carry out duties effectively. It is sometimes difficult to reprimand a friend or peer. Also we are not given enough opportunities to get involved in managerial tasks which frustrates us.

Furthermore, he adds:

School management sometimes do not take us seriously. Also there is not enough support structures available to us and learners tend to take advantage of us at times. These problems can be overcome by having more workshops/training for learners. Also to overcome these challenges management structures need to be adjusted and become more flexible. Learners must be given more opportunities and responsibilities to manage.

In agreement, class representatives from school A maintain that they are finding their tasks very challenging because learners just do not obey. They find that they are spending too much time on trying to compel learners behave in class and this has a negative impact on their schoolwork. One of the class representatives from school A explicitly stated:

I personally feel that many educators do not know how to control learners. Also I find that educators themselves are not setting good examples for learners to follow eg. they answer telephones in class, use bad language etc. Therefore I feel that if educators cannot cope and set good examples how am I supposed to cope with disruptive learners and why should I bother anyway”.

Therefore, it is evident that at school A RCLs are experiencing many challenges, which make it difficult for them to perform their duties properly.

The head RCLs of school B and C also admit that their task is very challenging as it takes up a lot of time and requires dedication. They indicated that they are involved in

making important decisions that can be very challenging. The head RCL from school C feels that “it is not always so easy to lead and for others to follow”. Class representatives from both schools also maintain that their tasks are challenging to a certain extent especially when learners do not co-operate. However, the head RCLs from both school B and C see the challenges they experience as positive and conducive to personal growth and development.

Discussion

The findings of the research suggest that learner involvement in school management is very challenging. According to Singh (2004: 2), learner representatives need to understand that leadership is about being the servant of those who elected one. Therefore, it is important to lead one’s fellow learners with integrity. Moreover, learners need to be guided to be exemplary in their leadership and develop into leaders who will reflect the attributes such as integrity, trustworthiness, selflessness and sobriety (Singh 2004: 2). Thus, learner involvement in education is no easy task. Learners must be made aware of the various challenges and responsibilities with which they will be faced.

However, Heystek (2001: 226) maintains that learner representation is intended to improve teaching and learning in schools. He further adds that learners can make a difference in schools, but their representation must be genuine, with enough control and power to make learners feel that they really can make a difference and influence their own situation (Heystek 2001: 227).

4.10 BENEFITS OF LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

Learners are placed in positions of leadership in the RCL in terms of the SASA, Act No. 84 of 1996. As leaders they are required to help transform education and to restore the culture of learning and teaching in schools. Learner involvement in school management can have a positive impact on schooling and it can be beneficial for the learners themselves to develop and grow as leaders.

4.10.1 Benefits of learner involvement in school management to learners

The findings of the research indicate that the school and learners have benefited from learner involvement in school management. The head RCL from school A felt that involvement in the RCL, helped him to build his confidence and social skills. He indicated that his leadership skills have really improved. One of the class representatives from school A adds:

By being involved with the RCL it has helped me to control myself as well as my classmates. I definitely have become more self disciplined and responsible as a person. Also I find that I am able to solve problems more easily.

Another class representative from school A added to this by saying, “The RCL has been good as it has taught me self-control and self-discipline. In fact it has taught me how to behave appropriately”. Another class representative from school A further adds, “I have really learnt that I must not let my emotions get in the way. Also by setting a good example I can help others improve their lives”.

In agreement, the head RCL from school B had this to say about his involvement with the RCL:

It has taught me how to relate to different kinds of people. My social skills have definitely developed. Also you become more critical, more mature and tend to strike a balance because you cannot take all problems to the office but have to deal with them by yourself.

Most of the class representatives from school B have indicated that their involvement in school management has been positive. One of the class representatives stated that being involved in the RCL has been worthwhile because it makes you feel that you have a voice and are involved in decision-making. Also he felt that they are given recognition and their opinions are valued. Another class representative from school B adds:

It has meant a lot to us as we feel very empowered and feel like we are making a difference to our school environment. Also it feels good being a member of a smaller group and feeling confident with them.

One of the class representatives from school B sums up by saying, “our leadership skills have grown, we can now easily listen better and help people to solve problems more easily”.

Meanwhile, the head RCL from school C expressed her involvement in the following manner:

Being involved with the RCL has been good because it has made me become more alert of people we have in different communities and to be able to overcome situations which you come across as a teenager. Also I am now able to socialize with many different kinds of people.

In agreement, one of the class representatives from school C indicated that they can now interact with different people on a daily basis. They also added that their social skills have developed and that they have become more confident and can solve problems more easily.

Discussion

The findings of the research suggest that by learners becoming involved in school management, learners can benefit tremendously. However, educators and students together must create a meaningful and positive climate to allow this to happen. According to Fennimore (1995: 135), mutual positive behaviour depends on a spirit of respect and cooperation in all school participants. The author further argues that educators, however, bear the greatest responsibility for the climate and quality of classroom life.

Short et al (1994: 47) contends that even young students can often play an active role in making decisions about acceptable classroom functioning. Student involvement in formulating and negotiating school rules often increases their commitment to

conforming with school expectations. According to Short et al (1994: 47), such shared decision-making can model effective group process skills and teach self-judgement in monitoring and evaluating behaviour. However, educators must provide opportunities for learners to take responsibility for themselves and others through classroom and extra-curricular activities. In this way learners will develop self-control and self-discipline and become good leaders.

4.10.2 Benefits of learner involvement in school management for the school

Learners can make a positive contribution to school governance and management. According to Heystek (2001: 209), learner participation ought to contribute towards an improvement in teaching and learning as well as in the standard of education. He further adds that the aim of schools should be to educate learners to an acceptable standard and to produce responsible adults who can contribute positively to their community.

The findings of the research indicate that the involvement of learners in issues of discipline can be beneficial for the school. The TLO from school A confirms this by saying that:

Some learners are definitely having a positive impact on discipline at our school. However there are still those like the younger learners who are on the RCL merely because of being popular and thus do nothing to promote good discipline in their classes.

She went on to say that learner involvement in the management of discipline at school does have advantages for the school. According to the TLO from school A, some of these advantages include:

- A more disciplined teaching/learning environment;
- When learners are involved, it allows for educator bias to be removed;
- It is good to see things from learners perspective as well;
- Learners can become more self-controlled, disciplined, confident and responsible.

The TLO from school A feels that the whole concept of learner involvement in education is working for schools. She sums up by saying:

It definitely can have a positive impact on the school environment but however at our school as a staff we need to put in more effort towards the RCL body to make it a success and help develop our learners to become self-controlled and disciplined.

Hence, the TLO from school A is of the opinion that learner involvement at school can be more beneficial if educators become more committed and dedicated to make the RCL concept a success.

The TLO from school C adds that the RCL/prefects are very helpful, especially because of the large class units. Many learners are beginning to respect the RCL's authority within the school. She further commented that learner involvement at their school has advantages for the school as a whole. She confirms this by saying:

Learners offer invaluable assistance in maintaining discipline in the classroom especially if the class units are large. Learners tend to listen to their peers and most RCLs are able to get through to their classmates – they are able to exert some control over them.

The TLO from school C sums up by saying:

I believe that with proper training the RCL can become a real asset in the management of discipline at schools. Learners must become more responsible, mature individuals and this would make teaching and learning an enjoyable experience.

At school B the TLO commented that learner involvement in the management of discipline at school is marginal, but it is looking positive for the future. He went on to say:

The RCL at our school are not so involved in discipline. I think the

prefect body plays a greater role in the management of discipline at our school. RCL body is more involved in the general welfare of the school however the class representatives do tend to get involved in disciplining learners within the class.

He further adds that learner involvement in school matters has many advantages. He went on to say:

By the learners just being involved is good for the school. Prefects have a meaningful say in decision-making at our school and are widely consulted on various important issues. Learners at our school are fortunate in that they run the entire RCL by themselves and TLOs are merely observers, this gives the boys great opportunities to accept responsibility and grow from there to become good leaders. actually I think there are no disadvantages of learner involvement in school management it just strengthens the school.

However, the TLO from school B concludes by saying, “At the moment learner involvement in school management is working but there is still a lot more that can be done to improve in this area”.

Discussion

The findings of this research suggest that learner involvement in school management is positive, however there is still much that needs to be done in this area. According to Heystek (2001: 219), learners do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to make a meaningful contribution to school governance. Heystek (2001: 219) further argues that although the aim is to include learners as important role-players in the decision-making process of the school, the learners’ lack of time, knowledge and skills does not enable them to make a substantial contribution. Hence, if learners receive more training and experience they will be better equipped to contribute positively towards school governance. Furthermore, learners must be given the opportunity to become involved and make a difference in the life of the daily running of the school.

4.11 SUMMARY

This chapter has described schools in the research, characteristics of individual participants and the findings derived from the analysis of data. The data collected during the individual and focus group interviews are presented under the following themes: discipline, dealing with misconduct, structures instituted to deal with discipline, training, challenges faced by RCL/prefects and benefits of learner involvement in school management in urban schools in KwaZulu-Natal. Chapter five will conclude with a synthesis of significant themes and the implications for the role of learners in the management of discipline at schools and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with a general overview of the investigation in order to show that the aims of the research expressed in Chapter 1 have been achieved.

The theory underlying the role of learners in the management of discipline, as well as an overview of the management of discipline in South African schools is given. The literature is integrated with the experiences of head RCLs/senior prefect/SGB learner representative, class representatives and Teacher Liaison Officers (TLO) concerning the role of the learner in the management of discipline in urban KwaZulu-Natal schools. A synthesis of the main findings is also provided in this chapter.

Recommendations for improving the role of learners in the management of discipline at schools derived from the research are briefly stated. Possible areas for further research are also identified in this chapter. The chapter concludes with the identification of limitations of the study.

5.2 OVERVIEW OF THE INVESTIGATION

The role of learners in the management of discipline at schools has become an important issue and can have a positive impact on the teaching and learning environment. Special emphasis is placed on the RCL bodies, prefects, SGB representatives and class representatives and how they are involved in management structures within the school. However, learners need to be guided, trained, supported and given the opportunity to become involved in managing discipline at schools, which is not always the case at many schools. Educators and TLOs must therefore provide opportunities for learners to take responsibility for themselves and others through classroom and extra-curricular activities (Blandford 1998: 3). Moreover, self-confidence and self-esteem are to be nurtured. Thus schools should allow learners to develop and grow.

5.2.1 Management of discipline in secondary schools in South Africa

The management of discipline in secondary schools in South Africa was examined by means of a literature study. The emphasis was on the role played by learners in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools. Managing discipline in schools is one of the most debated issues in education, moreover since the SASA (RSA 1996b) has abolished corporal punishment (cf 2.3). When corporal punishment was outlawed in schools, managers and educators found it even more difficult to manage discipline (cf 2.4.1). The literature also reveals that the management of discipline in secondary schools is not only a problem within the South African context, but that there is a widespread breakdown in school discipline universally (cf 2.2).

Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000: 35) believe that the present situation in South African schools shows that a lack of discipline and self-discipline among high school pupils has led to a continuation of unsuccessful learning and teaching (cf 2.4.1). Many attempts have been made to re-establish a culture of effective learning and teaching in schools (Mabeba & Prinsloo 2000:P 34) (cf 2.4.1). Therefore, there was a need for learners to become actively involved in the management of discipline in secondary schools through their involvement in the RCL and SGB (cf 2.4.1).

According to this research, discipline is a problem in the school environment (cf 1.3) Since the banning of corporal punishment in schools, many educators have claimed that there is an increased intensity and frequency of problem behaviour in schools which negatively impacts on the teaching and learning situation (cf 1.2). The research has also revealed that learners can help make a positive difference to the school environment if they are given the opportunity and training to do so.

According to Ridley and Walther (1995: 58), students are truly capable of directing their own learning. They argue that educators can successfully foster a student's sense of responsibility, autonomy and independence when they share classroom control and respect students as self-directed learners. In agreement, Fennimore (1995: 171-172) maintains that the ultimate goal of strategies for management and discipline is the empowerment of students to develop self-direction and self-control in the totality of their lives. Hence, if learners are given the opportunity to become actively involved in

the management of discipline at schools, they could positively impact the teaching and learning situation as well as their own future.

5.2.2 The role of learners in the management of discipline: a theoretical basis

In order to determine the role of learners in the management of discipline at schools, a literature study was undertaken. The emphasis was on how the RCL/Senior prefect/SGB representatives and class representatives with the guidance from the TLOs are helping with the management of discipline in South African schools.

This research illustrates that it is compulsory for learners to become involved in school management, specifically with the management of discipline so that effective teaching and learning can take place in schools. The SASA (RSA 1996b) provides for greater participation by learners in the democratic functioning of schools (cf. 2.1). Thus, the process of developing and implementing a discipline policy will involve collaborative decision-making with learners playing key roles in the management of discipline in secondary schools through their involvement with the RCL and SGB (cf 2.1). However, according to this research, participation in decision-making for learners is a relatively new phenomenon in schools and there is still much that needs to be done to make learner involvement in school management a success at schools.

Furthermore, literature reveals that it is important that learners become aware of the importance of their role in school management. Likewise, it is important for educators to allow learners to become accountable and responsible for their own behaviour (cf 1.4). The TLOs that are appointed at schools have a specific function to perform with regard to involving and training learners to take up their managerial roles within the school. Moreover, senior management have key roles to play when it comes to helping learners become actively involved in the management of discipline at schools.

The literature illustrates that the role of the learner in the management of discipline includes creating a sense of co-responsibility in learners as well as the opportunity to identify and train future leaders (cf 2.5.2). Furthermore, the RCL/prefects/SGB representatives must liaise and communicate with learners, professional school management and the SGB at school. Moreover, they must foster a spirit of mutual

respect, good manners and morality among learners and promote and maintain discipline among learners and promote the general welfare of the school (cf 2.5.2). The RCL/prefects/SGB representatives must promote orderliness and not disrupt the order in the school. Hence, their ultimate goal must be to assist school management in implementing the school policy and democratise its activities at the school (Department of Education 1999: 13). If learners can execute these functions and other responsibilities effectively and efficiently, then schools will not experience the discipline problems with which they are currently faced. This will also lead to more effective teaching and learning taking place as well as an improvement in learner achievement at schools. Moreover, learner involvement in the management of educational institutions is crucial for the creation of a climate conducive to learning and teaching which could result in stability in educational institutions (cf 2.5.1).

5.2.3 The research design

The necessary background to the management of discipline in secondary schools in South Africa and the role learners play in the management of discipline was provided in Chapter 2 of this research. It provided a detailed account of the role learners should be playing in the management of discipline in secondary schools in South Africa (cf 2.5) as well as the management of discipline and punishment in South African schools (cf 2.4). A qualitative approach (1.6 & 3.2.1) was considered appropriate for an exploratory study of the role of learners in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal. Three schools in the greater urban area of KwaZulu –Natal were identified. Access to these school was granted by the various school principals. Individual interviews with TLOs of the three schools (cf 3.3.5.1), head RCL/senior prefect/SGB representatives from the three schools (cf 3.3.5.2) as well as focus group interviews with three groups of class representatives (cf 3.3.5.3) from the three schools were conducted. The data collected were analysed according to procedures typical of qualitative research and organised according to emerging key themes (cf 3.3.7). These themes relate to discipline (cf 4.4), dealing with misconduct (cf 4.5), disciplinary structures at schools (cf 4.6), training (cf 4.7), challenges faced by the RCL/Prefects (cf 4.8) and benefits of learner involvement in school management (cf 4.9).

5.3 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section integrates prior research and theory reviewed in Chapter 2 with the significant themes that emerged from the qualitative investigation. The findings relate to the role of the learner in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

5.3.1 Discipline in schools

The findings of this research clearly show that schools are experiencing discipline problems. However, the intensity of these discipline problems vary from school to school (cf 4.4.1). Participants consider discipline to be an important aspect in the life of the school and complained that without good discipline, no effective teaching and learning can take place (cf 4.4.1). Furthermore, participants interviewed expressed frustration over the various types of disruptive behaviour that schools are currently experiencing. Moreover, participants in this research revealed that the major cause of discipline problems at schools stems from a lack of parent involvement in their children's education. Poor socio-economic conditions of parents and a lack of knowledge and skills of parent involvement serve as major barriers to parent involvement in school activities.

Recommendations

South African society has undergone major social, economic and political changes over the past few years as it has sought to establish a democratic and humane nation (cf 1.3). One of the changes was the banning of corporal punishment at schools, which has impacted negatively on the school environment and many schools are now faced with severe discipline problems. Therefore, it is recommended that schools give priority to discipline issues and develop proper structures to handle such issues. Schools need to have a code by which members of their community can monitor their behaviour and attitude towards each other and their environment (Blandford 1998: 165). Moreover, learners need to be taught and guided by educators how to take responsibility for their behaviour. Hence, learners must be actively involved in their education through the RCL/prefect/SGB representatives and more opportunities must

be created by the school to involve learners in the management of discipline. According to Gootman (1997: 2), good discipline requires that students experience the consequences of their misbehaviour and that discipline should help children develop self-control. Furthermore, parents need to become actively involved in their children's education. However, many parents do not have the necessary parenting skills. Thus, according to Porteus et al (2001: 88), the school has an important role in providing parents with ideas and new ways of thinking about discipline in the home. Schools should organise workshops for parents to discuss what they can contribute to a more effective partnership with parents.

5.3.2 Dealing with misconduct

Participants from this research indicated that a code of conduct is central to dealing with discipline problems at school (cf 4.5.1). However, some participants revealed that they are not involved in the drawing up of the school's code of conduct and this has a major impact on whether democratic structures are prevalent at the school. Moreover, some schools are still using corporal punishment to deal with discipline problems (cf 4.5.2). Furthermore, some participants felt that there are no proper structures in place to deal with discipline problems as well as insufficient opportunities for learners to become involved in the management of discipline at schools.

Recommendations

The importance of effective management cannot be overstated. A shared understanding of education management will enable schools to design, implement and review a discipline policy that works within the school and reflects the needs of learners, educators, support agencies and the community (Blandford 1998: 37). Thus, schools must have proper structures in place for dealing with misconduct. For example, a code of conduct is vital for the smooth and efficient running of the school. When the school's code of conduct is drawn up, all major stakeholders including learners must be involved to ensure that democratic principles are being included in important procedures (cf 4.5.1). Furthermore, according to Sacred Heart College R&D (1999: 70), the code of conduct should provide appropriate channels for learners

to air their grievances, as well as a basis for disciplinary procedures (cf 4.5.1). Moreover, according to Wheldall (1992: 46) educators have had little or no specific training in classroom management. The majority of educators claim that they have learned to manage classes “on the job” or by “trial and error” (Wheldall 1992: 46). Thus, it is recommended that educators be trained to use positive techniques on how to deal with disruptive behaviour at schools. Blandford (1998: 9) suggests that initial teacher training courses should include specific practical training related to motivating and managing learners, and dealing with those who challenge authority. Moreover, educators can create a positive environment by nurturing their learners, self-esteem and encouragement and support are effective tools in the management of discipline (Blanford 1998: 165).

5.3.3 Disciplinary structures at school

The RCL body was initially introduced at schools to consolidate democracy at school level. According to the SASA (RSA 1996b), it is compulsory for all schools to establish an RCL (cf 2.5.2 & 4.6). Schools in this research have indicated that they do have an RCL structure in place, but some schools complain that the RCL is not fully functional. Moreover, participants have revealed that they have a written policy on learner involvement in discipline. Yet at some schools this policy is not put into practice. It is merely a formal structure and learners are not given enough authority to deal with discipline issues at school (cf 4.6.1). Participants further added that insufficient opportunities are created for learners to become involved in the management of discipline at schools.

Recommendations

Learners are supposed to be the main focus and most important persons in schools and therefore must be included in management structures at school (Heystek 2001:) (cf 4.6.1). In agreement, Furtwengler (1996:38) argues that student leaders are a major factor in overall school improvement, fostering discipline in less effective schools and supporting appropriate behaviour in more effective schools. Therefore, it is important for every school to have proper structures in place for learner involvement in education. Moreover, learners serving on the RCL must be selected fairly and

democratically. It is also highly recommended that the Department of Education creates more structures, guidelines and support to schools to make learner involvement a success. The schools and Education Department must co-operate together in this regard, as learner involvement in education has become an important factor in the life of schools and research indicates that it can be very beneficial for the management of discipline in schools.

5.3.4 Lack of communication and collaboration

Findings of this study reveal that communication/collaboration between the school management and RCL is not sufficient (cf 4. 6.4. 2). Furthermore, the RCLs have indicated that there is no collaboration and co-operation from senior management and educators when it comes to matters pertaining to the RCL (cf 4.6.4.2). Some participants revealed that the school principals' involvement with the RCL is minimal. Moreover, participants in the research felt that communication links between class educators and class representatives are also not always good because educators often tend to be too busy with other activities.

Recommendations

Communication is essential in the development and implementation of an effective discipline policy (Blandford 1998: 166). Therefore, in order for learners to become actively involved in the management of discipline there must be sufficient communication and collaboration among school management, educators and RCL. It is recommended that principals as head of schools should be the driving force behind the RCL structure and ensure that there is sufficient communication and collaboration among all role players to ensure the success of learner involvement in educational management. Principals who know their learners are essential in the management of discipline in schools (cf 4.6.4.2). According to Blandford (1998: 166), communication is essential in the development and implementation of an effective discipline policy. Furthermore, educators should play key roles in helping to develop learners become responsible, self-disciplined and self-controlled. Educators must create opportunities where learners can become involved in helping to deal with discipline within the classroom. Therefore learner involvement in education can only run successfully if all

stakeholders play their roles effectively and take full responsibility for their tasks. Moreover, relationships with everyone are critical and educators, managers and learners need to relate to each other positively.

5.3.5 Training

The investigation showed that no formal training was provided for some RCLs. Therefore, these learners are not able to perform their tasks effectively. However, some participants indicated that they attended workshops but they complained that this was not sufficient to prepare them for their many duties/tasks (cf 4.6.1). This lack of training has a negative impact on learner involvement in management structures at school. Unless learners receive adequate training, their involvement in the management of discipline at school will not be effective or successful. Consequently, learners do not understand how to perform their duties/tasks effectively. Moreover, the research revealed that the Teacher Liaison Officers (TLOs) who are in charge of the RCLs have also not been sufficiently trained to perform their duties/tasks. They felt that their training should be on an ongoing basis so that they would be better equipped to guide and train the RCLs.

Recommendations

For learner involvement in the management of discipline at school to be successful, every role player should be adequately trained to perform his/her role effectively and efficiently. It is therefore recommended that the school management, TLOs, educators and learners (RCLs) should be adequately trained to fulfil their roles. While school management, TLOs and educators need training on how to guide and help learners to carry out their duties effectively, learners need to be trained on how to perform their tasks/duties and become fully functional in the management of discipline within the school environment. Heystek (2001: 216) argues that the training of learners should not be seen as a single event aimed at the year in which learners are serving as representatives. He adds that training should be given to learner leaders in all grades over a number of years to enable them to grow in the democratic process of participatory decision-making (cf 4.7.1).

To ensure that all role players receive appropriate training, it is important that the Department of Education should form a partnership with institutions of higher learning and use afternoons, weekends and school holidays for in-service training programmes. The Department of Education should make incentives available to principals and educators who undergo these programmes. Moreover, private providers should be encouraged to maximise their support to schools. They should be encouraged to support schools by training educators, supplying them with teaching and learning material and providing financial support. Their activities should be co-ordinated with the Department's programmes.

5.3.6 Challenges faced by the RCL/senior prefect/SGB representatives

Research findings indicate that the participants are experiencing many challenges in their jobs. They find that there is a serious lack of time to perform their duties effectively and still manage their schoolwork activities (cf 4.8). Furthermore, they complained that there are not enough support structures available to them and their peers tend to take advantage of them. They seem to think that most of their time is wasted on trying to deal with disruptive learners and this has a negative impact on their schoolwork (cf 4.8). Moreover, RCLs complained that some educators have no control of learners within the classroom and these educators are also not setting a good example for the learners to follow. Examples are that educators answer cell phones during class time and use bad language (cf 4.8). Thus RCLs revealed that this makes their tasks a little more difficult and challenging.

Recommendations

Learner involvement in educational management is still a fairly new one and very much in its early stages of development. Thus, learners involved with the RCL have many challenges to overcome. However, it is very important that proper structures are in place at schools to help these learners to overcome major challenges. Support structures for the RCLs are an absolute necessity and school management, educators and TLOs must ensure that they provide learners with the necessary support that is required to make their tasks more manageable and enjoyable. Initially learners must be made aware of the various challenges and responsibilities they will be faced with

(cf 4.8). Moreover, educators can and should play key roles within the classroom in supporting and helping the RCLs become more successful. Educators must try and develop good relations with the RCLs and work closely with them to make a positive contribution to the teaching and learning environment. Furthermore, educators should be guided to be out-standing role models to learners and set good examples for them to follow. This influences learners positively. Hence, in order to improve the effectiveness of the RCL structure, everybody must contribute and put more effort into the process (cf 4.8).

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The findings of this research on the role of the learner in the management of discipline in secondary schools suggest the following areas be further explored:

It is firstly recommended that the use of a qualitative research methodology should be further explored, as it allows participants the opportunity to discuss issues that they consider to be important from their own perspectives (cf 3.2.1). This method is appropriate because it seeks to understand human and social behaviour as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting and participants are regarded as the prime source of information (cf 3.2.1). Therefore, it is recommended that a qualitative methodology be used in a situation where the aim of a study is to determine the perceptions of the participants. Moreover, a qualitative study is relevant for the discovery of important themes as it allows participants the opportunity to define the topics and questions to be pursued in larger research projects.

Due to the lack of research on the role of the learner in the management of discipline in secondary schools, many aspects still require further more detailed research. Thus, the following areas are suggested for further research:

- Strategies to improve parent support/involvement in their children's education and disciplinary issues at school.
- Implementation of proper structures at school to handle discipline problems.

- Strategies to implement an effective communication system among all role players involved with disciplinary issues within the school.
- Training of learners for their tasks/responsibilities within RCL.
- Training of principal, senior management, educators and TLOs on ways of supporting and guiding learners who are tasked with discipline issues at schools.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The primary aim of this research is to determine the role that learners play or should play in the management of discipline in secondary schools from the perspective of head RCL/Senior prefect/SGB representatives, class representatives and TLOs. However, this study demonstrates both the strengths and the limitations of such an investigation.

An obvious limitation of the study is the small size of the sample that is typical of qualitative research. Therefore, it cannot support a general theory on the role of the learner in the management of discipline. It is obvious that different schools would have revealed different findings. This research was designed to be exploratory and descriptive in nature, as a result no attempt is made to generalise or quantify the findings.

Although an attempt was made to select three schools serving different socio-economic groupings, the selection was limited by, among others, accessibility of participating schools. The participants and schools were selected on their willingness to participate in the research. This means that different results might have been obtained in different situations or if different schools were included in the research.

The overview of the existing literature (Chapter 2) provided valuable background to the interviews. It suggests that individual interviews with the head RCL/senior prefect/SGB representatives (cf 3.3.5.2) and the TLOs (cf 3.3.5.1), as well as focus group interviews with class representatives (3.3.5.3) are suitable data collection strategies for this study. Possible factors that could have influenced the study were

included in the statement of subjectivity (cf 3.3.1). Following data analysis, findings were presented according to themes that emerged from participants' perspectives. No attempts were made to generalise or quantify the findings.

Despite these limitations, the data gathered from this research yielded key areas that contributed to a better understanding of the role of the learner in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal. These key areas indicate aspects in which further research can be done on the topic (cf 5.4).

5.6 SUMMARY

The management of discipline in schools is central to effective teaching and learning. If educators are unable to manage a class they will be unable to teach. Research indicates that many schools are currently faced with difficulties regarding discipline problems. However, according to Blandford (1998: 9), central government, past and present has recognised the need for schools to maintain a disciplined environment that is safe and secure for all learners and educators, yet discipline is rarely mentioned in the context of education reform. Moreover, government's introduction of the role of learners in school management is aimed at bringing about democracy in education, but there are insufficient guidelines, support and training in this area. Furthermore, school management, educators and learners are still not fully aware of how these structures should be fully functional at school level. Furthermore, parents are not involved in helping schools to make this concept of learner involvement in management structures at school, a success. Thus, a number of obstacles that impinge on the role of the learners in the management of discipline in schools identified should be addressed so that every role player will understand his/her role and how to perform that role.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

91 Hesketh Drive
Hayfields
Pietermaritzburg
3201
24 may 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH: STUDENT NO.
674-766-3

I kindly request permission to conduct a small research project in your school.

I am currently registered at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for the Master of Education Degree (Education Management). In order to fulfill the requirements for this degree, I am required to undertake a small research project and submit a mini-dissertation related to this.

My proposed research is: *“The role of learners in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal”*. Thus, this research project requires that I interview the Head RCL, the TLO and a few class representatives from grade 8 to 12. I, therefore, appeal for your co-operation in helping me organise a suitable time and date to carry out these interviews. I also request that interviews be tape recorded in order to save time and ensure that I do not miss certain things during our conversation. However, I assure you complete anonymity and confidentiality of the responses.

The information that I will gain will help me develop professionally and I hope that the feedback that I will share with you if you want me to do so will be of great help to you and your staff. Should you require further information in the process of considering the request, please contact my supervisor, Prof. J. N. Van Wyk at (012) 42943 46(work) or (012) 3480700 (home).

I do hope that my request will meet with your favorable consideration.

Thanking you

Yours faithfully

Charmaine Subbiah (Mrs)

APPENDIX B: LETTER TO TLOs

91 Hesketh Drive
Hayfields
Pietermaritzburg
3201
24 May 2004

Dear Sir/Madam

I kindly request permission to interview you and a few learners serving on the RCL as part of my small research project that I am conducting.

I am currently registered at the University of South Africa (UNISA) for my Master of Education Degree (Education Management). In order to fulfil the requirements for this degree, I am required to undertake a small research project and submit a mini-dissertation related to this.

My proposed research is "*The role of learners in the management of discipline in urban secondary schools in KwaZulu –Natal*". This requires inter-alia that I interview the TLO and a group of learners serving on the RCL component at three different urban schools in KwaZulu-Natal. I therefore, appeal for your co-operation and time to conduct this interview with you and a group of learners selected by you that are serving on the RCL. You will decide on the dates and times that are suitable to you and the learners. I request that the interviews be tape recorded in order to save time and to ensure that I do not miss certain things during our discussion. However, I assure you complete anonymity and confidentiality of your responses.

Should you require further information in the process considering the request, please contact my supervisor, Prof. JN Van Wyk at (012) 4294346.

I do hope that my request will meet with your favourable consideration.

Yours sincerely

C. Subbiah (Mrs)

**APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE:
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH HEAD RCL/SENIOR PREFECT/SGB
LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE**

This guide was used to ensure that important issues are included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the discussion and all participants were allowed to raise issues, which were of concern to them.

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- What do you think about discipline at your school?

2. SCHOOL POLICY ON LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN DISCIPLINE

- What is the policy of your school on learner involvement in discipline
- Is it a written policy/unwritten policy on the role of learners in maintaining discipline?

3. SCHOOL GOVERNING STRUCTURES

- What are the tasks of the SGB regarding learner discipline?
- In what way has the SGB been trained to fulfil its tasks on discipline?
- In what way does the SGB assist in getting learners involved in the school discipline?

4. THE HEAD RCL/SGB LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE/PREFECTS

- How do you select the head RCL, SGB learner representative and prefects?
- What are their tasks? How specifically are they involved in discipline?
- Who is involved in choosing these representatives?
- Do you think that the selection process is based on democratic principles?
- What role do you think you should play in maintenance/improving discipline in your school?

- How challenging is this task?
- What leadership qualities do you think the head RCL/SGB representative/senior prefects should have?

5. ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE

- What role do you play in creating a disciplined environment at your school so that a situation conducive to teaching/learning prevail?
- What do you consider to be good discipline?
- What is classified as misconduct/poor discipline at your school?
- Are there degrees/different levels of misconduct?
- Are there different rules for the more serious/less serious discipline problems?
- Can you give some examples of misconduct that you had to deal with this year?
- If you had to deal with severe misconduct, who do you report to?
- What role does the RCL play in determining what conduct is expected of learners, in determining the rules of the school and in punishing misbehavior?
- Section 10 of the South African Schools Act prohibits the use of Corporal punishment in all public schools, what is the situation in your school regarding corporal punishment?
- What can the RCL do to ensure the end of corporal punishment?
- How are learners punished in this school?

6. COMMUNICATION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

- How do teachers handle discipline handle problems within the class?
- How are problems dealt with by learners
- SGB decides to suspend a learner, how do you get involved
- To what extent have you been involved in drawing up the code of conduct

7. TRAINING

- What type of training did you receive?

- Who is involved in training you?
- Does the training equip you to handle your tasks/duties?

8. BARRIERS TO LEARNER INVOLVEMENT

- What barriers prevent proper learner involvement in school management?
- What should schools do to encourage learner involvement in discipline?

9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Has participation in the RCL/SGB/Prefect body helped you in any way?
- What have been the benefits of participating in decision – making for you personally
- What are the challenges facing the RCL in exercising their duties and functions and how can this be overcome?

**APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE:
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH TEACHER LIAISON OFFICERS (TLO)**

This guide was used only to ensure that important issues are included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the discussion and all participants were allowed to raise issues that were of concern.

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- What do you think about discipline in this school?

2. STRUCTURES IN SCHOOL

- What structures are in place at your school regarding learner participation in school management/discipline
- How were you elected for this post?
- Do all RCLs report to you only? Are there other teachers that assist you?
- How is the principal of the school involved with the RCL?
- When did learner participation in school governance begin? And what were the circumstances surrounding this decision?

3. TRAINING

- Have you been trained to perform your tasks as a liaison officer?
- Who was involved in training you? Please tell me about your training?
- How equipped do you think you are to carry out your responsibilities as a TLO?
- Are the learners properly trained for their roles, and who was involved in training them?

4. TASKS/RESPONSIBILITIES

- What is your main tasks/responsibilities regarding the management of discipline at your school?
- Are you able to cope with these tasks and manage your other teaching activities?
- What are the main tasks of the RCL in the management of discipline?
- Are the RCLs coping with their responsibilities with regard to discipline problems?
- Do you think that the learners are actively involved in the RCL?

5. COMMUNICATION

- How often do you'll meet?
- Do the RCL come to you with problems/difficulties?
- Is there sufficient collaboration between educators and the RCL in general?
- Are teachers willing to co-operate and participate in involving learners in decision making within the classroom?

6. DISCIPLINE

- What do you see as good discipline?
- What types of misbehavior do you find at your school?
- How do you differentiate between “minor” issues of misbehavior and major transgressions of rules?
- What authority does RCL members have to deal with misbehavior?
- Do you think that RCLs are having a positive impact on helping teachers with discipline problems
- Are teachers creating sufficient opportunities for learners to become involved in the management of discipline?
- Are there constructive measures in place to direct learners to become self-disciplined and self-controlled?

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of learner involvement in the management of discipline?
- Do you think that the whole concept and idea of the RCL is working to help maintain a disciplined environment within the school?
- Has being involved with the RCL helped you in any way? What have been the benefits of being the TLO at your school?

**APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW GUIDE:
FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW WITH CLASS REPRESENTATIVES FROM
GRADE 8 TO 12.**

This guide was used only to ensure that important issues are included in the discussion. At no time was the interview guide used to dictate the course of the discussion and all participants were allowed to raise issues that were of concern to them.

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

- What in your opinion does discipline mean?
- Do you think that it is important for learners to get involved in the management of discipline in the school?

2. SELECTION OF CLASS REPRESENTATIVES

- How were you chosen as a class representative?
- Do you think that the process of selection is fair?
- Why do you think that you were chosen by the learners to represent them?

3. TASKS

- What are your main tasks/responsibilities with regard to discipline?
- What effect does being a RCL representative have on your schoolwork?
- Do you get the co-operation from your classmates?

4. TRAINING

- What kind of training did you receive?
- Who was involved in training you?
- Do you think that you are well equipped to carry out your tasks/duties effectively?

- Is there any area that you feel you need help in to make your task easier?

5. DISCIPLINE

- What role do you play in creating a disciplined environment in your class?
- What do you consider to be a well-disciplined learner?
- What is classified as poor discipline in your class?
- Is discipline a problem within the classroom?
- Give some examples of misconduct that you have to deal with in your class?
- How do teachers react to discipline problems?
- Are you actively involved in the process of helping the teacher deal with misconduct?
- Do learners co-operate with you when punishment is meted out?

6. COMMUNICATION LINKS

- Is there sufficient communication/collaboration between the class teacher and you regarding discipline issues?
- Are you able to easily consult with the teacher when problems arise?
- Have you been involved in drawing up the classroom rules and code of conduct?
- Are you able to communicate with the class effectively?
- As class rep. how has it influenced your relationship with your friends?

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

- Has this job been worthwhile to you?
- What has this task meant to you?
- Did it help you to deal better with people?
- Are there any positive/negative things about your job?

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF INTERVIEW WITH TLO.
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH TLO FROM SCHOOL C

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Researcher: What do you think about discipline in this school?

TLO: Well, actually the discipline is quite okay at our school. We do not have any serious problems as such. We have a few minor problems, of course, as often happens in most schools.

Researcher: Could you list some of these problems?

TLO: The biggest problem at our school is smoking and bunking of lessons. Our offenders are mainly from the FET phase and they are predominately male learners. The other, perhaps less serious problem is that some learners fail to dress in proper school uniform, they are careless and tardy in appearance. However, all in all, I think our staff are able to maintain fairly good discipline at school.

2. STRUCTURES IN SCHOOL

Researcher: What structures are in place at your school regarding learner participation in school management/discipline?

TLO: The main structures in place at present are our prefect body and our RCL body.

Researcher: How are these learners involved in maintaining discipline at school?

TLO: Well our prefects assist educators to maintain control of learners during both the interval and lunch breaks, and during assembly. The prefects report any incidents of misdemeanour to the educators on duty

for that particular week/day. The prefects also help to ensure that learners wear proper school uniforms.

Researcher: So, would you say that the prefects are the only learners who are involved in managing discipline at school?

TLO: No, the prefects are in charge of the school at large. We have 2 RCLs in each class unit who assists educators in maintaining discipline in the classroom itself ie. during lessons. RCLs monitor behaviour of learners in the class during lessons and during the change of lessons(while learners are moving from one class to the next). RCLs report all misconduct to the form teacher who then address the problem. Sometimes the RCLs refer the problems to TLOs and we address problem.

Researcher: So what you are saying in a nutshell is that the RCLs maintain/manage discipline during lessons and the prefects take over the control during the breaks and assembly?

TLO: To a large extent, yes. However, the RCLs do have the right to assert their authority during breaks and assembly but they usually defer to the prefects who are in fact our most senior learners/our matriculants.

Researcher: How were you elected for this post?

TLO: I was elected by the principal of our school.

Researcher: Do all RCLs report to you only? Are there other teachers that assist you?

TLO: We have two TLOs at our school and learners normally report to both of us on important issues. Learners also report to form teacher on matters pertaining to their classes. We the TLOs share the duties and responsibilities.

Researcher: How is the principal of the school involved with the RCL?

TLO: His involvement is minimal. The RCL only interacts with the principal if the TLOs cannot resolve issues/problems, or if a matter requires the principals consent/authority. The principal is invited to our RCL meetings on occasions (full meeting) and sometimes the TLOs and RCL head have a meeting with the principal if we have urgent matters to discuss/resolve.

Researcher: When did learner participation in school governance begin? And what were the circumstances surrounding this decision?

TLO: Around 1998/1999. The SASA clearly stipulates the role that learners should play in school governance.

3. TRAINING

Researcher: Have you been trained to perform your tasks as a liaison officer?

TLO: I have attended a few meetings conducted/organised by the department of education and learner services.

Researcher: Who was involved in training you? Please tell me about your training?

TLO: Learner services and some department officials. I have all the necessary documentation at my disposal so I am able to read about all the responsibilities/duties of a TLO. In other words a lot of my training comes from self-training.

Researcher: How equipped do you think you are to carry out your responsibilities as a TLO?

TLO: I feel confident that I am adequately equipped to carry out my responsibilities as a TLO. We have a TLO master trainer at our school who also assists me/informs me about the latest developments about TLOs and their responsibilities. Yes, I think I am up to the task.

Researcher: Are the learners properly trained for their roles, and who was involved in training them?

TLO: They have been trained, in fact, their training is a continuous process. They have attended meetings organised by the Department of education and learner services. At present the other TLO at our school is involved in training TLOs in our district, is providing further training for our RCLs. Thus we are in a fortunate position at our school because our learners have proper training available to them.

4. TASKS/RESPONSIBILITIES

Researcher: What are your main tasks/responsibilities regarding the management of discipline at your school?

TLO: I am a member of the discipline committee at school, which controls all discipline problems/matters.

Researcher: Are you able to cope with these tasks and manage your other teaching activities?

TLO: Oh yes. We usually attend to discipline issues during the breaks or after school hours and therefore it does not interfere with my teaching time.

Researcher: What are the main tasks of the RCL in the management of discipline?

TLO: At the moment it is mainly a co-operative role. The RCL reps. attend meetings together with the SGB and Discipline Committee but major

decisions concerning discipline matters are still handled by the principal and members of the Discipline Committee.

Researcher: Are the RCLs coping with their responsibilities with regard to discipline problems?

TLO: Yes, because their role is not a demanding one. In fact they are not expected to make major decisions on their own.

Researcher: Do you think that the learners are actively involved in the RCL?

TLO: Yes, they are active participants. They display a keen interest in all RCL activities, they want or should I say they are willing to co-operate.

5. COMMUNICATION

Researcher: How often do you'll meet?

TLO: We have regular meetings – I would say at least two per term. Sometimes, in fact during the past month we have been meeting every Friday because we had urgent matters to discuss. We meet whenever and however often we need to.

Researcher: Do the RCL come to you with problems/difficulties?

TLO: Yes, all the time. We have a good working relationship. The learners have confidence and trust in me. They are always consulting with me.

Researcher: Is there sufficient collaboration between educators and the RCL in general?

TLO: Most times. Some educators tend to have a negative attitude to the RCL in general. They believe that the learners are not mature enough

to make important decisions and become involved in decision-making at school level. However, as the RCL is becoming more empowered, educators are adopting a more positive outlook/attitude.

Researcher: Are teachers willing to co-operate and participate in involving learners in decision-making within the classroom?

TLO: Yes most educators welcome the assistance of the RCLs. We have large class units and assistance from the learners in promoting/maintaining good discipline is always welcome.

6. DISCIPLINE

Researcher: What do you see as good discipline?

TLO: Well mannered, respectful, courteous, dedicated learners who are always in full school uniform.

Researcher: What types of misbehaviour do you find at your school?

TLO: Smoking and bunking of lessons.

Researcher: How do you differentiate between minor issues of misbehaviour and major transgressions of rules?

TLO: We have a code of conduct and all forms of misbehaviour – minor and major – is clearly spelt out to learners. The learners know what is expected of them and are expected to abide by rules and regulations of the school. All transgressions are justly dealt with to prevent a repetition of such offences.

Researcher: What authority does the RCL members have to deal with misbehaviour?

TLO: They are responsible for reporting all misbehaviour to their teachers or TLOs. They have the authority to bring learners into line by talking to them/cautioning them. They have no authority to mete out any form of punishment as such.

Researcher: Do you think that the RCLs are having a positive impact on helping teachers with discipline problems?

TLO: Yes they are very helpful, especially because of the large class units. The learners are beginning to respect the RCLs authority.

Researcher: Are teachers creating sufficient opportunities for learners to become involved in the management of discipline?

TLO: Most teachers are encouraging learners to become actively involved in the management of discipline. Some educators think that the learners are not yet ready to be given such a huge responsibility, but most agree that we need to teach our learners to become self-disciplined and self-controlled and to become good leaders. We can only do this if we create sufficient opportunities for them to display their leadership qualities.

Researcher: Are there constructive measures in place to direct learners to become self-disciplined and self-controlled?

TLO: To a large extent, yes. In our school we have large class units and I guess learners do have to become self-disciplined because educators cannot give individual attention to all learners.

7. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Researcher: What are some of the advantages/disadvantages of learner involvement in the management of discipline?

TLO: Some advantages – learners offer invaluable assistance in maintaining discipline in the classroom, especially if the class units are large. Learners tend to listen to their peers and most RCLs are able to get through to their classmates – they are able to exert some control over them.

Some disadvantages – some learners get too enthusiastic about their positions in the classrooms – they think they are responsible for all the learners in their classes. These learners tend to want to take control from their teachers. This leads to problems – some educators get annoyed because they feel that their position is being usurped. Some learners do not want/object to being reprimanded by fellow learners and this can cause serious problems in the classroom.

Researcher: Do you think that the whole concept and idea of the RCL is working to help maintain a disciplined environment within the school?

TLO: Yes, certainly. I believe that with proper training the RCL can become a real asset in the management of discipline at schools. Learners must become more responsible, mature individuals and this would make teaching and learning an enjoyable experience.

Researcher: Has being involved with the RCL helped you in any way? What have been the benefits of being the TLO at your school?

TLO: Yes, there are numerous benefits. I enjoy a good relationship/rapport with the learners. They trust me and feel free to talk to me about any problems/matters. I really enjoy this close relationship with the RCL and I feel honoured to represent them at meetings. I have really developed and grown in many areas.

APPENDIX G: AN EXAMPLE OF AN INTERVIEW
INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW WITH HEAD RCL/SENIOR PREFECT/SGB
LEARNER REPRESENTATIVE FROM SCHOOL B

1. INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

Researcher: What do you think about discipline at your school?

Vivek: Discipline at our school is good, we do have the occasional problems but these are sorted out very quickly and effectively as we have a very privileged code of system.

Researcher: Why do you think that your school does not have a major discipline crises that seems to be prevalent in most other schools?

Vivek : Well, I think the majority of our learners come from very affluent backgrounds and the parents are very involved in their children's educational activities. Also the measures of disciplinary rules, traditions and codes at our school are very strict and strong and therefore, the learners become properly groomed into the system.

2. SCHOOL POLICY ON LEARNER INVOLVEMENT IN DISCIPLINE

Researcher: What is the policy of your school on learner involvement in discipline?

Vivek: We actually have a very proactive policy at our school, learners are actively involved in discipline issues.

Researcher: Is it a written policy/unwritten policy on the role of learners in maintaining discipline?

Vivek: Yes, it is a written policy.

3. SCHOOL GOVERNING STRUCTURES

Researcher: What are the tasks of the SGB regarding learner discipline?

Vivek: SGB play major role in discipline at school. They are continually re-assessing policy to meet the needs of the school. The SGB is comprised of various different committees such as the Old boy parent contact committee, Legal Committee, Strategic development committee, Staff committee etc. These committees together are very proactive in maintaining a high standard of discipline at our a school.

Researcher: In what way has the SGB been trained to fulfil its tasks on discipline?

Vivek: Well, the person who heads the discipline committee is a an old boy of the school and is currently a “judge”. Also advocates come in from the old boy committee to help make decisions regarding discipline. Therefore, it can be noted that these people obviously have a tremendous amount of knowledge and experience to offer the school regarding discipline.

Researcher: In what way does the SGB assist in getting learners involved in the school discipline?

Vivek: They allow two learner representatives to serve on the SGB to represent learners regarding discipline issues. Since the SGB has supreme authority at our school, when problems arise they involve learners by allowing RCL/Prefects to fill in questionnaires so that they can get ideas from the learners on how the problem should be solved.

4. THE HEAD RCL/SGB LEARNER REPRESENTATIVES/PREFECTS

Researcher: How do you select the head RCL, SGB learner representative and prefects?

Vivek? Well, usually for prefects the whole school votes but this is not the final say as each grade is given a different weighting and also the educators have say in selection of prefects. Whereas, for the head RCL/SGB rep. each class votes for 1 rep. But the grade 8s are not allowed to vote as they are still fairly new, they can select only after first term. The RCL class reps then get together and vote for head RCL who also serves as SGB rep.

Researcher: What are their tasks? How specifically are they involved in discipline?

Vivek: They are very involved in discipline issues. If discipline problems arise they take the problem to headmaster and if need be it goes further to SGB for further investigation.

Researcher: Do you think that the selection process is based on democratic principles?

Vivek: Yes most definitely.

Researcher: What role do you think you should play in maintenance/improving discipline in your school?

Vivek: An active role. It is important to communicate well with the boys and work closely and collaboratively with the class representatives. The boys must be constantly reminded of the school rule and code of conduct.

Researcher: How challenging is this task?

Vivek: It is very challenging and it takes up a lot of time. The SGB has compulsory meetings about 2/3 times a term and sometimes more when problems arise. Also at these meetings important decisions have to be made which is challenging for me.

Researcher: What leadership qualities do you think the head RCL/SGB rep./senior prefect should have?

Vivek: Firstly, they must be impartial because they are expressing the views of the boys. They must have communication skills as they will be communicating with boys /management. Also practical skills are important to get control over situations.

5. ROLE IN THE MANAGEMENT OF DISCIPLINE

Researcher: What role do you play in creating a disciplined environment at your school so that a situation conducive to teaching/learning prevails?

Vivek: Well as head RCL I make sure that I encourage and motivate the boys on an ongoing basis. Also after every RCL and SGB meeting I give a full report back. Issues of discipline are usually addressed immediately. We have a pledge book, which the boys sign to commit themselves to take pride in their school community and environment. This really helps the boys to stay focussed and dedicated to uphold the school name and tradition.

Researcher: What do you consider to be good discipline?

Vivek: Reasonable behavior. In other words when learners do not prohibit educators teaching activities in class and also deprive their fellow classmates from their right to be taught without disruption. Good discipline for us also works out into the sports field. Self- discipline and self-control is inculcated in boys so that they can be good players on the sportsfield.

Researcher: What is classified as misconduct/poor discipline at your school?

Vivek: Not wearing proper uniform in and out of school, not respecting those in authority (prefects, educators, RCL etc). Bad behavior on the sports field, homework/assignments not done etc.

Researcher: Are there degrees/different levels of misconduct?

Vivek: Yes

Researcher: Are there different rules for the more serious/less serious discipline problems? Give some examples.

Vivek: Yes. Minor discipline problems involve learners doing minor punishment like running from prefects/RCL or they are deprived of lunch break. Whereas, the serious discipline problems receive more severe punishment. Usually the learner gets a misconduct slip which has to be signed by parent, after 3 slips you receive a Saturday detention where the learner must spend a full day at school working (sanding desks, polish floors etc.). Also Saturday detention prevents learners from playing Saturday sport.

Researcher: Can you give some examples of misconduct that you had to deal with this year?

Vivek: A few minor discipline problems eg. Homework not done, not wearing proper uniform. Major problem was an incident when a learner pitched for a rugby game in civvies/no uniform and he was caught smoking.

Researcher: If you had to deal with severe misconduct, who do you report to?

Vivek: Deputy headmaster – Mr. Jury

Researcher: What role does the RCL play in determining what conduct is expected of learners, in determining the rules of the school and in punishing misbehavior?

Vivek: RCL plays major role. They are actively involved in drawing up the school rule and code of conduct. Also they have a say in the punishment that is meted out to learners.

Researcher: Section 10 of the South African Schools Act prohibits the use of corporal punishment in all schools, what is the situation in your school regarding corporal punishment?

Vivek: Corporal punishment is totally banned, we use more positive strategies of punishment.

Researcher: How are learners punished in this school?

Vivek: Misconduct slips to parents, normal detention, and Saturday detention.

6. COMMUNICATION

Researcher: How do educators handle discipline problems within the class?

Vivek: This varies from educator to educator. Some educators are very strict and maintain good control whereas there are others who cannot they get frustrated and constantly rebuke learners or chase learners out of class.

Researcher: How are problems dealt with by the learners?

Vivek: Fairly well

Researcher: SGB decides to suspend a learner, how do you get involved?

Vivek: Well we get involved in the process up to expulsion, have a say in decision-making however we can abstain if we do not want to get involved. The meetings are also optional.

Researcher: To what extent have you been involved in drawing up the code of conduct.

Vivek: To a great extent.

7. TRAINING

Researcher: What type of training did you receive?

Vivek: Initially had training for RCL, which entailed what the job is all about. Also had leadership training and workshops for prefect duties. Continually attend motivational meetings and watch videos and answer questionnaires.

Researcher: Who was involved in training you?

Vivek: 4 headmasters, TLOs, and some staff members.

Researcher: Does training help you to handle your tasks/duties?

Vivek: Yes definitely. Also I think because it is on an ongoing basis helps me to continually reflect on my tasks/duties and see how I can improve.

8. BARRIERS TO LEARNER INVOLVEMENT

Researcher: What barriers prevent proper learner involvement in school management?

Vivek: Actually none we have enough opportunities at our school to become actively involved.

Researcher: What should schools do to encourage learner involvement in discipline?

Vivek: I think by creating the opportunity for learners to get involved and also by educators playing a role in directing learners toward developing self-discipline and self-control.

9. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Researcher: Has participation in the RCL/SGB/prefect body helped you in any way? What have been the benefits of participating in decision-making for you personally?

Vivek: It taught me how to relate to different kinds of people. My social skills have definitely developed. Also you become more critical, more mature and tend to strike a balance because you cannot take every problem to head.

Researcher: What are the challenges facing the RCL in exercising their duties and functions and how can this be overcome?

Vivek: There is none. We have a deep commitment to our school and enjoy every task and do it to the best of our ability to maintain our schools disciplined environment.

