

**An investigation into the nature of misdemeanours
experienced by selected learners at a secondary
school in KwaZulu-Natal.**

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DEDICATION

Declaration of Originality

I, Tasneem Rajack declare that this one module dissertation entitled "An investigation into the nature of misdemeanours experienced by selected learners at a secondary School in KwaZulu-Natal", is my own work and that all sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.


Mrs T Rajack
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Executive Summary

School discipline issues and more especially various kinds of misbehavior in the classroom interfere with the teaching and learning process. Precious instruction time is taken up in dealing with discipline. This study investigates the misdemeanors that three selected learners have been involved in. In a secondary school it also examines reasons for these misdemeanors and how these problems impact on the discipline of the institution.

Undeniably, a large body of evidence suggests that in many South African schools the culture of teaching and learning seems to be disintegrating, especially in secondary schools. Significant role-players are overwhelmed by disciplinary problems and lack the capacity to manage this problem effectively. It is against this background that the present project attempts to encourage managers of education and other relevant people to embrace a strategic management approach to restore the culture of learning and teaching in schools.

The researcher proceeded to investigate why the selected learners engage in certain misdemeanors and how the schools' management strategies impacted on the climate at the secondary school. The data from these learners were collected through semi-structured interviews. An analysis of all data acknowledges that restoring the culture of learning and teaching is not simply about the acceptance of authority and the impositions of sanctions for misdemeanors. It is about understanding the complex process of learning, teaching, managing and resourcing. It entails involving every role-player so that new social relationships are developed. Concurrently, it means rebuilding social and material conditions for schooling to take place, and capacity building so that new forms of discipline are internalized. It means that there has to be changes in attitudes, skills, competencies and values so that learners can ultimately take responsibility for their own behavior.

The study focuses on the significance of the research findings, and attempts to offer educational representations of the practical and procedural recommendations for the management of behavior in schools made by key constituencies. It further highlights the immense potential that a strategic management approach has for the enhancement of learning and teaching.

1. Introduction

Teaching and learning in any school can only effectively take place in an environment in which love, warmth and caring form the forefront to a safe and orderly atmosphere. Furthermore, scholars are to be in more or less a stable state of mind to learn effectively. However presently we find those learning environments are disintegrating in schools due to the various stresses of life and living. Learners are more often than not, psychologically and emotionally disturbed and schools are not adequately resourced to deal with such learners. As such, it is the intention of this research project to explore the nature of misdemeanours committed by pupils at a selected secondary school and to assess the nature of support afforded to these learners by school managers and educators.

1.1 Background to the project

The background of the study arises out of the concern expressed by managers of education, educators, learners and the school community about the breakdown of the schooling system and the non existence of the COLTS programme, i.e., the culture of teaching and learning in school. Learners are engulfed with helpless inability to cope with the spiralling chaos that they are constantly faced with (Report on COLTS, Wits; E.P.U.). This concern was underscored by the ex-provincial Minister of Education in KwaZulu-Natal, Dr. Vincent Zulu, in the (Daily News, 31 July 1998), where he stated that:

The lack of order and discipline was being experienced mainly at former black schools, but it was unfortunate that discipline was "creeping in" at former Indian schools, which previously ran smoothly together with former white schools.

However it must be clearly understood that the problem experienced by schools and learners is not about race, neither is it confined to former white nor black schools.

1.2 Focus

The focus of the project suggests that in many KwaZulu-Natal schools, the culture of learning and teaching appears to be disintegrating, especially in secondary schools. Role players are overwhelmed by disciplinary problems at schools and they lack the capacity effectively to manage this problem. Scholars are experiencing untold grief and problems, their voices are not being heard and little or nothing is being done. Doctor Vincent Zulu, the ex Minister of education in the Kwa Zulu-Natal education department (Daily News, 31 July 1998), told delegates at a conference on the government's ambitious Culture of Learning, Teaching and Services (COLTS) campaign that: "In our situation, kids come in at any time, some with the hands in their pockets and produce guns and the teachers keep quiet".

This reality is further substantiated by the Sunday Tribune (27 June 1999) that highlighted cases of violence in KwaZulu-Natal secondary schools, in the first six months of 1999. These are summarised as follows:

- A learner at New Forest High School in Montclair, Durban, was allegedly stabbed to death by another learner of the school in June 1999. The motive for the stabbing was unknown to the school management.

Against this preamble and context, the study will attempt to explore in a limited way, the nature of different discipline problems that three selected learners have experienced in a secondary school in the district of Phoenix North in the North Durban region of KwaZulu-Natal. In part the study also examines through the lens of these learners, their impressions of the problems and the reaction of the school (Peers, Managers and Educators).

2. Aim of the Study

Hence it is vital that schools forge meaningful partnerships with the community and harmonise with the culture, ethos and values of the school. Failure to do this is tantamount to schools setting themselves up for failure.

It is vitally important that any attempt to intervene in school be done on the basis of an understanding of and sensitivity to school cultures and social backgrounds. These dynamics are complex and cannot simply be acted upon. Specific dynamics need to be understood systematically and sympathetically and role players need to be worked with on an ongoing basis.

This alarming situation was encapsulated by a report by the Gauteng committee of culture and teaching (June 1996: 10) which urged that:

Given the above state of disciplinary problems, especially in public secondary schools, this study is an attempt to unpack the misdemeanours of selected learners. It is contextualised against the historical background of transforming South African education.

learners caused extensive damage to the school property and the school was closed for a week.

- There was an alleged shooting of a parent in April 1999. The 19-year old learner of the Shalcross secondary school in Durban was arrested for the alleged shooting. Angry learners caused extensive damage to the school property and the school was closed for a week.
- At Ntuli Primary School, Nsuzi in the North Coast of Durban, two educators were gunned down in front of their learners in February 1999. The motive for the shooting was unknown.
- The Mphahwe High School in Ndedwe was set alight by an armed gang of alleged learners in a nearby school in April 1999 destroying two classrooms. The motive is believed to be jealousy because the school had produced good results in the previous year's matric examination.
- At Siyahlonmuka High School in Edendale, it was alleged that learners held management staff and educators hostage in May 1999 when they demanded that a learner charged for attempted murder be released.
- At Sea Cow Lake secondary school in Durban a learner was stabbed in the hip, allegedly by another learner at the school in March 1999. The motive for the stabbing was unknown.
- Outraged learners at Burnwood secondary school in Durban went on a rampage and beat up an educator in May 1999.
- Ten learners had to receive medical attention at Drakensberg secondary school in June 1999, after being pelted with stones and assaulted by fellow learners after an alleged racial remark made by an Indian learner to an African learner.

Whilst it is the desire of every school to have well-disciplined learners, in our dysfunctional world the reality is that schools do have learners who choose to behave, in ways contrary to those acceptable to society. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the common thread in almost every school is that educationists and parents express concern about the rapid erosion of discipline in schools. Principals, educators, parents and school governors are becoming increasingly anxious about the increase in the range and intensity of violent and antisocial behaviours found in many schools today. On a daily basis, staff and learners endure verbal abuse, physical aggression, bullying and other forms of general hostility. Learners are exposed to bullying, dangerous weapons, drugs, pornographic literature, and school buildings are regularly burgled and vandalised. Schools are

Good school discipline is conceptualised as any initiative undertaken systematically to shape the minds, hearts and attitudes of learners so that they eventually change their fundamental ways, behaviour and attitudes through self-discipline. These are vital elements of good discipline and responsible citizenship. Good discipline also underpins every facet of the culture and ethos of any school (Mortimore, 1995).

6. Literature Review

There are largely three limitations in this study. They are, firstly personal; being employed as a principal, has meant time constraints and other responsibilities, limited the investigation to only a public secondary school, in the Phoenix district. Crucially, it would be appropriate and ideal to broaden the scope of the research study to a primary public schools as well. Whilst it is acknowledged that this restriction will have an impact on the scope of the research findings and range of recommendations, it would certainly not invalidate it in its entirety. Perhaps, a justification is that it is intentionally small-scale in design given the thesis framework. Secondly, any parallels with regard to the nature of misdemeanours in rural and other contexts cannot be inferred as this study is confined to an urban setting. Thirdly, this small-scale research project is confined to the investigation of the discipline problem learners are facing in a selected public secondary school in the Phoenix district. Fourthly, it has gaps presenting deep psychological analysis of the misdemeanours presented in this study.

5. Limitations of the Study

This study may evoke different responses but it is hoped that ultimately it will impact positively on education and that through various nuances of the study, responsible education officials will acknowledge the urgency to make amends at both Provincial and National levels. If this study succeeds in reminding us of the need to equip learners, managers, educators and parents with effective strategies to produce better disciplined pupils, it would have served a purpose. At a different level it succeeds in giving voice to learners on the issue of indiscipline.

4. Credibility of the Study

- 3.1 What is the nature of misdemeanours committed by selected learners at a secondary school?
- 3.2 How have peers, school managers and educators responded to such problems?

3. Critical questions

no longer safe and secure, and the culture of learning and teaching is disintegrating.

It must be borne in mind that learners have to endure many pressures whilst growing. These pressures emanate from their interaction with peers, the political system, the socio-economic conditions, the apparent unimportance of what they are expected to learn and the tensions family interactions bring. All of these bring a fair amount of inter personal and personal conflicts. It is a combination of these influences that manifests outwardly in the form of deviant behaviour in schools, which are seen as convenient sites to vent emotions. Researchers have alluded to the fact that on a daily basis learners are exposed to graphic forms of violence, as romanticised on television, motion pictures and computer games.

The Sunday Tribune (16 May 1999) makes reference to a study conducted in the United Kingdom that reveals the extent of violent shows on television and states that: "... every day, a child would see four killings, 24 firearms and 14 gun shots on television. Even shows like "Tom and Jerry" show violence every ten seconds.

Researchers are convinced that learners are influenced by constant exposure to video and computer games to the extent that these become so real that younger learners find it difficult to distinguish between reality and fantasy. This according to them, could be the catalyst that pushes learners to commit acts of violence as they tend to imitate the violent behaviour that they are exposed to in the games (DES, 1989: 17).

The management of learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties has always been a source of worry and anguish for many educators as they are the ones who are faced with undisciplined learners. They typically, respond by blaming parents for the erosion of acceptable family and social values and standards. Parents, in turn, respond by blaming schools for failing to discipline their children. But instead of wasting time assigning blame, managers of education need to devise strategic responses that are practical and realistic in managing discipline. Most effective schools tend to be those with the best relationships with parents. (DES, 1989: 14).

The management of learner discipline is a fundamental aspect of the skills of educators. Therefore, in the management of discipline the educators need, first, to take a genuine interest in the problems of each and every learner, to create a positive environment by monitoring learners. Second, they need focus on the development of their self-esteem and self-confidence, remembering that educators who treat learners with dignity are in turn respected by learners. Third, they should prevent bad behaviour by pro-actively modifying behaviour patterns and not reactively punishing it. Fourth, acknowledge and appreciate those learners who behave well (Karodia, 1996: 1).

Educators themselves need to be supported by a well-established network of support systems so that they do not feel overwhelmed and alone in the management of discipline. The Gauteng committee of culture and teaching report (COLT, 1996: 10) urges that:

It is vitally important that any attempt to intervene in schools be done on the basis of an understanding of and sensitivity to school cultures. These dynamics are complex and varied and cannot simply be acted upon. Specific dynamics need to be understood

sympathetically and role players need to be worked with on an ongoing basis.

Lord Elton, chairman of the committee of enquiry into discipline in schools, in a research report in England, stresses that:

The behaviour of pupils in a school is influenced by almost every aspect of the way in which it is run and how it relates to the community, it serves. It is the combination of all these factors which gives a school its character and identity. Together, they can produce an orderly and successful school (DES, 1998: 17).

According to West Burnham, implicit in the vision of schools is the creation of a safe and secure teaching and learning environment. If major educational players are serious in their attempt to restore the culture of teaching and learning then a precondition for success is an alliance free of tensions. Any forced readmission of learners recommended for expulsion, by the principal and governing body, not only damages the reputation of the school but also sours the relationship between the school and the education department. This is reiterated by the Ministry of Education's first White paper on education and training (1995). It was affirmed that it is now the joint responsibility of all South Africans, to help build a just, equitable and high quality system for all citizens, with a common culture of disciplined commitment to learning and teaching.

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996, focuses on legislation governing compulsory school education, suspensions and expulsion from schools and states that:

8. (1). *Subject to any applicable provincial law, a governing body of a school must adopt a code of conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school.*

(2). *A code of conduct referred to in subsection (1) must be aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process.*

(3). *The Minister, may, after consultation with the Council of Education Ministers, determine guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in adopting a code of conduct for learners.*

(4). *Nothing contained in the Act, exempts a learner from the obligation to comply with the code of conduct of the school attended by such a learner. A code of conduct must contain provisions of due process, safeguarding the interests of the learner and any other party involved in disciplinary proceedings.*

9. (1). *Subject to this Act and any applicable provincial law, the governing body of a particular school may, after a fair hearing, suspend a learner from attending the school.*
(a) as a correctional measure for a period not longer than one week
(b) pending a decision as to whether the learner is to be expelled from the school by the Head of Department.

Curriculum 2005 the flagship for South African Education should offer personal and social education as a means of promoting mutual respect, self-discipline and social responsibility. Firstly, it should recognise the importance of the pastoral role of subject teachers and form teachers. Secondly, the links between the appearance of school premises and the behaviour of the school learners must be acknowledged. Thirdly, the problems that many schools' experience during the lunch breaks need to be considered. Finally, and most importantly, it must emphasize the need for schools to build up effective relationships with parents. A more in-depth recommendation is offered in a later section of the study.

Partnerships among educators, parents and learners need to be cemented in order to avoid polarization with regard to the management of behaviour problems. There is an urgent need for management and educators to be appraised of surrounding legal issues when implementing disciplinary strategies as the South African Schools Act has necessitated.

Sadly, to date, there are no concrete structures in place to address the escalating violence and crime in schools at a national level. The exception is a publication by the interim unit on educational management, research for the Department of Education by leading educationists. Given the un-abating violence in schools and the lack of capacity of the education department to address indiscipline in schools, a programme entitled Community Alliance for Safe Schools (CASS), an initiative of the Phoenix Community Police Forum and The Phoenix/Versluis District Education Forum was launched in June 1999. The aim of this project is to join forces with other individuals and organisations in a combined effort to promote a safer and effective learning and teaching environment in schools.

- 10.(1). No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
- (2). Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.
- (3).
 - (a) if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing.
 - (b) if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing.
 - (c) if found guilty of serious misconduct after a fair hearing.
- (4). The member of the Executive Council must determine by notice in the Provincial Gazette:
 - (a) the behaviour by a learner at a public school which may constitute serious misconduct.
 - (b) disciplinary proceedings to be followed in such cases.
 - (c) provisions of due process safeguarding the interest of the learner and any other party involved in the disciplinary proceedings.
- (5). A learner or the parent of a learner who has been expelled from a public school may appeal against the decision of the Head Of Department to the member of Executive Council.
- (6). If a learner who is subject to compulsory attendance in terms of section 3 (1) is expelled from a public school, the Head of Department must make an alternative arrangement for his or her placement at a public school.
- (7). No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
- (8). Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.
- (9). No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
- (10). Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.

It may be argued that three pupils are too few in numbers. As Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) states "often only a few individuals, or a single class does not permit generalisations to a larger population". The sample of three learners was recommended, however, to the researcher by the principal and the chairman of the disciplinary committee the school Governing Body. They were appropriate informants who according to Molefe (1996) had the knowledge and the experience that were required to respond as rich informers. They were also obliging to participate in interviews. This concurs with Fraenkel and Wallen (1993) who acknowledge that "a convenience sample is a group of individuals who are conveniently available for the study". This coincides with Patton (1990) who advises that in sampling, we must ensure "that informants are information rich".

The three learners were not sampled by any "sophisticated statistical techniques" as in some investigations (Mortimore: 1995). No opinion surveys were sent out in order to identify the learners.

7.2 Criteria for the Selection of the Three Learners.

In this study the interview technique was employed to respond to the critical question, "What is the nature of misdemeanours committed by selected learners at a secondary school and how have peers, school managers and educators responded to such problems?". Lockheed (1993), and Cohen and Burden (1995), remarked that interviews are capable of eliciting information from participants which are usually not readily available, like perceptions, beliefs, values, knowledge, norms, fears, desires and attitudes. It is this in-depth probing that made the interview so attractive when dealing with respondents as it allows researchers to get beneath the surface of crucial areas. Entire interviews were tape recorded with permission, to gain maximum benefits from the interviews, which allowed for an efficient and versatile means of retaining the entire original communication (Bouduo, 1995:63) The interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed. Each question was written out and the corresponding responses from the learners were penned in.

7. Research Methodology 7.1 Interview.

The literature review is a selected profile of policy attempts to unpack issues of safe schools and discipline. in the next section the research methodology of the study is presented.

Thus, in trying to find initiatives to manage discipline in South African schools it is worth remembering that there is parallel overseas. The literature emanating from this source has immense value for the management of discipline in the South African context as it focuses on serious issues relating to disciplinary legislation. For example, The Sunday Tribune report (16 May 1999) commented that in the Columbine High School massacre of April 1999, in the United States of America, two high school learners massacred thirteen fellow learners and then killed themselves. They were avid fans of a violent computer game called "Doom".

7.3. Background of the Research School

A social inventory of the researched school reveals that the school is situated in the heart of a traditionally "Indian" area with learners coming from families which are predominantly settled and middle-class. This school was chosen because the most patent manifestation of disciplinary problems have been encountered, to a large extent in urban settings. This school also provides ease of access to the researcher who is employed full-time as a principal in a nearby primary school in the Phoenix district. Also of interest to the researcher is the fact that this school has been plagued with learner indiscipline.

7.4. The Sample

In order to achieve the best possible results in this research project, it would have been appropriate to survey the perceptions and the opinions of learners in all public secondary schools in the Phoenix district. However, this small scale study, was restricted to one public secondary school in the Phoenix district from which "information-rich" learners were drawn. Three such learners were identified and were used in this study.

7.5. The Structure of the Research Instrument

In collecting the data for the study in the selected school, semi-structured interviews were preferred because it is a style most favoured in small-scale research projects. It allows the limited number of interviewees to gain confidence and its flexible style can be adapted to the personality, desire and circumstances of the people being interviewed (Johnson, 1994).

As the nature of the study requires an in-depth discussion rather than the provision of curt answers, a less formal approach allowed the researcher to probe and elicit a fuller response by allowing the respondents to talk at length. Further, the researcher was able to maintain the sequence of the interview questions, thus giving scope for questions to be repeated or simplified, unlike in the case of a formal interview. Although each interview was scheduled to be approximately thirty minutes in duration, where necessary, respondents were allowed the flexibility of more time. Each of the three learners was interviewed by the researcher and all were asked the same questions during the interviews. All interviews were tape recorded.

Permission for research access was obtained from the principal prior to the interviews and the nature of the enquiry was explained to each interviewee. Times for interview appointments were secured. Confidentiality of the interviews was assured and a feedback of the research findings were promised. In the management of school discipline it needs to be understood that "reducing bad behaviour is a realistic aim. Eliminating it completely is not" (DES 1989:65).

A complete list of questions that framed the interview is appended as Appendix A.

The framework for the questions asked was primarily :

- To explore and characterise the problem of discipline in the selected secondary public school by determining the seriousness of the problem of discipline, the specific types of disciplinary problems the school finds difficult to deal with and what action the learners think might best be taken to help manage the problem of discipline in their school.

- Disciplinary problems experienced are confined to those that occur after the introduction of the South African Schools Act, 84 of 1996 that legislates that the administration of corporal punishment in public schools is a punishable offence.
- To observe and note existing strategies, practices, disciplinary structures and sanctions that are in place to tackle the problem of discipline and to measure the effectiveness of the school's code of conduct and its disciplinary committee.
 - To match these observed disciplinary policies and practices, including legislation, against emerging current policies, practices and legislation.
 - To establish to what extent the school is embracing a strategic management approach in the management of discipline and to determine whether the concerns and suggestions of key role players, and individuals are incorporated in its management.

8. Findings

In this section a brief case study of each learner is provided in some detail. Thereafter, an analysis of the finding for each question is presented.

Suren : age 17, Grade 11, second born of three children. Family background:

Suren's father is employed as a barman at a hotel. His mum is employed as a Senior Nurse at King Edward VIII hospital. His older brother is a high school drop out, who is addicted to drugs and alcohol. Suren has failed grade 11 and is repeating the grade.

For Suren the main reasons for engaging in bad deeds were that he felt that his parents really did not care about his welfare and only his brother was important to his parents. He wanted to be noticed.

Barry : age 18, grade 11 (he failed last year and is repeating grade 11), second born of four children. His father is employed as a clerk at a shipping company. His mother is a machinist at a clothing factory. Barry was of the view that his parents were not really interested about bonding with him because they were more concerned about their work activities. Therefore he sought to connect with his friends. He engaged in irregular activities because he wanted to be "with it", in order not to be called by names by his peers.

Romy: age 16, grade 9, second born of two children. She has an older brother who is a high school drop out and who is addicted to drugs and alcohol. Romy's father is employed as a High School teacher and is an alcoholic. He constantly abuses his family members verbally as well as physically. Her mother is employed at a hospital and is suffering from depression. Although Romy is anti-social she excels academically and is eloquent and articulate. In Romy's case she could not handle the physical and emotional abuse by her father on her mother and herself, hence she found other individuals to be easy victims on whom she could vent her negative feelings. She also indicated that she engaged in stealing because she liked "nice things" and her dad deprived her of all the "nice things" because his money was spent on liquor on a daily basis.

8.1 Responses to a semi-structured interview:

In response to the perception of how serious the problem of learner discipline is at the school (Question one), all three interviewees confirmed that indiscipline in the school is a serious problem but with only a small percentage of learners. Alongside routine disciplinary problems which are encountered during the process of teaching and learning, a real concern is that a few learners are resorting to carrying dangerous weapons to school for various reasons. Another noticeable aspect is that many learners are found in possession of cigarettes. Some isolated learners are taking drugs at school.

When asked about the specific types of disciplinary problems which are encountered in and outside the classroom, (Question two), their responses indicated that the nature of disciplinary problems encountered in the classroom were substantially different to those found outside the classroom. It was stated that this was largely due to the fact that the classroom is perceived to be strictly the focus of teaching and learning, whilst the environment outside the classroom is seen as a relief from academic matters.

The behavioural problems encountered inside the classroom according to Romy, Barry and Suren are summarised as follows:

- ▶ Talking out of turn and distracting others
- ▶ Shouting out answers
- ▶ Passing silly remarks
- ▶ Arriving late for lessons
- ▶ Moving around the class without permission
- ▶ Being rude and insulting other learners
- ▶ Passing insolent remarks and responses to educators
- ▶ Shoving, punching, slapping and kicking other learners
- ▶ Blatant disregard for the educators' instructions
- ▶ Writing on furniture, walls and defacing charts and pin boards
- ▶ Absconding from classes
- ▶ Verbal abuse and arrogance toward educators.

All interviewees voiced their concerns that the Education Department had reneged on providing quality education by not funding schools adequately. This financial cutback and the lack of effective capacity building initiatives in managing discipline have impacted on material and human resources, and have provided fertile ground for bad learner behaviour to grow.

The above stated behaviour problems are prioritized from the most frequent to the least as perceived by the three learners.

The behavioural problems encountered outside the classroom and around the school as related by Barry, Romy and Suren are summarised in the following:

- ▶ Lack of respect
- ▶ Rough play, jostling, kicking and slapping
- ▶ Running around the school and generally being noisy

The behaviour patterns listed above are also prioritized from the most frequent to the least as perceived by the three learners and range from rough play to carrying of dangerous weapons.

When asked about the methods that the school had introduced to manage learners with disciplinary/ behaviour problems, (Question three), the responses were as follows:

- ▶ Returning late to classes for lessons
- ▶ Frequenting areas that are out of bounds
- ▶ Learners intimidating and bullying other learners
- ▶ Making offensive remarks and disregarding educators instructions
- ▶ Physical aggression to other learners resulting in injury
- ▶ Absconding from school
- ▶ Writing graffiti, vandalizing and destroying school property
- ▶ Carrying of dangerous weapons to school
- ▶ Experimenting with drugs and other illegal substances.

After the first warning, if the learner commits another misdemeanour, the learner is once again referred to the deputy principal or the principal. Thereafter, the following steps are taken.

Step 1: The principal brings the misdemeanour to the attention of the parents. This serves as a second warning.

Step 2: The principal requests the parents to call at school to discuss the misdemeanour in the presence of the learner. This serves as a final warning before the learners are referred to the Disciplinary Committee for disciplinary action.

Step 3: The principal brings the misdemeanour to the attention of the Disciplinary Committee who, after a fair hearing recommend an appropriate sanction. This can range from a stern warning, suspension of the learner or a recommendation to the Head of Department for the learner to be expelled.

In response to the question on behavioural problems, (Question four), Barry indicated that he was involved in graffiti, stealing the exam paper from the subject teacher's bag, loitering outside

the classroom, breaking light fittings in and outside the classroom, co-accused of breaking forty-seven window panes in the school, absconding from school and burning a classroom. Barry was influenced negatively by peer pressure. His character was not strong enough to withstand the type of pressure that was borne upon him. He engaged in specific negative actions just because he did not want to be called names like "sissy", "sellout" and "skaapie." As children grow, develop and move into early adolescence, involvement with ones peers and the attraction of peer identification increases. As pre adolescents begin rapid physical, emotional and social changes, they begin to question adult standards (Herbert: 1999).

Suren, stated that he had been chased out of the classroom on several occasions because other pupils do the wrong things in class and teachers blame him. He has been caught smoking in the toilet during school hours. He has been involved in using vulgar language on educators, on other learners and has been constantly abusing the Governing body chairperson. He was also involved in many gang fights in the school premises and on his way home from school. He has been involved in stopping motorists on the road and assaulting them and damaging their vehicles. He was found to be in possession of dangerous weapons at school. He was found drinking alcohol during the school sports and when the pupils were taken on an excursion. Suren has also been injecting himself with drugs. He had also assaulted the security guard at the school gates, when the security guard had refused to allow him access to the school premises because he had arrived at school at 10h00.

Romy, had been involved in the poking of other learners with a needle which according to her was being used by her brother to inject drugs into his veins. She stated that she was just playing with the needle and trying to make the learners frightened. She has been drinking "vitalizer and samboca," which she claims makes her feel nice and this drink helps her to "forget all her worries". She had been caught kicking, punching, booting, pulling and slapping other learners, both male and female, as she asserts that they make her "mad" and she loses her temper. She had been conning other unassuming learners into giving her money and other items for favours that she had been doing for them like doing their homework, lending others her notebooks and so on. She had been absconding from school and watching movies at home with her friends. When questioned further on this irregular issue, she stated that they had decided to "just have a good time". She was also caught for stealing money from her class teachers' bag during the interval and she was caught smoking raw tobacco wrapped in a piece of newspaper. She had explained that she only does this when she "feels stressed out". She further stated that tobacco makes her "nerves feel nice and dizzy".

In the following section learners were asked for reasons why they became involved in the problems. Romy's response to (Question five), "Can you identify some of the reasons why you were involved in those types of problems?" revealed problematic behavioural traits when she stated that:

"You see, every time my Daddy hits me and my Mummy and he calls us names like 'big boesman', 'hipper boesman' and 'shits' and now these people are also calling me names, that's why I get a bad temper and I hit them".

Adult morals and personality are formed in the childhood years, so children need love and nurturing as well as positive role models. The fact that Romy's dad used force, held her mother's

head back and spat thick phlegm into her mouth and then forced her to swallow it, has had an extremely damaging effect on Romy. She reflected on this "horror scene" several times during the interview.

The interview with Barry revealed that, he has been badly affected because his parents provide him with material possessions, but did not have the time to "worry about him". He has engaged in various activities, where he wants to be noticed. Brown (1990) affirms that "during adolescence, peers play a large part in a young person's life and typically replace family as the centre of a teen's social and leisure activities". Added to this, he states that, "by, 'trying on', new values and testing their ideas with their peers, there is less fear of being ridiculed or 'shot down'. Barry has obviously been recognised for trying on "new things" like breaking the windows and burning the classroom and he has been physically noticed for perpetrating such violent acts.

The psychological dilemma in the case of Suren seems to have emanated from the fact that his parents have been busy all their lives, only worrying about his elder brother's problematic behaviour. In doing so, they have disregarded Suren. They have simply overlooked him and this has impacted very negatively on him. This is evident when he stated "everything is only about my brother, my brother, what about me?" He has been feeling neglected and the utterance "my mother and my father have put my brother on their heads" stresses the point. According to Lingren (1995) "the peer group is a source of affection, sympathy and understanding, a place for experimentation and a supportive setting for achieving the two primary developmental tasks of adolescence. These are

- Identity : finding the answer to the question, "Who am I" ; and ,
- Autonomy : discovering the self as separate and independent from parents. It is no wonder, then, that Suren has opted to spend so much of his time with his peers. In doing so, and getting involved in so many misdemeanours, being "identified" and caught out, he too has succeeded in getting his parents' attention.

The psychological ramifications for learners are twofold. For example, in Romy's case, it is difficult for her mother and her to get out of the home due to age and loyalty to the "secrets" of the family (the abuse suffered) and she will more likely have problems as an adult. It has been ascertained that "Children that are abused or witness abuses within the family are six times more likely to commit suicide, are twenty four times more likely to commit sexual assault, are sixty times more likely to exhibit delinquent behaviour and are a thousand times more likely to be abusers (Arbitrell, Bowker and McFerron, 1988).

Researchers have identified "bullying" to have caused many psychological problems for learners. In the case of the three interviewees, we find that either they have fallen prey to other "bullies" or they have been bullies themselves. Bullying according to Majendie (1996) emanates from poor parenting. "School bullies may lash out in the playground because they are reacting to contempt and punishment in the home". As many as one in three British children say they have fallen prey to bullies, Professor Rowen Myton-Wilson (1997), believes that parents could hold the key to the soaring figures. She and fellow psychologist, Peter Smith, from London's Goldsmiths' college established the link after studying seventy-two school children in their teen years. Those who had a high bullying score were more likely to see their parents more negatively. They viewed their parents as more neglectful and punitive. This would appear to be the case with Romy and Suren.

It tends to be girls who do the indirect bullying. They are much more manipulative (Myron Smith, 1997 : 74). This has been clearly evident with Romy's behaviour when she indicated that "No, they can't hit me, I give them. They don't take a chance with me, they know what I'll do with them....I'll give them a couple of heavies. I don't waste time".

In response to what can be done to support and help learners who persist in defiant behaviour, (Question six), there were diverse responses. Suren stated that these learners should be severely punished, Romy indicated that there ought to be greater psychological support systems in place to assist learners with deviant behaviour, and, Barry stated that these learners should be assisted to ameliorate their bad behaviour.

When the interviewees were asked how familiar they were with the current disciplinary policies, practice and legislation, (Question seven), they indicated that their knowledge is limited to the fact that they are aware that the administration of corporal punishment in schools has been abolished. They further stated that they are aware that the schools' governing body has the authority to recommend that learners be expelled from the school for serious offences. They admitted that they are unaware of the process involved during a disciplinary hearing.

In response to how they could rectify their behavioural patterns, (Question eight), Suren showed remorse. He stated that he should not have started drinking, and injecting himself with drugs. He also said that he ought to listen to his mother and his teachers because they were reprimanding him for his own good. Lastly he realized that he should stop associating with pupils, who have a bad reputation.

Barry's response was that "it's not nice to do bad things and get involved". He realizes that his parents do love him because they did not hit him when he was involved in breaking the windows. He said his father was prepared to pay for the damages and that he feels bad about this because he knows his father works very hard, hence he would not commit such acts again. He also emphasized that his friend Sally had "opened his head", because she was the one who had informed the educator that he has set the class alight. Although this has been the case according to him, she will remain his good friend.

In terms of Romy, she asserted that she will control her temper as she believes that her inability to control her temper is the thing that gets her into trouble on most occasions. She also stated that she must stop stealing because others feel bad when their things are stolen. She also stated that all their problems will be sorted out in a few months when her mother collects her money because she was to be medically bordered at the end of May. The money will allow them to move out of their home, away from the abuse of their father.

In response to the question, "How does the teachers react to you?" (Question nine), Suren stated that the teachers are generally hostile toward him. He further stated that the teachers continuously "picked" on him because they did not like him. They did not recognise anything good about him. He also said that when he excelled at soccer, the school teachers did not present him with a medal

In response to the question, "What are the reasons for the decline of discipline in the school?", (Question eleven), the interviewees responded by stating that parents have lost control in effecting good values and discipline at home. They further revealed that there is a serious lack of

When the interviewees were asked what specific types of behaviour the teachers found difficulty in dealing with in school, (Question ten), all three interviewees stated that the misdemeanours were: a lack of respect of other learners; verbally abusing learners; leaving school without permission; late coming to school and the classrooms; high absenteeism rate; vandalism and physical destruction of school property, making insolent remarks to other educators; and, writing graffiti on walls. Barry in addition was of the view that he had encountered cases of bullying of learners by other learners which educators found difficult to handle.

Romy felt that the teachers simply did not like her because whenever a problem situation arose, the teachers blamed her for inciting the problem. The teachers made nasty comments about her. They stated that she must leave school and get married. The deputy principal had called her father twice or thrice at the school where her father is a teacher and complained about Romy's behaviour. When her father arrived home from school, he would have a few drinks and then "start with her" stating that she is a "bitch" and a "slut" and that she had disgraced him. Teachers have also asked her to come out of her place in class and stand in front of the class or have chased her out of the class. On many occasions she has been sent to the Deputy principal, who would make an entry in the defaulters book. She would be escorted to the office by the monitor of the class who would relay the nature of the incident she was involved in. Her bag was emptied on the desk in front of all the pupils when the teacher realized that her money was missing. She said that she felt embarrassed because "the sanitary pad that she had in her bag had fallen on the floor and all the boys laughed". She further stated that the teachers would always tell her that she wore tight and short dresses because she wanted to attract the boys.

Barry stated that whenever he was involved he was sent to an educator for "tensioning" because this educator was a very "cheeky teacher". He said that this educator had shaken him up and given him a terrible spanking several times. His parents were telephoned and called to report at school when he was involved in breaking the windows and burning the classroom. He said that the deputy principal had suspended him for five school days. Thereafter he was called before the disciplinary committee together with his parents and was asked to go to another school because they said that he had a very bad influence on other learners. The disciplinary committee laid a criminal charge against him but later withdrew the charges because his father was willing to pay for the damages.

at the assembly but the soccer coordinator merely called him to the office and gave it to him. When he was called to the office, he thought that he was involved in something again. He said that for everything that he was involved in, the Deputy Principal had sent letters to his parents via him and on most occasions he never handed the letters to his parents because his father used to hit him very badly when he received letters. He stated that the Principal does nothing because he is "fast asleep". The teachers have chased Suren out of the class on numerous accounts.

personal security in schools. Another reason offered was that discipline is not meted out consistently by every educator in the school. They also revealed that learners are not kept fully occupied in the classrooms. Another response was that there is an increase in dysfunctional families in the community arising from poor parenting skills, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, the present poor economic conditions which resulted in a high rate of unemployment, the high divorce rate which sees single parents struggling to rear children, and both parents being forced to work. Finally, Barry conceded that peer pressure often causes learners to break school rules.

When asked what steps the principal, educators, parents and learners can take to improve learners' behaviour in the classroom and the school, (Question twelve), the interviewees reported that it is vital that every member of staff be collectively committed in promoting good discipline at the school. They felt that there should be tougher sanctions for certain offences. They emphasized that random learner searches should be conducted for dangerous weapons, cigarettes and drugs. The interviewees were also of the view that the curriculum should be meaningful and educators should make their teaching styles more interesting. Suren emphasized the need for educators to respect and listen to the views of all the learners. He concluded by saying that learners will only be motivated to behave well if educators set the example by being good role models. Regarding parents, Barry stated that they need to give their children their own "space" as many learners from strict homes use the school as a site to vent their anger and frustrations.

It is apparent that gross misdemeanours are being committed by learners and the school (educators/Managers) have not responded effectively in dealing with these appropriately. The finding also reveals deep psychological scarring, discussions around which are beyond the scope of the study. However, two issues have emerged and deserve more discussion.

8.2. Significance of findings.

The issues of peer pressure and trust emerge frequently in the findings. These are explored in the next section of this study. Other significant issues arising out of the study are interpreted first.

• Knowledge of Current Disciplinary Policies, Practices and Legislation

It was disturbing to note that the interviewees are totally unfamiliar in this area. This aspect needs to be addressed as soon as possible, as the rights of learners may be compromised and educators may be open to legal action due to lack of knowledge of current educational legislation. According to the Schools Act, No 84 of 1996, educators could face charges of misconduct or be dismissed from duty if they are found wanting in respect of infringing upon the human rights of learners. It is the duty of educators to make pupils aware of the legislation regarding bad behaviour and the steps that are followed when they break the code of conduct of the school.

• Responsibility for the Management of Discipline in the School

The perception that it is the responsibility of the school only to promote good discipline is totally

unacceptable. The view of attributing "problem learners" to "problem parents", because these parents failed to enforce discipline at home must be rejected as suggested by the literature.

• Support for Deviant Learners

The intention of any imposed sanctions on deviant learners ought not to be seen as punitive, but rather as a reminder to learners ultimately to take responsibility for their own behaviour. Schools should cater for the special educational needs of learners with emotional and behavioural problems. Social workers ought to work in tandem with schools in assisting learners who come from homes that are identified as dysfunctional because the support that these learners require is a specialised area.

• Reasons for the Decline of Discipline in the School

The startling revelation that some educators lack professional commitment and accountability by leaving learners unsupervised in the classroom, needs to be addressed immediately. The comment by Surén, that some learners can only display good behaviour if they are threatened with physical punishment is completely out of order. This is illegal and it has also been found that learners, who are physically punished, repeat offences. According to the Norms and Standards document for educators by the education department, educators are to serve as parentis-in-loco and as such they are totally responsible for the health, safety and well being of the learners during periods when they are at school or are under the supervision of educators out of school.

8.2.1 Peer Pressure

Peer pressure has been blamed for adolescent behaviour ranging from choice in clothing to cigarette smoking. Now a new study says that the effects of peer pressure on teenagers' behaviour may be seriously overstated. A study, published in *Addiction* (Ennett, 1996) adds to a growing body of research that suggests that peer pressure is a weaker factor in adolescent behaviour than many had believed. Study co-author, Bauman a research health analyst for the Research Triangle Institute, said: "when there is so much emphasis on peer pressure, there is a tendency not to discuss or not to look hard for evidences of other factors. We went back and tried to critically examine the importance of peer pressure..." (Ennett, 1996 : 185 - 198).

The above is indicated in Barry's case because he engaged in several destructive behaviours, not only because his friends will call him by silly names but also because he wanted recognition for his "deeds". He wanted his friends to see that he was a "hero" when he set the classroom alight. He was also unable to rationalize his thinking because he decided to burn the classroom with all the books, because his friends were not given books by the school. They had not returned their loan books the previous year. Barry and his friends also engaged in breaking forty seven-window panes in the school because they had been caught out for stealing the exam paper from the teacher's bag by gaining entry to the classroom through the window.

Closer examination of Barry's parental support indicated that they provide him with material possessions but they do not communicate well with him because both of them work and are too preoccupied with their work.

Of course with trust and friendship, come responsibility and common sense. Sally was able to differentiate right from wrong and she did make a difference to better the character of Barry. Trust and Friendship are not ephemeral concepts, but their sustainability depends on how those involved in the situation deal with them. Trust and true friendship can last forever if two people

In one incident, Barry had trusted Sally very much and therefore he confided in her by revealing to her that he had been involved in setting the classroom alight. He had cautioned her not to mention this to anyone. However, she did inform the form teacher. According to Jackson (1999), "Trust is like a fragile crystal that is wonderful to have, but what happens when and if the trusted, understanding and warm special person breaks that trust". Barry stated that "he felt a pierce so sharp and deep that it left a scar so bad almost as bad as one left by being stabbed in the back". He verbalized at length how disappointed he was with her and he stated that he could not help referring to her as a "cut-throat" and a "spierk". He said that he also stopped talking to her immediately. However, after some time had passed, he had realized that what she had done was in fact a good deed and he felt that it was a "wake-up call for him". At this point, he decided to improve his behaviour and once more started talking to Sally. The following statement characterises Barry's move to talk to Sally. "Strong friendship will probably allow the broken pieces of crystal I've held in my heart to wash away like old footprints in the sand. Trust and friendship both required fresh, new footprints, and so I must find a way for the old footprints to be washed away" (Jackson, 1999).

According to Jackson (1999) a common definition for the word "trust" is having confidence in someone. The word friendship could be defined as emotional intimacy or simply the state of being attached to another person by respect or affection.

8.2.2. Trust and Friendship

If the negative effect of peer pressure is to be minimized, youth, parents, school and community leaders must come together to establish workable and effective strategies to guide teen behaviour and to support their transition from children to mature, responsible adults (Brown, 1990).

Likewise, Barry has certain psychological difficulties and he was drawn into associating with other learners of the same disposition.

Kids who smoke, tend to choose kids who smoke as friends. When you are seeing kids in groups alike in their behaviour, it becomes easy to say, Ah, they smoke because their friends do. Actually it may be an impetus for them becoming friends at all (Lindgreen, 1995 www.geocities.com).

According to the researchers, teenagers may not change because of their friends, but seek out friends with similar interests.

Researchers such as Ennett, and Bauman, examined studies on adolescent behaviour spanning two decades and found that peer pressure was easily blamed for teenage behaviour but never examined. Other factors such as family life, economic background, environment and biological tendencies all may be as important or more important than peer pressure in determining behaviour (Bauman, 1996).

The outcome of this investigation sees the presentation of a few recommendations that of which is not to present a magic formula for success, but has, at its core the motive to bring schools a little closer to exploring the nature of misdemeanours. Maintaining good discipline is a fundamental aspect of the daily lives of the educators and the successful educators are those who create a purposeful learning environment by their skilful management styles and create a system

A brief overview of the small scale study which was conducted in a selected public school in the Phoenix District attempted to address the genuine concerns experienced and articulated by three learners with serious behavioural problems. Much of the commentary deliberately detracts from the deep psychological interpretations as this discussion lies beyond the scope of this study.

9. Recommendations

With regard to the strategies employed by the school, to manage discipline, it was reported that not all educators are consistent in upholding the school's Code of Conduct. This sends the signal to learners that they can overstep the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and not be reprimanded. Regarding those educators who make constant referrals of learners to the deputy principal for relatively minor offences, it needs to be stated that this not only compromises their time, but also their function as a manager who ought to be seen as a final arbiter in serious cases of indiscipline.

8.2.5 Strategies That Are Employed by the School to Manage Learner Discipline in the School

Some of these offences committed by learners, like smoking in the toilets during the breaks and in-between periods, and absconding from school, seem to suggest that learners are grossly under supervised, especially during recess.

In analysing the evidence regarding the specific types of misbehaviour encountered inside and outside the classroom, it was reported that these types of behaviour were different with a large proportion of misbehaviour in the classroom being of a routine nature. These mainly tend to disrupt the flow of the lesson, while outside the classroom, it was one of general rowdiness together with a few cases of indiscipline of a more serious nature. Other offences reported were more infrequent, but were considered serious and they include learners making rude remarks to other learners, insolent remarks by learners to educators, vandalism, absconding of lessons and disregard of educators, instructions.

8.2.4 Specific Types of Misbehaviour Encountered in and Outside the Classroom

In analysing the evidence about how serious the problem of indiscipline is at the school, it is important to note that the situation is not altogether uncontrollable as each of the interviewees have made some concerted effort to make a positive change.

8.2.3 Perception of the Seriousness of the Problem of Discipline in the School.

meet each other, a little bit more than half way (Jackson, 1999).

Parents should carefully monitor their children's school performance, their choice of friends, social outings, accessibility to drugs, cigarettes and alcohol, access to undesirable publications and so on. Parents are expected to serve as exemplary role models to promote and encourage socially responsible behaviour in their children. Through good parenting skills, any form of deviant behaviour should be addressed immediately and ameliorated with firm guidance. It is recommended that the net of capability be widened to include parents and their children, and to understand the school's curricula and behavioural expectations through effective communication. There is a dire need to increase parental "accountability" for their children's behaviour. In terms of the law, legislation should be introduced. The two possibilities that exist would be lowering the age of criminal responsibility and making parents liable for the criminal acts of their children. Parents need to provide their children with firm guidance and positive models through their own behaviour. The important role parents play in shaping the attitudes that produce good behaviour in school must be highlighted. (Romy's dad is a very bad role model although he is an educator

9.3. Parental Involvement

That understanding learner indiscipline demands an analysis not just of the learner but of the social context in which the behaviour takes place and it is important that this analysis precede intervention. Such a social analysis can be made at many levels beginning with the learner's social skills, the social judgements of those whom the learner interacts, their peers, family influences and finally to the very fabric of the society of which the learner, the school and the family are all members (Varma, 1993: 85).

9.2. Understanding Learners Behaviour

Teacher training for educators must have clearly identifiable elements in respect of the management of learner behaviour and that any outcomes of research and good practice should cascade to all schools on a regular basis. This initiative will empower educators to exercise greater control over pupils with problematic behaviour.

9.1. Teacher Training

There are largely six issues that form the framing principles for the recommendations.

Members of staff should be encouraged to accept responsibility for maintaining and sustaining good behaviour throughout the school. Very often learner behaviour that is unacceptable, is ignored by some educators. Learners test the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and educators need to confirm these boundaries firmly and immediately.

of incentives and support for their learners. There is an assumption that the lessons are thoroughly prepared and their constant self appraisal reflects a genuine commitment to themselves, their colleagues, their learners and their profession. It is also assumed that these interactions happen within a context of human rights. It is obvious from the findings that teachers engage in managing learner behaviour rather than controlling them and they acknowledge and recognize that the nurturing of the learners self esteem and self confidence are central to the management of learner behaviour. In this regard, teacher training institutions should assess an applicant's ability to relate well to learners before admission is confirmed.

They should also promote the highest possible degree of consensus about standards of behaviour amongst staff, pupil and parents of learners. They must not fail in their duty to provide clear guidance to all-three groups about these standards and praise good behaviour as well as dealing with bad behaviour. Punishment should make the distinction between minor and more serious misbehaviour, clear to pupils and should be fairly and consequently applied. The Principals' management style is also seen as a crucial factor in encouraging a sense of collective responsibility

formal and informal curricula should reinforce one another.

Such plans should ensure that the schools' code of conduct and the values represented in the training courses should include specific practical training in the ways of motivating and managing groups of pupils, and of dealing with those who challenge authority. Principals of schools and their senior management teams must take a lead in developing plans to promote good behaviour. The central point of disruption in schools could be significantly reduced by helping teachers to become effective classroom managers. In this regard in-service training is crucial. All teacher

9.5. Educator Involvement

Schools should ensure that rewards and punishment are seen as fair and consistent and disciplinary problems are dealt with objectively and firmly. The humiliation of learners should be avoided. To increase self-esteem and self-confidence learners should be given responsibilities and their progress reported to parents through regular feedback on their children's success, difficulties and behaviour at school.

Schools need to focus on providing opportunities for all learners, by listening to them, by respecting that each learner is a unique person who is to be loved, respected and nurtured and any achievement, irrespective of its magnitude, needs to be recognised and celebrated and the pupils must be made to feel special. Suren was not accorded with what he wanted, i.e. glamour and publicity when he excelled at soccer. The comment, "they just called me to the office and gave me the medal" captures this very clearly.

When learners are unhappy, the natural consequence is often rebellion. Whilst there are frustrations in life, schools often nurture it by showing a lack of love and respect for learners as individuals. Rigid rules are enforced without considering individual circumstances and by not providing the opportunity for every learner to experience success in the school, by not considering their concerns and by burdening them with expectations beyond their ability levels. If these aspects are considered, then frustration and destructive behaviour will be minimized.

9.4. Schools Involvement (Code of Conduct)

Schools have an important part to play in preparing children for the responsibilities of parenthood. Education for parenthood must be fully covered in the school personal and social education programmes and that the government should develop a post-school education strategy aimed at promoting socially responsible parenthood. Another recommendation would be that parents should take full advantage of all formal and informal channels of communication made available by schools and that parent teacher associations should ensure that their activities are accessible and rewarding as to as many parents as possible. There is a need to increase parental accountability for their children's behaviour. The government should explore the possibilities of improving civil liability on parents for damage or injury done by their children in schools.

between pupils and their parents. Learners must be given the opportunity to air their opinions. Suggestion boxes placed strategically, coupled with learner publications could provide the opportunity for learners to air their views and also signal to them that their opinions are valuable. Although many suggestions and some articles in the publications maybe considered cynical or ridiculous, a few of their opinions will have merit.

If the concerns of learners are acknowledged and implemented then the schools' management of the discipline policy will be seen for being pro-active rather than reactive. The problem of learners who disregard instructions of educators should be addressed by the provisions contained in the Code of Conduct. Failure to do this immediately would send the signal to learners that the school is not serious about managing discipline. Other serious offences reported by the interviewees indicate that some learners and outsiders are responsible for the destruction and defacing of school property, mainly in the form of writing graffiti, breaking window panes, damaging external lights and other fixtures, breaking asbestos wall panels and generally using the school premises as a venue to smoke and take drugs. Those educators who make constant referrals to the Principal for relatively minor offences compromise their time and the educators who frequently/constantly send learners outside the classroom cause more damage to the learners. Psychologists feel that this is not an appropriate form of sanction as learners would be missing out on valuable instruction time and they also may suffer a loss of self-esteem as they are in a full glare of other learners of the school. Perhaps, detention is considered by many to be a better alternative.

9.6. Psychological Services

The education department is urged to provide psychological support services, to schools to ensure that learners with behavioural difficulties are assisted by psychologists, who could service a cluster of schools within a district. The Education Department has removed the psychological support services from the schools. It is further recommended that these counsellors network closely with social support agencies like the Child Line, Life Line, family and welfare societies, Abuse desk for women, The Child Protection Unit of the South African Police Services and the Non-Governmental Organizations.

Educators should learn and be fully aware of the constitutional rights of learners. Failure to do this will result in the law intervening should the constitutional rights of learners be infringed, as has been evidenced when Romys' bag was searched in full view of all pupils in the class.

The recommendations made are by no means exhaustive. Any successful management of discipline initiative in schools must be seen as learners eventually being able to manage their own behaviour without authority figures. Undoubtedly, the management of discipline in schools is a complex issue as has been revealed in this small scale research project. Schools alone cannot change the way its learners behave. Good behaviour fundamentally underpins the foundations of society and features in every aspect of school life, hence the fostering of society acceptable behaviour of learners is fundamentally the responsibility of each and every member of the schooling community.

10. Conclusion

If schools are to serve the function of, *inter alia*, developing the potential of learners to live autonomous and harmonious lives in society by respecting themselves and others, then they certainly need to create an environment conducive to serious teaching and learning. Without

doubt, any successful management of discipline initiative in schools must be seen as learners eventually managing their own behaviour without authority figures. But undeniably, the management of discipline in schools is a complex issue as revealed in this small scale study.

The evidence has highlighted the real concerns of key constituents that South African schools and classrooms are increasingly becoming battlegrounds. Learners feel that they are left to their own devices in managing discipline and these daily demands are a potential source of stress. They contend that parents are failing to be socially responsible by allowing and tolerating unacceptable standards to behaviour at home.

Managers need to emphasise the expectations of high quality classroom activities from educators and learners. This can be achieved by providing the necessary support structures to inspire all to aspire to new levels of performance. This empowers staff in that it generates ownership, confidence and commitment for any change that takes place. This is reinforced by Freedy, (1992) who states that the fundamental element for managing discipline problems is about improving the capacity of educators to manage change by altering traditional management arrangements so that the desired change can take place.

In conclusion, if managers of education are seeking a generic solution that eliminates all school disciplinary problems, such a blueprint does not exist. The ongoing struggle is to reduce the instances of indiscipline to manageable levels and acknowledge the potential that a strategic approach has for the management of discipline in schools.

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Appendix 1

Questions posed to Interviewees

Questions that framed the semi-structured interview

- 1.) There is a perception that the State of Discipline in many Kwa Zulu- Natal Secondary Schools is giving rise for concern. Why do you think that this school experiences such a large number of discipline problems?

- 2.) What specific types of disciplinary problems are encountered in and outside the classroom? Are the educators competent in dealing with the pupils with these problems?

- 3.) How do the teachers manage the problems in and outside the classroom?

- 4.) Name the incidents in which you were directly involved in?

- 5.) Can you identify some reasons for why you were involved in the problems/ incidents?

- 6.) What type of support should the school give to pupils with behaviour problems ?

- 7.) How familiar are you with your school's disciplinary policy?

- 8.) How do you plan to rectify your behaviour patterns?

- 9.) How do the educators react to you ?

- 10.) What specific type of behaviour do the educators find difficult to handle ?

- 11.) What are the main reasons for the decline of discipline in Schools?

- 12.) What steps can the Principal, Educators, Parents and Learners take to improve learner behaviour in the classroom and in the school?

