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Discipline and disciplinary measures in the Free State township schools: unresolved problems

First submission: March 2007

Acceptance: November 2007

This article is based on a study of discipline and disciplinary measures in township schools. It is widely acknowledged that discipline is essential for creating a positive school climate conducive to sound academic performance. Numerous township schools are experiencing increasing incidents of poor discipline which impact negatively on their students' academic performance. A survey conducted among teachers imputes the escalation of learner misbehaviour to the abolition of corporal punishment. The sample for this study was randomly selected from teachers of township primary and secondary schools and the study employed a quantitative research method. The method comprised a questionnaire used to gather data which were computer-analysed by using the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences Primer* Version 12. The study concludes with recommendations to address these topical issues in South Africa.

Dissipline en dissiplinêre maatreëls in die Vrystaatse townshipskole: onopgeloste probleme

Hierdie artikel is gebaseer op 'n studie van dissipline en dissiplinêre maatreëls in townshipskole. Dit word algemeen aanvaar dat dissipline noodsaaklik is vir die skepping van 'n positiewe skoolklimaat om goeie akademiese prestasies te verseker. Baie townshipskole ervaar toenemende gevalle van swak dissipline wat akademiese prestasie negatief beïnvloed. 'n Opname onder onderwysers wys die skuld vir die toename in swak dissipline aan die afskaffing van lyfstraf. Die steekproef vir hierdie studie van laer- en hoërskoolonderwysers is in townshipskole geneem en die studie het 'n kwantitatiewe navorsingsmetode gebruik. 'n Vraelys is gebruik om data te versamel, wat met 'n rekenaar ontleed is deur gebruik te maak van die *Statistical Package for Social Sciences Primer* Version 12. Die studie sluit af met aanbevelings om hierdie aktuele vraagstukke in Suid-Afrika aan te spreek.

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Today, more than ever, school discipline and disciplinary measures are areas of discussion and debate, constantly in need of innovative approaches. The phenomenon of discipline refers to an appropriate behaviour and as such, to a commitment to uphold certain convictions and norms of decency (Marshall 2005: 51). Discipline is associated with the notion of bringing children in line with the accepted norms of decency, which conjures up the long-standing association of not sparing the rod (Skiba & Peterson 2003: 66). Leung & Lee (2006: 47) contend that since the objective of education is to help students to learn and to develop their potential in a peaceful environment, any obstacle to this goal should be eliminated or reduced, regardless of its seriousness. The phenomenon of disciplinary measures refers to punitive measures used against learners who transgress school regulations or who fail to do what they are required to do; and as Wilson (2002: 90) posits, punitive measures are an unpleasant necessity. Corporal punishment is a form of disciplinary measure that uses physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience pain but not injury, for the purpose of correcting his/her behaviour (Madiba 2004: 1). It does not take the form of physical force for purposes of self-defence or to protect other people or property (Andero & Stewart 2002: 90). Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) bans all forms of corporal punishment in schools (RSA 1996b). Lorgat (2003: 1) finds that despite the ban on corporal punishment in 1996, it continues to be practised widely.

De Wet (2003: 168) postulates that not only schools, but also structures having an interest in education, such as the family, the church and the state (including the local community), determine what kind of behaviour is acceptable and what is not. These behavioural rules may rest on moral, religious, cultural or juridical grounds. The list of unacceptable learner behaviour is almost unlimited and includes for example, truancy, smoking, fighting, theft, burglary, murder, disobedience, substance abuse, rape and intimidation (cf De Wet 2003: 168, *Daily News* 2002: 1, *The Herald* 2003: 1). There are multiple factors which cause learner misbehaviour, such as a poor learning and teaching culture, insufficient learning materials, poor motivation, poor role models and the negative influence of peers, the community and the

media. A school's code of conduct aims at establishing a disciplined school environment by informing learners of the way in which they should conduct themselves and of the type of disciplinary measures that will be applied to correct misbehaviour (Squelch 2000: 19).

The rules of natural justice are important for school discipline because they usually find application where the rights, freedoms or privileges of individuals may be affected. Legislation that regulates disciplinary measures for children comprises the South African Schools Act, 1996 and the Rights of the Child, Section 28 of the Constitution (RSA 1996a & 1996b). Depending on learner behaviour, schools may experience disciplinary problems ranging from the less serious to the very serious. A school with few serious disciplinary problems will accordingly use light disciplinary measures, whereas a school with serious disciplinary problems will accordingly resort to harsh disciplinary measures. Teachers, by virtue of their profession and by law, are obliged to maintain discipline at school. Oosthuizen *et al* (2004: 66) endorse this by stating that the functions that educators should fulfil, in accordance with their (legal) role *in loco parentis*, include the right to maintain authority (which includes upholding discipline) and the obligation to exercise caring supervision over the learner.

1. Statement of the problem

Numerous township schools are experiencing increasing incidents of ill-discipline and uncertainty about which disciplinary measures to use to maintain discipline. Media reports indicate that learners in township schools are arrogant, violent, destructive, rude, abusive, abuse alcohol, play truant, smoke, carry firearms to school, commit rape, commit burglaries, intimidate other learners and teachers, break school rules with impunity and often blatantly challenge the teacher's authority (Rautenbach 2006: 1, *The Herald* 2006: 1 & 2003: 1). In some schools teachers are under pressure to cope with substance abuse, learners coming to school under the influence of alcohol, inappropriate sexual behaviour and gang violence (Capazorio 2006: 1, *Natal Witness* 2006: 1). Learners die at the hands of their schoolmates and such incidents are increasing (Capazorio 2006: 1, *Sunday Tribune* 2006: 1).

Shlensky (2006: 1) contends that the problems of ill-discipline and violence among the youth are not only confined to schools, but are also prevalent in their communities. A Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention survey conducted countrywide among 4 409 youths found that 41.5% of youths between the ages of 12 and 22 years were victims of crime in the 12-month period between 2004 and 2005. It also found that one in seven youths had been a victim of assault and one in ten of robbery during that time. These incidents occurred in communities.

A survey conducted among 1000 teachers on educator morale in South Africa indicates that teachers hold the view that learners misbehave intentionally because they believe that their constitutional rights protect them against disciplinary measures to be instituted against them (*Star* 2003: 1). From the time learners became aware that corporal punishment had been abolished, their misbehaviour escalated to the extent that currently, a state of unruliness prevails. Some learners take advantage of teachers as they know that they will not be physically punished (Makapela 2006: 1). Thus, teachers claim that since corporal punishment has been outlawed, the power of those maintaining discipline has been significantly diminished (*Natal Witness* 2006: 1). Consequently, many teachers hold the proscription on corporal punishment responsible for disciplinary problems at school and the high Grade 12 failure rate (*Star* 2006: 1). In many schools the situation is so serious that numerous teachers believe that the use of corporal punishment should be reinstated at schools, since its ban has left them with no effective method of enforcing discipline (George 2004: 1, *Natal Witness* 2003: 1, *The Herald* 2003: 1, Molefe 2004: 1). Ezekiel (2003:1-2) maintains that to abolish corporal punishment is to remove or dispel the fear of wrongdoing in learners and encourages unmanageable situations involving rampant ill-discipline at schools. Thus, the abolition of corporal punishment is, at best, weakening the teachers' grip on handling their schools (Ezekiel 2003: 2). The abolition of corporal punishment has led to scores of teachers feeling that their authority over the learners has been usurped, while from the learners' perspective, it signifies the teachers' powerlessness. There are learners who behave in so refractory a manner that their presence is injurious to other learners or teachers. The serious and sometimes

atrocious acts of misbehaviour perpetrated by learners compel teachers to question the wisdom of abolishing corporal punishment.

In response to the teachers' concern about the banning of corporal punishment and their frustration at not finding an equally effective method of punishment, the Department of Education (DoE) issued guidelines on school discipline in 2000 (Ngubane 2000: 2, DoE 2000: 25-8), in which detention, verbal warning, demerits, additional work and community service were proposed for minor misconduct in the place of corporal punishment. For the breaking of school rules including smoking and leaving school without permission; for serious misconduct, including gambling, theft, vandalism, possessing dangerous weapons; and for very serious misconduct including threatening another person with a dangerous weapon, sexual abuse, selling drugs and being drunk at school, the school may apply to the Provincial DoE for the culprit's limited suspension from all school activities. For criminal acts such as assault, the use of dangerous weapons, rape, robbery, theft and break-ins, the guidelines proposed an application to the Provincial DoE for expulsion or transfer of the culprit. These guidelines imply that because of the serious nature of the incidents of poor discipline in schools, the bulk of learner misbehaviour requires disciplinary measures to be applied by the DoE. One wonders whether the DoE will be able to cope. While principals will be waiting for disciplinary measures to be meted out against the culprits, misbehaviour will continue unabated. The Minister of Education has recently acknowledged the seriousness of the problem by announcing that she would introduce legislation in parliament to institute measures aimed at curbing school violence and ill-discipline. These include providing security infrastructure such as fences, floodlights, security officers with search-and-seizure powers, random searches at schools for drugs and weapons, a visitors' register and counselling services (*The Citizen* 2006: 12, Dugmore 2006: 1).

Wilson (2002: 28) states that teachers have expressed their displeasure at the suggested disciplinary measures, indicating that they are ineffective, inadequate and a waste of time. They claim that the DoE had either trivialised the problem or has not understood its magnitude. In addition, not enough has been done to train teachers in the

alternative methods of discipline introduced by the DoE (*Star* 2006: 1). Roos (2006: 1) claims that disciplinary measures such as detention suit the lazy and unprepared learner who wants to spend the rest of the day doing nothing. They teach learners how to benefit from displaying a lack of discipline. The upsurge of learners' misbehaviour at schools, teachers' frustrations because of their inability to curb it and teachers' defiance of the new code of disciplinary measures, has led to the use of unacceptable and illegal disciplinary measures. The South African Council for Educators reports that since 1999, twelve teachers have been removed from its roll for inflicting physical harm on learners (*Star* 2003: 1). In Benoni a teacher hurled all manner of objects and insults at learners who were misbehaving in class and in Kwazulu Natal a secondary-school learner died after being punished by a teacher (Nkosi: 2005). On the other hand, Alston (2006: 1) argues that the use of corporal punishment has been so entrenched and ingrained that despite its ban, many teachers continue to use it as though nothing has changed. The practice is more prevalent in township schools, where learners are often unaware that corporal punishment has been banned (Dimbaza 2006: 1). According to the countrywide study conducted by the Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, 51.4% of children are being subjected to corporal punishment (Shlensky 2006: 1).

Du Bois (2006: 1) contends that schools are microcosms of tomorrow's society. The fact that discipline is under siege in many schools reflects on the quality of parenting these days. He argues that if effective teaching is to take place, if teachers are to feel a sense of self-worth and if schools are to be made safe again, two things should happen. First, because of the serious nature of misdemeanours perpetrated at numerous schools, corporal punishment should be reintroduced. Second, wherever drugs, alcohol, theft and violence are concerned the police should be summoned, since these misdemeanours constitute crime. The use of harsh measures at schools are applauded by Steenkamp (2006: 1) who claims that principals should be accorded the right to expel learners for serious misbehaviour, although parents obviously should have the right to appeal. He claims that learners' right to education is a qualified right. Learners who refuse to abide by the school rules must face the consequences.

The Minister of Education concurs, although she does not commit herself by naming the measures to be used, except to say that if learners are a risk to life and severely disrupt school functioning, alternative means to addressing the problem should be provided (Pandor 2006: 1). Currently schools do not only have to deal with common learner misdemeanour, but also with learners involved in criminal activities at school, some of which are injurious to teachers and fellow learners and hamper academic activities. This compounds the problems experienced with school discipline and disciplinary measures used to instil discipline in learners. Teachers who want the use of corporal punishment reinstated at school are unaware that corporal punishment will not curb criminal behaviour.

2. Arguments for and against corporal punishment

Disciplinary measures at schools have generated a great deal of debate and varying opinions in South Africa, founded on religious, social and cultural norms and practices on the one hand and on the country's Constitution on the other. Debate founded on religious, social and cultural norms suggests that it is necessary to punish children, even by means of corporal punishment, because it helps to instil in them the values of society, good behaviour and discipline; whereas the Constitution regards any form of corporal punishment as illegal. To a large extent there is agreement regarding the need for disciplinary measures, but disagreement concerning the disciplinary type or measures. Hinchey (2003: 128) finds it telling that the USA is one of the few countries worldwide that has not yet ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1989. Throughout the developed, industrial world and in many developing countries, the use of corporal punishment is forbidden. However, in nearly half of all states in the USA, children are still subjected to corporal punishment with little or no practical means of prevention. The fundamental rights of children serve to protect children against abuse by adults and caregivers. Among these rights are the right to protection from abuse and the right not to be tortured or subjected to degrading forms of disciplinary measures (RSA 1996a: section 108).

2.1 Argument in favour of corporal punishment

Researchers and education practitioners agree that disciplinary measures should be meted out fairly and in proportion to the transgression for which they are given (Jacobs *et al* 1996: 348). Andero & Stewart (2002: 93) state that there are insufficient quality studies that document detrimental outcomes of non-abusive corporal punishment to support advice or policies against the use of corporal punishment. Until recently, corporal punishment has been a practice in both secular and religious education, in many societies and in all centuries (Baron 2005: 45). The Gauteng judge president stated at an education conference that he had no problem with corporal punishment as a means of instilling discipline, as long as it did not degenerate into abuse or did not go beyond the bounds of reasonableness (Sowetan 2000:1). Research indicates that effective deterrents for drug-pushers, rapists or gangs (which are problems recently faced by township schools) may have to be very strong if they are to override the existing motivation of such learners and that may mean the use of methods which are regarded as barbaric or sadistic — such as the infliction of severe physical pain (Wilson 2002: 28). In support of this, Ezekiel (2003: 1) holds the view that when corporal punishment is occasionally administered, it is a deterrent measure for positive attitudes and acceptable behaviour.

The proponents of corporal punishment argue that the ever-growing disregard for authority by young people is the result of the discontinuation of corporal punishment, both in the home and at school (Jacob *et al* 1996: 352). This is tantamount to loosening the teachers' grip on the learners. The inference that may be drawn here is that, if judiciously used, corporal punishment is an effective disciplinary measure. Corporal punishment is undoubtedly an appropriate disciplinary measure for serious misdemeanours. However, this disciplinary measure needs consistent monitoring to ensure that it is not abused. This monitoring resource, unfortunately, will not be accessible or even possible, even in the smallest school.

2.2 Argument against corporal punishment

The opponents of corporal punishment argue that if it works as a deterrent, over time it should stop bad behaviour among disobedient children, but that experience shows that in schools that use corporal punishment, the same learners are beaten for the same offences over and over again (Porteus *et al* 2003: 1). Thus, corporal punishment does not result in long-term behavioural change; rather, it teaches the child to avoid punishable behaviour when the person who does the caning is close by. It does not reinforce desirable behaviour but teaches only what not to do, ceasing when the pain stops (Andero & Stewart 2002: 94). Dlamini (2005: 1) expands on this view by stating that violent disciplinary measures temporarily check the child's behaviour to avoid further beating and subsequently leads to pent-up resentment and rage which resurface at a later stage. Some children leave school due to a fear of corporal punishment (Porteus *et al* 2003: 1). This suggests that beatings are associated with fear and power rather than with a respect for authority or change in behaviour.

Hinchey (2003: 128) asserts that although proponents of corporal punishment argue that few incidents are excessive, a review of news reports indicates otherwise. The extreme cases are sufficiently horrifying to justify the exclusion of corporal punishment, whatever the rate of incidence. Studies found the existence of a strong relationship between corporal punishment and the development of aggressive behaviour among learners. For instance, Porteus *et al* (2003: 1) and Gregan-Kaylor (2004: 160) find that corporal punishment tends to develop aggressive hostility as opposed to self-discipline. For many children, boys in particular, it leads to feelings of revenge, anti-social aggressiveness and increases vandalism. It does not teach learners discipline, but rather destroys their experience of school because they see it as a violent place. Bower (2003: 1) concurs that children who are caned frequently demonstrate high levels of aggressiveness against siblings and others. Tafa (2002: 19) regards the cane as the most tangible symbol of an authoritarian regime because teachers who use it seldom give their victims the right to explain why they have committed the offence. As a result, many learners who are punished do not deserve the disciplinary action taken against them.

This type of disciplinary measure lends itself easily to abuse. The inference that can be drawn here is that, although corporal punishment has negative effects, some of the allegations against its use must be considered with caution. There are strong arguments for and against the use of corporal punishment in the literature which suggest that it is not worthwhile reinstating the practice.

3. Research aim

In the light of the foregoing paragraphs, the aim of this study is to shed light on and provide insight into the problems experienced by township schools in the Free State concerning discipline and the disciplinary measures used at schools. The study aims to conduct a literature study which focuses on discipline and disciplinary measures; and to obtain educators' views on the kind of discipline practised at their schools and the forms of disciplinary measures used to maintain discipline. A literature study was undertaken on the issues of discipline and disciplinary measures and an empirical investigation was conducted on the basis of educators' views regarding discipline and disciplinary measures at their schools.

4. Theories of discipline and disciplinary measures

The theories of discipline and disciplinary measures discussed here demonstrate the value of these concepts to the school, their relatedness and how conventional school disciplinary policies and practices often fail to achieve intended outcomes and appear, in some cases, to have a destructive impact on learners' behaviour.

4.1 Discipline and control

Parker-Jenkins (1999: 82) posits that the concept "discipline", as used in this study, relates to issues of school management, ways of getting things done at school or education orderliness. She argues that discipline may also be perceived as the development of the individual and the promotion of self-actualisation and empowerment. In support of this, Cameron & Sheppard (2006: 20) state that discipline is necessary for work to be done and for the safety of all children. Thus,

discipline is positive. Discipline is the recognition of a need for order and of working together. Thus, in such situations, punitive measures and rewards are educative, rather than mere inducements to toe the line (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 82). In this sense, both discipline and control are forms of order. Discipline is part of an educative order, whereas control may be self-induced or externally imposed — in the form of disciplinary measures. Educational theory on discipline should demonstrate a consistency between teaching objectives, curriculum and school management; otherwise, disciplinary procedures are reduced to a mechanical behaviour modification, with the educational value of the system being compromised. Parker-Jenkins (1999: 83) concludes by stating that a broader concept of discipline may encourage teachers to think beyond controlling, regulating or meting out disciplinary measures and instead, to reposition the issue as one concerning curriculum, teaching and school organisation.

4.2 School discipline and effective disciplinary measures

Studies indicate that a serious shortcoming of teachers regarding disciplinary measures is that they tend not to use positive disciplinary approaches with misbehaving learners, but prefer neutral or negative approaches that may best achieve their short-term objective of ending learners' inappropriate behaviour (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 17). Such disciplinary measures are not useful because they do not teach or encourage the culprit to change inappropriate behaviour. For disciplinary measures to be effective, they need to be applied timeously and be of an appropriate intensity. When disciplinary measures are not effective, unwanted behaviour is not discouraged, nor is new behaviour encouraged or taught. Thus, no meaningful corrective experience takes place and behaviour patterns are not modified (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 17).

4.3 School discipline as positive reinforcement of misbehaviour

Research has found that school discipline may paradoxically reinforce learners' misbehaviour, especially with learners who do not like or have little interest in school. These learners may be motivated to

find ways to be absent from school and suspension and expulsion may have the unintended consequences of promoting these learners' use of inappropriate behaviours to provoke disciplinary actions that will allow them to stay out of school (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 17). Consequently, teachers should conduct a meticulous study of the circumstances that lead to learner misbehaviour before imposing, especially serious disciplinary measures.

4.4 School discipline as a model for aggression and hostility

Research has found that learners with verbally hostile teachers may be more likely to act with peers in hostile ways, and that these learners may take on some of the teacher behaviour (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 17). Social learning theory supports the contention that children develop behavioural habits through observational learning. Thus, the modelling of punitive discipline may unintentionally suggest to learners that the use of aggressive and coercive action is appropriate (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 18). Because teachers are role models for learners, their behaviour, even when meting out disciplinary measures, is seen by learners as an example to be emulated. Thus, teachers should always set an ideal example to learners by applying acceptable and corrective disciplinary measures.

4.5 Pedagogic disciplinary measures

Parker-Jenkins (1999: 78) asserts that in a pedagogic situation, teachers assume responsibility for children both morally and intellectually and school-based disciplinary measures aim to be both formative and reformative. Thus, in order to justify the use of disciplinary measures at a school as a means of preserving order, a distinction should be made between whether the measures are justified and whether a teacher is justified in meting out disciplinary measures. If the two criteria are met, a third justification is required as to the form and extent of the disciplinary measures (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 78-9). Research supports the view that disciplinary measures are justified at school to maintain social order and to reduce the problem of poor learner discipline (Parker-Jenkins 1999: 79). Therefore, to be pedagogically justifiable, disciplinary measures must be fair, reasonable, justified and

be intended to improve the behaviour of the recipient. The latter is possible because children are amenable to discipline. Pedagogic disciplinary measures protect children by providing stability for them and by providing boundaries to their wilful natures (Parker-Jenkins 1999:80).

5. Research design and methodology

5.1 Quantitative and qualitative approaches

A quantitative empirical investigation and a qualitative approach were used in this study. Data used in this study were quantitatively acquired, recorded and analysed as reflected in the different tables. The researcher had to use a qualitative method of inquiry to interpret the data and the findings and to make deductions. Thus, the investigation was strengthened by supplementing a quantitative method with a qualitative method (Waghid 2003: 42-7).

5.2 Research sample

In order to draw a sample from a wide area of research, this study was conducted in four of the five Free State education districts, from each of which four secondary schools and seven primary schools were selected by means of stratified (township schools in rural and urban areas) random sampling based on an address list of Free State schools. The address list used to select a sample did not distinguish specifically between town and township schools, but between types of schools such as public primary and secondary schools, hospital schools, farm schools, independent schools and schools for the disabled. Township schools were selected in terms of the names of the schools on the address list. It was found that there were approximately 284 primary schools, 153 secondary schools and 136 intermediate and combined schools in townships in the Free State (FSDoE 2006). The sample of this study consists of 28 township primary schools and 16 township secondary schools. Of this sample, 6 primary schools and 4 secondary schools are situated in urban areas and the remaining in rural areas. Because of the size of the Free State, it was not possible to employ

a sample truly representative of township primary and secondary schools. In fact, the researcher can never be certain of this representativeness unless township schools in the entire Free State are used in the sample. The principals of the selected schools were requested to ask ten educators, who were randomly selected to form the sample for this study, to complete a questionnaire. Of the 440 questionnaires distributed, 431 were returned, of which 407 were suitable for processing, thus realising a response rate of 92.5%. These questionnaires were completed by 235 primary-school and 172 secondary-school teachers.

5.3 Research method

A discussion with ten principals of primary and secondary schools in rural and urban areas concerning discipline and disciplinary measures at their schools and a literature review, identified items for inclusion in the questionnaire. The factors indicating discipline on the questionnaire are representative of the theoretical factor denoting indicators of learner discipline (Blandford 1998: 62, 134, 167). However, the questionnaire does not cover all criminal activities at schools. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain quantifiable and comparable data. The use of questionnaires was compatible with and appropriate to the aim and purpose of this investigation as the participants were distributed over a wide area. Participants were asked to indicate the current situation at their schools regarding discipline, the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures and the frequency of forms of disciplinary measures used, by choosing from five possible answers — using a Likert scale in selecting a response. Data from the questionnaires were computer-analysed by a statistician using the *Statistical Package for Social Sciences Primer* Version 12.

5.4 Validity and reliability

Validity means that the findings can be substantiated by evidence that does not waver (Niemann *et al* 2002: 283). Reliability refers to the degree of consistency of the data-gathering instrument in measuring that which it is supposed to measure. Cronbach's *alpha* coefficient is a measure of internal consistency that shows the degree to

which all the items in a test measure the same attribute (Huysamen 1993: 125). Santos (1999: 2) adds that the higher the score, the more reliable is the generated scale. He indicates that 0.7 is an acceptable reliability coefficient, although lower thresholds are sometimes used in the literature. In this study, the Cronbach *alpha* coefficient was calculated for all four sections of the questionnaire and the results are indicated in the following table.

Table 1: Cronbach *alpha* coefficient

Section	Type of school	Cronbach <i>alpha</i> coefficient	Number of items
A	Primary	0.762	19
	Secondary	0.764	19
B	Primary	0.874	13
	Secondary	0.835	13
C	Primary	0.778	15
	Secondary	0.742	15
D	Primary	0.796	20
	Secondary	0.812	20

The Cronbach *alpha* coefficient averages for the two groups are: primary schools 0.837 and secondary schools 0.811, and the items for each group were 67. Since 0.7 indicates an acceptable reliability coefficient, the coefficients of all sections of the questionnaire are reliable.

To observe reliability and content validity, the questionnaire was structured so that the questions posed were clearly articulated and directed. It was pre-tested on ten educators from primary and secondary schools which were not part of the sample schools and thereafter amendments were made to ensure the simplicity and clarity of most questions, thus making it fully understandable to the participants. To ensure the validity of the responses, the principals who administered the questionnaire explained it and the rationale of the study to the participants. The completion instructions were made clear and assurance was given that participants would remain anonymous. However, the self-report approach incorporated in the questionnaire does present certain problems which may limit its validity, namely, that participants should co-operate in completing the questionnaire and

they should relate the facts, rather than what they think the researcher would like to read. It is also possible that participants may underreport on disciplinary matters, aims and the conditions of disciplinary measures and the frequency of the forms of disciplinary measures used for misbehaviour in an effort to respond to questions in a professional, legal and socially acceptable manner. To address these problems, the participants were made aware of the importance of providing accurate information in the questionnaire and some questions were added to the questionnaire on the recommendation of educators who pre-tested it. To ensure and promote confidentiality, principals were requested not to discuss the questionnaires. The questionnaires were completed anonymously to ensure a true reflection of the respondents' views. To meet the ethical criterion of confidentiality, the collected data were treated confidentially and were not linked to the participating schools, and consent for participation was obtained from all participants.

5.5 Administration

Permission was obtained from the Free State DoE to undertake this study in schools and from the principals of the selected schools to use their schools and educators for this study. The researcher distributed the questionnaires to the sample schools in three districts and his colleague distributed the questionnaires to the sample schools in one district. When the questionnaires were distributed, the researcher and his colleague discussed with the principals the guidelines on how the participants should complete the questionnaire. Schools were given a week to complete the questionnaires. The principals administered the completion of the questionnaires in all school districts. The researcher and his colleague fetched the completed questionnaires from schools nearby, while questionnaires from the more distant schools were returned by post.

6. Results

This study investigates levels of discipline, the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures and frequency of the forms of disciplinary measures in 235 primary schools and 172 secondary schools in townships. In the first four tables the mean scores represent the following alternatives:

1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 undecided, 4 disagree and 5 strongly disagree. In the rest the mean scores represent the following alternatives: 1 never, 2 rarely, 3 sometimes, 4 most of the time and 5 always.

Table 2: Profile of discipline in primary schools

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Learners attend school regularly	235	2.12	1.14	2	2.00	4
Learners arrive at school on time daily	235	2.46	1.09	2	2.00	4
Learners are on time after school breaks	235	2.49	1.14	2	2.00	4
Learners stay at school the whole day	235	1.83	0.86	2	2.00	4
Learners dress neatly	235	2.21	1.03	2	2.00	4
Learners wear school uniform	235	2.03	0.93	2	2.00	4
Learners have books	235	1.97	1.06	2	2.00	4
Learners have stationery	235	2.10	1.04	2	2.00	4
Learners' books are neat	235	2.71	1.04	2	2.00	4
Learners obey school rules	235	2.56	1.05	2	2.00	4
Learners obey the teachers	235	2.34	1.01	2	2.00	4
Learners do homework	235	2.63	1.06	2	3.00	4
Learners write tests	235	2.04	0.94	2	2.00	4
Learners have respect	235	2.41	1.08	2	2.00	4
Learners steal property of other learners	235	2.78	1.15	2	2.00	4
Learners steal school property	235	3.37	1.19	4	2.00	4
Learners vandalise school property	235	3.23	1.19	2	4.00	4
Learners fight among themselves	234	2.41	1.20	2	3.00	4
Learners obey the LRC/Prefects	235	2.74	0.85	3	2.00	4

Masitsa/Discipline and disciplinary measures in township schools

A mean of 3 represents an undecided or neutral response of participants. Means below 3 indicate that the participants as a group tend to agree with the statements. Means above 3 indicate that participants as a group tend to disagree with the statements. The statement indicating that learners steal school property has the highest mean and mode, implying that most participants tend to disagree with the statement.

Table 3: Profile of discipline in secondary schools

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Learners attend school regularly	172	2.12	1.13	2	2.00	4
Learners arrive at school on time daily	172	2.62	1.15	2	2.00	4
Learners are on time after school breaks	172	2.72	1.13	2	2.00	4
Learners stay at school the whole day	172	2.14	0.96	2	2.00	4
Learners dress neatly	172	2.17	1.00	2	2.00	4
Learners wear school uniform	172	2.05	0.99	2	2.00	4
Learners have books	172	2.33	1.25	2	2.00	4
Learners have stationery	172	2.32	1.05	2	2.00	4
Learners' books are neat	172	2.83	1.10	2	3.00	4
Learners obey school rules	172	2.58	1.02	2	2.00	4
Learners obey the teachers	172	2.43	0.93	2	2.00	4
Learners do homework	172	2.47	1.05	2	3.00	4
Learners write tests	172	1.89	0.81	2	2.00	4
Learners have respect	172	2.55	0.96	2	2.00	4
Learners steal property of other learners	172	2.62	1.08	2	2.00	4
Learners steal school property	172	2.95	1.08	4	3.00	4
Learners vandalise school property	172	2.88	1.12	2	3.00	4

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Learners fight among themselves	172	2.47	1.01	2	2.00	4
Learners obey the LRC/Prefects	172	2.89	0.98	3	3.00	4

Table 4: Profile of aims and conditions of disciplinary measures in primary schools

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Disciplinary measures are used to discourage misbehaviour	235	2.12	1.21	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures are used as the last resort	235	2.29	1.23	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures used fit the offence	210	2.81	0.80	3	3.00	4
Disciplinary measures display the power of teachers	225	3.07	1.18	2	3.00	4
Disciplinary measures display the authority of teachers	225	3.08	1.13	2	3.00	4
Disciplinary measures are used to correct learner's behaviour	225	2.10	1.13	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures are used to scare would-be culprits	225	2.75	1.24	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures come immediately after the offence	225	2.57	1.21	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures are negotiated with the learner	225	2.51	1.09	2	2.00	4
Parents are informed about disciplinary action taken against a learner	225	2.52	1.17	2	2.00	4

Masitsa/Discipline and disciplinary measures in township schools

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Disciplinary action administered is recorded	225	2.79	1.15	3	3.00	4
Sick learners are not subjected to disciplinary action	225	2.40	1.13	2	2.00	4
Every teacher may mete out disciplinary action against a learners	225	2.84	1.25	2	2.00	4
Only the principal may mete out disciplinary action against a learner	225	3.56	1.16	4	4.00	4
Only the management team may mete out disciplinary action against a learner	225	3.83	1.00	4	4.00	4

The statements indicating that only the principal and the management team may mete out disciplinary action against a learner have the highest means and modes implying that most participants tend to disagree with the statements.

Table 5: Profile of aims and conditions of disciplinary measures in secondary schools

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Disciplinary measures are used to discourage misbehaviour	172	1.94	1.11	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures are used as the last resort	172	2.42	1.12	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures used fit the offence	170	2.87	0.52	3	3.00	3
Disciplinary measures display the power of teachers	170	2.81	1.16	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures display the authority of teachers	170	2.81	1.14	2	2.00	4

Statements	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Disciplinary measures are used to correct learner's behaviour	170	2.14	0.96	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures are used to scare would-be culprits	170	2.34	1.11	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures come immediately after the offence	170	2.61	1.02	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary measures are negotiated with the learner	170	2.78	1.20	2	2.00	4
Parents are informed about disciplinary action taken against a learner	170	2.67	1.05	2	2.00	4
Disciplinary action administered is recorded	170	2.76	1.16	2	3.00	4
Sick learners are not subjected to disciplinary action	170	2.42	1.03	2	2.00	4
Every teacher may mete out disciplinary action against a learners	170	2.48	1.13	2	2.00	4
Only the principal may mete out disciplinary action against a learner	170	3.89	0.89	4	4.00	4
Only the management team may mete out disciplinary action against a learner	170	3.96	0.89	4	4.00	4

The statements indicating that only the principal and management team may mete out disciplinary action against a learner have the highest means and modes implying that most participants tend to disagree with the statements.

Masitsa/Discipline and disciplinary measures in township schools

Table 6: Profile of frequency of forms of disciplinary measures in primary schools

Forms of disciplinary measures	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
By deducting the learner's marks	223	1.36	0.68	1	1.00	3
Refusing to mark late submissions of work unless reasonable reason/s is/are provided	222	2.09	1.12	1	2.00	4
Holding a serious discussion with the learner	222	3.22	1.28	3	3.00	4
Reprimanding the learner	222	2.59	1.33	1	3.00	4
Using sarcasm to ridicule the offending learner	221	1.65	0.91	1	1.00	4
Calling the culprit names (insulting the culprit)	221	1.45	0.80	1	1.00	4
Excluding the culprit from the group	221	1.86	1.03	1	1.00	4
Refusing privileges to the offending learner	221	1.90	1.10	1	1.00	4
Beating the culprit	221	1.62	0.99	1	1.00	4
Punching the culprit	221	1.21	0.64	1	1.00	4
Pinching the culprit	221	1.39	0.84	1	1.00	4
Knocking the culprit on the head	221	1.25	0.65	1	1.00	3
Twisting the culprit's ear	221	1.42	0.83	1	1.00	3
Pulling the culprit by the hair	221	1.22	0.61	1	1.00	3
Pulling the culprit by the ear	221	1.36	0.78	1	1.00	4
Giving the offender work during school breaks	221	2.20	1.16	1	2.00	4
Giving the offender extra work in class	221	2.26	1.18	1	2.00	4

Forms of disciplinary measures	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Ordering the culprit to leave the class during the lesson	221	1.73	0.98	1	1.00	4
Ordering the offender to stand in front of the class	221	2.10	1.08	1	2.00	4
Detaining the culprit	221	1.99	1.11	1	2.00	4

Means ranging from 1.21 to 1.99 indicate that participants as a group never apply those disciplinary measures. Means ranging from 2.09 to 2.59 indicate that participants as a group rarely apply those disciplinary measures. A mean of 3.22 indicates that participants as a group sometimes apply the disciplinary measures. Holding a serious discussion with the learner has the highest mean and mode implying that most participants use it rarely. In terms of frequency, the disciplinary measure most frequently used in this study namely holding a serious discussion with the learner is used sometimes.

Table 7: Profile of frequency of forms of disciplinary measures in secondary schools

Forms of disciplinary measures	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
By deducting the learner's marks	170	1.65	0.97	1	1.00	4
Refusing to mark late submissions of work unless reasonable reason/s is/are provided	170	2.54	1.04	3	3.00	4
Holding a serious discussion with the learner	170	2.98	1.12	3	3.00	4
Reprimanding the learner	170	2.75	1.19	3	3.00	4
Using sarcasm to ridicule the offending learner	170	1.75	0.89	1	2.00	4
Calling the culprit names (insulting the culprit)	170	1.54	0.85	1	1.00	4

Masitsa/Discipline and disciplinary measures in township schools

Forms of disciplinary measures	n	Mean	Standard deviation	Mode	Median	Range
Excluding the culprit from the group	170	1.97	0.98	1	2.00	4
Refusing privileges to the offending learner	170	2.08	1.03	1	2.00	3
Beating the culprit	170	2.05	1.04	1	2.00	3
Punching the culprit	170	1.45	0.80	1	1.00	3
Pinching the culprit	170	1.71	0.90	1	1.00	3
Knocking the culprit on the head	170	1.57	0.87	1	1.00	3
Twisting the culprit's ear	170	1.75	0.90	1	1.00	3
Pulling the culprit by the hair	170	1.38	0.77	1	1.00	3
Pulling the culprit by the ear	170	1.58	0.92	1	1.00	3
Giving the offender work during school breaks	170	2.68	1.06	3	3.00	4
Giving the offender extra work in class	170	2.53	1.08	3	3.00	4
Ordering the culprit to leave the class during the lesson	170	2.26	1.06	3	2.00	4
Ordering the offender to stand in front of the class	170	2.26	1.08	1	2.00	4
Detaining the culprit	170	2.08	1.08	1	2.00	4

Means ranging from 1.38 to 1.97 indicate that participants as a group never apply these disciplinary measures. Means ranging from 2.05 to 2.98 indicate that participants as a group rarely apply these disciplinary measures. A mean of 3.22 indicates that participants as a group sometimes apply the disciplinary measures. Holding a serious discussion with the learner has the highest mean implying that most participants use it rarely. In terms of frequency the disciplinary measures most frequently used in this study are used rarely.

7. Discussion

Considerable data related to the purpose of this study and gleaned from a questionnaire, have been analysed. The data in relation to levels of discipline, the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures and forms of disciplinary measures and their frequency will now be discussed.

7.1 Discipline

7.1.1 Primary schools

The findings on discipline in primary schools which constitute the sample of this study indicate that participants tend to agree with fifteen statements indicating that learners are being disciplined. Participants also tend to agree with two statements indicating that learners are not being disciplined in certain areas (that learners steal the property of other learners and fight among themselves). Participants tend to disagree with two statements indicating that learners are not being disciplined for stealing and vandalising school property. Stealing school property has the highest mean and mode implying that most participants tend to disagree with the statement. On the whole, these primary schools do not experience numerous disciplinary problems. The perceptions of participants as a group are that learners abide by the majority of the school rules dealing with discipline by behaving in an appropriate manner. However, learners break school rules which forbid fighting and theft, thus committing serious misdemeanours. According to the DoE guidelines on school discipline, disciplinary measures for these misdemeanours should be applied by the DoE. Since schools do not experience much learner misbehaviour, teachers are not required to use disciplinary measures frequently. Nevertheless, the prevalence of disciplinary problems, however few or insignificant they may be, suggests that action should be taken to correct behaviour, because without discipline, no meaningful education can take place and a learning culture cannot be effectively established in schools.

7.1.2 Secondary schools

The findings on discipline in secondary schools, which constitute the sample of this study, indicate that participants tend to agree with fifteen statements indicating that learners are being disciplined. They also tend to agree with four statements indicating that learners are not being disciplined (that learners steal the property of other learners, steal school property, vandalise school property and fight among themselves, which constitute serious misdemeanours). According to the DoE guidelines on school discipline, disciplinary measures for these misdemeanours should be applied by the DoE. These findings suggest that learners abide by most of the school rules, which if transgressed, would constitute minor offences, but they are guilty of transgressing a few rules which constitute serious offences. The findings also suggest that secondary school learners commit more serious offences than primary school learners. This suggests that much more effort is required to maintain discipline in secondary schools so that a learning culture may be established and meaningful education take place.

7.2 Aims and conditions of disciplinary measures

7.2.1 Primary schools

The findings on the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures in primary schools constituting the sample of this study indicate that participants tend to agree with eleven statements. This indicates that schools comply generally with the accepted rules and standards governing the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures. Participants tend to disagree with two statements indicating unacceptable rules and standards (that disciplinary measures display the power and the authority of teachers). They also tend to disagree with two statements stating that only the principal and the school management teams are allowed to mete out disciplinary measures to learners. These statements have the highest means and modes implying that most participants tend to disagree with the statements. If disciplinary measures are applied by every teacher on the staff this would be difficult to control and could lead to abuse. Thus, disciplinary measures could fail to achieve their aim. Their primary task is to

reform transgressors so that they are able, on their own volition, to change their conduct. The effect of disciplinary measures is to alert wrongdoers to their wrongdoing; to make them thoroughly aware of the wrong that has been done and why it is wrong (Wilson 2002: 26). This will not be achieved if disciplinary measures are abused. On the whole, the findings suggest that the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures in primary schools comply with educationally acceptable norms and standards.

7.2.2 Secondary schools

The findings on the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures in secondary schools constituting the sample of this study indicate that participants tend to agree with eleven statements. This indicates that schools generally comply with accepted rules and standards governing the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures. They also tend to agree with two statements indicating non-compliance with rules and standards (that disciplinary measures display the power and the authority of teachers). This implies that teachers abuse disciplinary measures as they do not use them as corrective measures with the objective of enabling offending learners to change their behaviour and to behave appropriately. They use disciplinary measures to impose their authority and power on the learners, making their actions unpedagogic and unprofessional. On the other hand, teachers may use disciplinary measures to impose their authority and power on the learners if they feel intimidated by learners. The participants tend to disagree with two statements (that only the principal and the school management teams are allowed to mete out disciplinary measures to learners). These statements have the highest means and modes implying that most participants tend to disagree with the statements. As stated earlier, if disciplinary measures are applied by every teacher on the staff this would be difficult to control and could lead to abuse, which already occurs in secondary schools using disciplinary measures to display the teachers' power and authority over the learners. Thus, disciplinary measures fail to achieve their aim. These findings suggest that in secondary schools not all the aims and conditions of disciplinary measures comply with educationally acceptable norms and standards.

7.3 Frequency of forms of disciplinary measures

7.3.1 Primary schools

The disciplinary measure most frequently used in the primary school sample of this study (holding a serious discussion with the learner) is only used sometimes. It has the highest mean and mode implying that most participants use it rarely. During such discussions the teacher has the opportunity of gaining better understanding of the offender and the circumstances that led to the offence. It needs to be supported and promoted and possibly turned into an opportunity, in serious offences, to arrange counselling for the offender. It may be used with DoE guidelines on disciplinary measures. The fact that none are used most of the time could either indicate uncertainty among teachers about which forms of disciplinary measures to use or could imply that learners do not misbehave so frequently as to require disciplinary measures.

The majority of disciplinary measures used rarely in this study (such as refusing to mark late submissions unless reasons are given, reprimanding a learner, giving the offender work during school breaks and giving the offender extra work in class) are regarded as legally acceptable measures. Thus, one could argue that teachers in schools that do not experience numerous or frequent disciplinary problems, do not have a problem finding and using suitable disciplinary measures. On the whole, these findings suggest that primary school teachers of the sample schools avoid using unacceptable disciplinary measures, in particular, corporal punishment. There is only one unacceptable form of disciplinary measure rarely used in primary schools — ordering the culprit to stand in front of the class. This measure may be degrading to the learner and thus be found to violate his/her human dignity (RSA 1996a: section 108).

7.3.2 Secondary schools

The disciplinary measures commonly used in the secondary school sample of this study (refusing to mark late submissions of work unless reasons are provided, holding a serious discussion with the learner, reprimanding the learner, refusing privileges to the offending learner, giving the offender work during school breaks, giving the

offender extra work in class and detaining the culprit) are used rarely. Of these, holding a serious discussion with the learner has the highest mean implying that most participants use it rarely. Thus, the majority of disciplinary measures used rarely in this study are regarded as legally acceptable. This suggests that secondary school teachers in the sample schools are acquainted with the legally acceptable disciplinary measures used at schools.

There are three unacceptable forms of disciplinary measure rarely used in the schools represented by the sample of this study (beating the culprit, ordering the culprit to leave the class during the lesson and ordering the culprit to stand in front of the class). The first has been banned and is therefore illegal; the second is illegal because it denies the learner the chance to receive education, whereas the third may be degrading to the learner and thus violate his/her human dignity (RSA 1996a: section 108 & 1996b: section 84). This study has found that despite the ban on corporal punishment, it is still used. This corroborates findings from literature and confirms the concern of the education authorities that it is still being used at schools. The findings of the secondary schools imply that teachers use considerably harsher and more unacceptable disciplinary measures than their primary school counterparts. This could be because their learners are older and have a higher rate of misbehaviour.

8. Recommendations

Noguera (2003: 342) argues that disciplinary problems at schools often bear a striking similarity to the social problems found in the community (or country) where learners live, as children's behaviour often reflects that of the community. When one locates disciplinary problems exclusively in learners, ignoring the context in which problematic behaviour occurs, one runs the risk of overlooking some of the most important factors that give rise to the behaviour (Noguera 2003: 347). Behavioural problems found at schools may thus be addressed with a greater degree of success if they are first resolved in the townships where the learners live. The educators, parents and community leaders should hold discussions with their communities,

with the aim of addressing these problems; education, counselling and motivation intended for both teachers and learners should be implemented to address the problems at schools. An attempt to address the problems in schools only may cause learners to live in two worlds — one being the school where the rules of behaviour apply and where certain behaviour is forbidden, the other being the community where no rules of behaviour apply. Noguera (2003: 342) argues further that disciplinary practices in schools bear a striking similarity to the strategies used to punish adults in society. Thus, the use of corporal punishment in schools may be traced to how society disciplines its law offenders.

Teachers should take the use of disciplinary measures seriously because it is an essential part of their work. The DoE should coordinate a process of identifying and inventing suitable types of disciplinary measures, in which every school in each province discusses and agrees on the disciplinary measures that will be appropriate to their circumstances, but that will not be in conflict with the law. The disciplinary measures identified and implemented by schools should again be discussed at provincial level and those agreed upon should be incorporated into the DoE's guidelines for disciplinary measures entitled *Alternatives to corporal punishment* (DoE 2000). Disciplinary measures should be divided into three categories: disciplinary measures for minor misdemeanours to be applied by teachers; disciplinary measures for less serious misdemeanours to be applied by the principal or his/her deputy, and disciplinary measures for serious misdemeanours to be applied by the principal and the school governing body. Because school discipline is maintained by those close to the school, namely principals, teachers and school governing bodies, disciplinary measures should accordingly be determined by these. Disciplinary measures applied in each category should fit the offence and should be intended to benefit recipients and not evoke personal hostility towards them, vindictiveness or any kind of sadism (Wilson 2002: 28). Criminal offences should be reported to the police. Schools should guard against making extra homework or tasks consequences of bad behaviour as this will only teach learners to associate learning with disciplinary measures (Porteus *et al* 2003: 1).

Teachers should not rely too much on disciplinary measures, but should apply them judiciously as a corrective intended to reinforce appropriate behaviour. Excessive reliance on disciplinary measures makes them ineffective and they do not achieve their goal.

For the safety and well-being of learners and teachers and for creating a secure school environment, the DoE should allow the police to conduct regular searches of learners for dangerous weapons and illegal drugs. This will undoubtedly prevent learners from carrying dangerous weapons and drugs to school. There is already ample evidence in South Africa that some learners carry weapons and drugs, and that the use of these by learners has led to numerous serious misdemeanours and crime at school.

Schools should enforce rules of behaviour and a code of conduct for learners. Teachers should set the example by obeying the rules that they expect learners to obey and to honour the regulations concerning disciplinary measures. Children learn more by example than by anything else. Learners are aware that corporal punishment is outlawed at schools and that teachers violate the rules when meting out disciplinary measures. If teachers disobey the rules when meting out disciplinary measures, they will not command respect among the learners. Instead of disciplinary measures changing the behaviour of culprits, teachers will thus anger them and consequently not achieve their objectives. Since teachers act *in loco parentis* they are expected to provide care and protection for learners entrusted to them. This is endorsed by Hinchey (2003: 129) who states that educators should protect the rights and interests of learners at school, because to do less is to fall short of the trust placed in them by learners, their parents and their profession.

The DoE should ensure that teachers do not have large classes. These generate greater disciplinary problems, are intimidating for teachers and are difficult to control, especially as teachers are expected to ensure that learners learn and study regularly by monitoring their performance and making them account for poor performance. Large classes may be so intimidating that they force teachers towards violence or to use disciplinary measures that inflict pain, such as cor-

poral punishment, to demonstrate their authority and to show that they are in control of a class.

Consistent and effective teaching (which can only occur when teachers are motivated) minimises disciplinary problems at school. Stated differently, good learner behaviour may be promoted by consistent effective teaching because it instils a love of learning; they spend more time on schoolwork; regard school as essential because it prepares them for life, and it keeps them from antisocial behaviour. Therefore, teachers should promote good learner behaviour by teaching effectively and consistently, thus creating more schools with higher academic achievement so that academic performance becomes the norm and disciplinary problems the exception (Noguera 2003: 350). In support of this, Barbetta *et al* (2006: 9) state that the first line of defence in managing learner behaviour is effective instruction. Schools should identify learners who consistently underachieve academically or misbehave and refer them for counselling. Learners who consistently or deliberately misbehave should be suspended or expelled. This will send a clear message that the school does not tolerate or condone misbehaviour. Ample evidence has already been presented indicating that disciplinary measures must be effective if misbehaviour is to be discouraged or altered.

9. Conclusion

Discipline and disciplinary measures are two sides of the same coin. Discipline refers to appropriate behaviour, to compliance with the accepted norms and rules of behaviour. Should learners fail to behave appropriately or fail to comply with the norms and rules of appropriate behaviour, suitable disciplinary measures will be meted out to correct or enforce obedience. Disciplinary measures are a negative motivational measure as their success depends on the amount of fear and coercion they are capable of exerting. Nevertheless, they are indispensable to discourage learners from disobeying the norms and rules of good behaviour and for maintaining discipline. Disciplinary measures are not merely an unpleasant necessity, but an essential part of education and perhaps even care Wilson (2002: 25).

If ill-discipline at schools is to be curbed, it must be identified and addressed while the learner is still at primary school and before it is too deeply ingrained. Efforts should be made to discourage ill-discipline in secondary schools and action should be taken against learners found guilty of unacceptable behaviour. Since school behaviour often reflects the behaviour in the communities around them, communities should make a concerted effort to fight misbehaviour in their midst. Parents and teachers should not expose learners to unacceptable forms of behaviour. A successful resolution to this problem bodes well for the proper functioning of schools and for guaranteeing the development and maintenance of a culture of discipline, dignity and respect in schools (DoE 2000: 1).

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