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The efficacy of a zero-tolerance approach to managing learner discipline

by

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS in EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT in the FACULTY OF EDUCATION at the RAND AFRIKAANS UNIVERSITY

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- Professor J Squelch my former supervisor who has since emigrated.
- The educators who participated in this research study.
- My wife for her unconditional support, daily encouragement and ever present love.
- Above all, to God for giving me the necessary courage to persevere.
DEDICATION

To my wife Fatima, and my daughter Raeesah, for their patience and support in my endeavours.
SYNOPSIS

The extensive changes in South Africa since the first democratic elections in 1994 have impacted immensely on educational governance. The South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) has brought about a major reform in education administration by decentralizing school governance to local school communities. The Constitution and its Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996b) has also impacted significantly on all areas of school governance. School management has to take cognizance of the South African Schools Act and the Bill of Rights when developing and implementing all school policies. One of the policies that all schools must have is a disciplinary policy.

Notwithstanding the requirement that every public school should have a disciplinary policy to ensure a disciplined teaching and learning environment, there is a perception amongst educators and other stakeholders such as parents that learner discipline at schools is emerging as a serious problem. This is causing many schools to become ineffective institutions of teaching and learning.

The aim of this research study was to explore and describe the experiences of school managers and educators of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment, as well as to ascertain from them their perceptions of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline. This was undertaken in order to formulate principles and guidelines for school managers and educators to effectively implement a zero – tolerance management approach to learner discipline.

A qualitative research design that was explorative, descriptive and contextual was employed. This paradigm was chosen because of the relative newness of the topic to be researched in the South African context. The researcher conducted focus group interviews in order to collect data. The data collected were analysed and interpreted from which various themes and categories were identified. Quotations from transcribed interviews were given to substantiate the themes and categories identified through analysis. A literature control was also undertaken whereby these themes and categories
were compared further with the relevant literature and also discussed. Several categories could not be substantiated and thus reflects the unique contribution of this research study.

The themes and categories that were identified by the researcher and the independent coder, and the literature reviewed, provided the basis for the proposed guidelines formulated by the researcher. The guidelines focused on two aspects, namely, principles on which a zero - tolerance management approach towards learner discipline should be based and, guidelines for educators to use in dealing with the problem of learner discipline in the classroom situation.

Since this research study has been limited to the city of Johannesburg one of the recommendations made by the researcher is that further research should be undertaken on the efficacy of a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline in South African schools. Future research studies on this phenomenon must be based more broadly with special emphasis on the experiences and perceptions of educators in the townships of South Africa. Also, this research study should ultimately form the basis for further quantitative research.
Uitgebreide veranderings in Suid-Afrika sedert die eerste demokratiese verkiesing in 1994 het 'n geweldig impak op onderwysbeheer gehad. Die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet (RSA, 1996a) het 'n omvattende hervorming van die onderwysadministrasie teweeg gebring deur die desentralisering van skoolbeheer na plaaslike skoolgemeenskappe. Die Grondwet en die meegaande Menseregtebepalings (RSA, 1996b) het ook 'n betekenisvolle uitwerking op alle gebiede van skoolbeheer gehad. Skoolbestuur moet kennis neem van die Suid-Afrikaanse Skolewet asook van Menseregte in die ontwikkeling en implementering van alle skoolbeleid. Een van die beleidstukke wat alle skole moet hê, is 'n dissiplinêre beleid.

Ten spyte van die vereiste dat elke openbare skool 'n dissiplinêre beleid moet hê om te verseker dat daar 'n gedissiplineerde onderrig-en-leeromgewing bestaan, is daar by onderwysers en ander belanghebbendes soos die ouers, die persepsie dat leerderdissipline by skole in 'n ernstige probleem begin ontwikkel. Dit lei daartoe dat baie skole ondoeltreffende onderrig-en-leerinstellings begin word.

Die doel van hierdie navorsingstudie was om die ervarings van skoolbestuurders en onderwysers ten opsigte van leerderdissipline in die skool- en klaskameromgewing te verken en te beskryf, sowel as om vas te stel wat hulle persepsie van die zero-verdraagsaamheidsbenadering tot die bestuur van leerderdissipline is. Hierdie ondersoek is onderneem om beginsels en riglyne vir skoolbestuurders en onderwysers te formuleer wat hulle kan help om 'n zero-verdraagsaamheidsbenadering tot die bestuur van leerderdissipline doeltreffend te implementeer.

'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsontwerp wat verkennend, beskrywend en kontekstueel is, is gebruik. Hierdie paradigma is gekies vanweë die relatiewe nuutheid van hierdie navorsingsonderwerp in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks. Met die oog op die insameling van data het die navorser fokusgroeponderhoude gevoer. Die data is ingesamel en geïnterpreteer om sodoende verskeie temas en kategorieë te identifiseer. Aanhalings uit
getranskribeerde onderhoude word gegee om die temas en kategorieë wat deur die ontleding geïdentifiseer is, te ondersteun. 'n Literatuurkontrole is ondernem waardeur hierdie temas en kategorieë verder met die relevante literatuur vergelyk en verder bespreek is. Verskeie kategorieë kon nie gesubsantiseer word nie en weerspieël so die unieke bydrae van hierdie navorsingstudie.

Die temas en kategorieë wat deur die navorser en onafhanklike kodeerder geïdentifiseer is asook die literatuur wat ondersoek is, het die basis vir die voorgestelde riglyne wat deur die navorser geformuleer is, voorsien. Die riglyne het op twee aspekte gefokus, naamlik beginsels waarop 'n zero-verdraagsaamheidsbenadering tot die bestuur van leerderdisipline gebaseer behoort te word en riglyne wat onderwysers kan gebruik in die hantering van die probleem van leerderdisipline in die klaskamersituasie.

Aangesien hierdie navorsingstudie tot die stad Johannesburg beperk is, is een van die aanbevelings deur die navorser dat verdere navorsing ondernem moet word om die doeltreffendheid van 'n zero-verdraagsaamheidsbenadering tot die bestuur van leerderdisipline in Suid-Afrikaanse skole te bepaal. Verdere navorsingstudies oor hierdie verskynsel moet 'n breër basis het asook 'n spesifieke beklemtoning van die ervarings en persepsies van onderwysers in die townships van Suid-Afrika. Hierdie navorsingstudie behoort ook uiteindelik as basis vir verdere kwantitatiewe navorsing te dien.
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CHAPTER ONE

ORIENTATION AND OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Section 8 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a) states clearly that every school must have a code of conduct "... aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process". Notwithstanding the requirement that every public school should have a disciplinary policy to ensure a disciplined teaching and learning environment, there is a perception that learner discipline at schools is emerging as a serious problem that is rendering many schools as being ineffective institutions of teaching and learning (Buck, 1992:36; Wheldall, 1992:2; Charlton & David, 1994:6). Therefore, one approach to emerge in dealing with this phenomenon is the adoption of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline.

The purpose of this research study was to explore the efficacy of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline in schools. It can be argued that schools need to adopt a zero – tolerance approach to learner discipline in order to ensure that schools remain institutions where quality teaching and learning take place. This approach must, however, be based on certain basic principles so that the correct policies, structures and procedures are put in place to ensure that any disciplinary measures taken are administered fairly and reasonably in accordance with the Constitution (RSA, 1996b) and the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a).

This study is important to research, as the issue of learner discipline is presently an area of concern for many schools. The approach suggested is different and not as yet used by schools in South Africa on a broad scale in managing learner discipline. The implications of developing principles and guidelines for applying a zero – tolerance approach is clear in that every transgression of school rules and expected behaviour, even if seemingly
trivial, will be dealt with according to the school's disciplinary policy. By maintaining learner discipline the school management team will also ensure an ordered and harmonious school and classroom environment in which quality teaching and learning can take place.

Having introduced the research study it is now necessary to discuss the background to the problem.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

According to Squelch (1993:239) "discipline is important for maintaining order and harmony in the school and classroom". She points out that disruptive and anti-social behaviour can have a harmful effect on teaching and learning and therefore every school should have a school discipline policy which would include details of school rules and expected behaviour, as well as the consequences of deviation from school rules.

Squelch (2000:312) argues that in order to manage school discipline effectively disciplinary procedures should be clearly set out in the school's disciplinary policy. She argues further that when being disciplined all learners have the right to be treated in a fair and just manner and according to fair procedures. Therefore, when attempting to apply a zero-tolerance approach to managing learner discipline it is vital for schools to follow the correct administrative procedures when disciplining learners. This makes it necessary to examine the origins of this approach and its adoption to managing learner discipline in other parts of the world.

The term zero-tolerance originated in the United States of America in the 1980's. It grew out of state and federal drug enforcement policies referring to policies that punish all offenders severely, no matter how minor the offence. By 1993 zero-tolerance policies were being adopted in a variety of contexts including school boards across the United States of America, broadened to include not only drugs and weapons but also tobacco-related offences and school disruption. Although zero-tolerance policies in
the United States of America have been applied to issues such as environmental pollution, trespassing, racial intolerance, sexual harassment and school discipline it has been subject to much criticism (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

Cauchon (1999) has pointed out that although zero – tolerance policies have become standard operating procedures in 109 000 public schools in the United States of America its all – or – nothing approach has been attacked as inflexible, harsh and lacking common sense. For example, 87% of all schools in the USA now have zero – tolerance policies for alcohol and drugs, often resulting in mandatory expulsion, no matter how small the offence. He argues further that zero – tolerance policies “… often fail to differentiate between good kids who make the typical mistake of adolescence and the unruly delinquents who can bring learning to a standstill”.

Uhler and Fish (1999) also criticize the potentially unlawful and unfair “one size fits all” zero – tolerance discipline policies that impose severe, predetermined penalties for misconduct regardless of individual circumstances. According to Noam (cited in Johnson, 1999) the use of blanket zero – tolerance policies has resulted in the loss of discretion and on – the – spot resolutions to disciplinary problems by school authorities.

However, proponents of the zero – tolerance approach argue that children must learn that unacceptable behaviour means certain punishment and that a tough approach is necessary to create an atmosphere of discipline. They nevertheless point out that it is important for these policies to be applied with flexibility and discretion, taking into account individual circumstances (Johnson, 1999). According to Cauchon (1999) a director of the Centre for Research on Aggression at Syracuse University and a strong supporter of zero – tolerance policies says the key to making the policy work is giving principals the discretion to exercise fairness and common sense.

According to Stephens (cited in Cauchon, 1999), executive director of the National School Safety Centre in Westlake, California, “Zero tolerance simply means that all misbehavior will have some sanction. It doesn’t mean you bring the maximum
punishment for every transgression”. Zero – tolerance can therefore include a range of punishments, including a note home or after – school detention.

According to McAndrews (2001), a zero – tolerance policy should be tailored to individual schools and their local needs. Also, while the policy should be flexible, it must nevertheless specify clear consequences for misbehaviour, with consistency of application. He pointed out the importance of reviewing the policy each year while emphasizing that a sound policy must allow for some degree of discretion. He argues further that in order to alleviate apprehension three important points should be focused upon when communicating zero – tolerance policies to the relevant stakeholders. These are: the exact definitions of punishable offences; consequences for noncompliance; and the decision process that will be followed when offences occur.

Having motivated the background to the problem of the research it is now necessary to state the problem in a more precise way by outlining the research question as well as the aims of the research study.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

Against the background of the preceding discussion, the research question was as follows:

How can a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline assist in creating disciplined school environments?

The following questions assisted the research process:

- What are the experiences of school managers with regard to learner discipline in the school and classroom environment?
- What are the experiences of educators with regard to learner discipline in the school and classroom environment?
• What are the perceptions of educators (which include school managers) on zero-tolerance discipline policies?
• What is the nature of and rationale for zero-tolerance discipline policies?
• Upon what basic principles (guidelines) should the zero-tolerance management approach to learner discipline be based?

1.4 AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

The general aim of this research was to determine how a zero-tolerance approach to managing learner discipline would assist in creating disciplined school environments. In order to attain the general aim of this research study, the following specific aims were to:

• explore and describe the experiences of school managers with regard to learner discipline in the school and classroom environment;
• explore and describe the experiences of educators with regard to learner discipline in the school and classroom environment;
• critically examine the concept and use of zero-tolerance policies;
• explain the nature and rationale for zero-tolerance discipline policies; and
• develop principles and guidelines (recommendations) for education managers to implement a zero-tolerance school discipline policy effectively.

Having discussed the research question and aims of the research a brief discussion will be undertaken on the methodological assumptions of the research study.

1.5 METHODOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

Methodological assumptions concern the researcher’s view of the nature and structure of science and research in his discipline (Botes, 1995:7). Qualitative research usually does not provide the researcher with a step-by-step plan or a fixed recipe to follow. Instead, the researcher’s choices and actions will determine the design. In other words the researcher will, during the research process, create the research design best suited to the research (De Vos & Fouche, 1998:80).
In this research study the researcher interacted with the participants to understand their reality by discovering and explaining the meaning that they attached to a specific setting. Inductive logic prevailed whereby themes and categories emerged from the participants rather than being identified "a priori" by the researcher. The emergence of themes and categories provided rich context – bound information that led to patterns and theories that helped to explain the phenomenon under study (Cresswell, 1994:7; Schurink, 1998a: 242 – 243).

The approach used can therefore be described as functional whereby the researcher made use of a qualitative study that can be seen as exploratory and descriptive. The researcher thus embarked on a voyage of discovery to undertake a more structured survey research. The research intends to stimulating new leads and avenues of research on the phenomenon under study, which may be used as a basis for further quantitative research.

A discussion on the research design and methods that were used now follows.

1.6 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODS

1.6.1 Research design
A qualitative research design that is exploratory, descriptive and contextual was used (Berg, 1995:24; Merriam, 1998:5 – 9; Mouton & Marais, 1992: 43 – 49; Myburgh & Poggenpoel, 1995: 4 – 7). Qualitative research is primarily concerned with the view that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds. Qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed in making sense of the world and the experiences they have in the world (Merriam, 1998:6). The researcher investigated the interpretation and meaning that people (school managers and educators) gave to events and experiences of learner discipline.

1.6.2 Data collection
Data was collected by means of semi – structured, open – ended, interviews, documents and field notes:
1.6.2.1 Semi-structured, open-ended, focus group interviews

The researcher conducted semi-structured, open-ended, focus group interviews with schools managers and educators to find out their experiences of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment. The interview is a form of data collection in which questions are asked orally and subjects’ responses are recorded. There is a direct verbal interaction between the interviewer and the respondents (McMillan, 2000:165).

Semi-structured interviews have attracted interest and are widely used in qualitative research. This interest is linked to the expectation that the interviewed subjects’ viewpoints are more likely to be expressed in a relatively openly designed interview situation than in a standardized interview or a questionnaire (Flick, 1998:76). In semi-structured interviews the questions do not have predetermined structured choices. The questions are open-ended and yet specific in intent, allowing for individual responses (McMillan, 2000:166).

McMillan (2000:166) asserts that by establishing a proper rapport with the participants, a skilled interviewer can enhance motivation and thereby obtain information that might not otherwise have been offered. He maintains that more accurate responses can be obtained as the interviewer clarifies questions that the respondent may have and follows up leads through probing.

Interviews encourage people to describe their worlds in their own terms (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:3). Interviews also seek to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life-world of the interviewee. The main task is to understand the meaning of what is said. In this way the interviewer will be able to register and interpret what is said, as well as how it is said. During the course of the interview the interviewer must be observant of and be able to interpret vocalization, facial expressions and other bodily gestures (Kvale, 1983:175).

Merriam (1998:23) points out very importantly that the purpose of interviewing is to find out what is on someone else’s mind and since this cannot be directly observed or
measured, the interviewer has to ask questions in such a way as to obtain meaningful information.

1.6.2.2 Documents

Documents are written records. They can provide first hand information (primary sources) based on direct experiences with the phenomena obtained through interviews or observations (McMillan, 2000:263). The interview data generated has to be documented and edited prior to it being analyzed. Therefore the spoken words of the interview has to be recorded and transcribed. This process is an essential aspect in the construction of reality in the research process (Flick, 1998:168). Primary documents such as the Constitution (RSA, 1996b) and the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) formed an integral part of this research study and were also used.

Documents also provide additional ‘secondhand’ information (secondary sources) based on information obtained as a result of a literature review relevant to the particular concern under study. They can be virtually anything written or printed such as letters, newspapers, diaries and books. Non - print materials such as pictures, videotapes and films can also be used (De Vos, 1998:390; McMillan, 2000:263).

1.6.2.3 Field notes

Flick (1998:170) describes field notes as “the classic medium for documentation in qualitative research…” Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in the research process in qualitative research, it usually involves fieldwork (Merriam, 1998:7). It is therefore vital that the researcher entered the study with little or no biases, motivations and perspectives that could influence the research procedures or findings (Krefting, 1991: 216 – 217).

Field notes are not merely summaries of events but rather detailed written descriptions of what was observed as well as the researcher’s interpretations (McMillan, 2000:260; Schurink, 1998b:285). The researcher must physically go to the people, setting, site and institution in order to observe behaviour in its natural setting (Cresswell, 1994:145). The
researcher has to record field notes of the interview situation as well as his impressions. According to McMillan (2000:260) nothing is trivial and therefore whatever is seen, heard or experienced is recorded and considered.

1.6.3 Sampling
A purposive sampling method was used in this research. A purposive sample is one that is selected non-randomly but for some particular reason (McBurney, 1994:203). This method is based entirely on the judgement of a researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample (Bless & Higson-Smith, 1995:95). In this study the participants were chosen from a specific target group whose opinions and ideas were of specific interest to this investigation. The population in this study consisted of primary school educators and school managers.

1.6.4 Pilot study
A pilot study was conducted to determine if the wanted information was gained by the questions posed to education managers and educators and whether the method of questioning was suitable to attain in-depth information. The pilot study also helped the researcher to correct mistakes occurred during the course of the interview.

1.6.5 Data analysis
A data analysis was done according to Tesch's method of open coding in order to identify themes and categories. Tesch's method described in Cresswell (1994:155) involves several steps whereby the transcriptions of the interviews with educators about their experiences and the field notes were analysed.

The themes and categories identified through data analysis were consequently compared with relevant literature in order to highlight similarities and differences between this research and other studies on the topic. This also facilitated the process of describing principles and guidelines for education managers to effectively implement a zero-tolerance school discipline policy in order to manage learner discipline.
1.6.6 Trustworthiness of the study

In this research study Guba's (cited by Krefting, 1991:214 – 215) trustworthiness model was used to establish the validity and reliability of the qualitative research. The four criteria for trustworthiness are truth-value, applicability, consistency and neutrality (Poggenpoel, 1998:349 – 350).

Having discussed the research design and methods used a brief discussion of the ethical considerations now follows.

1.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations were taken into account during the course of this research study. This included the competency of the researcher as well as the rule of conduct in the researcher – participant relationship. The researcher also ensured that the respondents will remained anonymous and all information supplied by the respondents remained confidential.

Having taken ethical considerations into account one has to also undertake a literature control.

1.8 LITERATURE CONTROL

The findings of this research study were compared with the review of literature undertaken in chapter two so that the similarities, differences and unique contributions may be identified and recommendations made.

A brief outline of the demarcation of the research study will now be undertaken.
1.9 DEMARCATION OF THE RESEARCH

The research was conducted in primary schools in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa. Johannesburg is the largest city in South Africa and is also the capital of the Gauteng Province. Johannesburg is made up of the inner city and is immediately surrounded by residential areas commonly known as the northern, southern, eastern and western suburbs.

Having briefly described the demarcation of the research study, certain concepts will now be illuminated. Basic concepts such as discipline, educator, learner, management, school management and zero – tolerance are repeatedly used in this study. It is therefore necessary to make explicit explanation of these concepts.

1.10 CLARIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.10.1 Discipline

According to Jones (1989:6) discipline refers to the maintenance of an orderly system that creates the conditions in which learning takes place and that allows the aims and objectives of the school to be achieved.

Charles (1992:48) describes discipline as a series of little victories, brought about when educators use sane messages that address the situation rather than the learner’s character – to guide learners away from inappropriate behaviour towards behaviour that is appropriate and lasting.

In this research study discipline was considered as acceptable learner behaviour, within the context of the school’s disciplinary code of conduct, so that quality and effective teaching and learning as well as opportunities for optimal personal and collective growth and development of learners’ characters can take place. Furthermore, when educators teach this concept to learners they are merely educating them to behave in ways acceptable to society.
1.10.2 Educator
Educator means any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons or who
provides professional educational services at any public school and who is appointed in a
post in any educator establishment under the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996
(RSA, 1996a). In this research study the word “educator” refers to the persons who are
educated in teaching methodology and teach learners in the primary school.

1.10.3 Learner
Learner means any person receiving tuition or obliged to receive tuition in terms of the
South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a). In this study a learner is someone who is still
attending school.

1.10.4 Management
Management in education is a specific type of work which comprise regulative tasks or
actions executed by a person or body in a position of authority in a specific field or area
of regulation so as to allow formative education to take place (Van der Westhuizen,
1991:55). According to Van Schalkwyk (1986:4) managing includes organising, leading,
motivating, planning, controlling and determining programmes, procedures and methods.
Management takes place at all levels of an institution like a school. In this study
management refers to the tasks of the school management team (i.e.: principal, deputy
principal and heads of department) as well as school educators, who are also managers, as
they have to manage learners and a classroom so that there can be discipline in the
school.

1.10.5 School management
While educators at all levels are managers and have to manage learners school managers
refers specifically to the principal, deputy principal and heads of department. The school
management team must help in managing the school in order to curb indiscipline in
schools and thereby allowing the school to be managed effectively.
1.10.6 Zero - tolerance

For the purpose of this study zero – tolerance implies that schools should develop principles and guidelines for applying a zero – tolerance approach whereby every transgression of schools rules and expected behaviour, even if seemingly trivial, will be dealt with according to the schools’ disciplinary policy.

After having explained the various contextual terms, the order of discussion and a brief exposition of the remaining chapters will now be discussed.

1.11 DIVISION OF CHAPTERS

Chapter one
In this chapter an orientation and overview of the study is stated, a short reflection of the background to the problem has been discussed and the research question and aims of the research study clearly outlined. Also, the methodological assumptions of the research study and the research design and method used is clearly outlined. Furthermore, a clarification of concepts used, was undertaken.

Chapter two
In chapter two a literature overview of the issue of learner discipline is given. Special focus fell on learner discipline in South African schools, managing discipline and a critical analysis of the zero – tolerance approach to learner discipline. The South African perspective on how a zero – tolerance approach will improve discipline in South African is discussed.

Chapter three
In this chapter a detailed discussion on the research design and method used is given. A qualitative research design was used while the research method consisted of data collection, sampling, the pilot study, data analysis, a discussion on trustworthiness and ensuring the ethical correctness of the research.
Chapter four
This chapter deals with the research itself. The data collected was analyzed in order to identify themes and categories. An interpretation of the research results will be presented as well as a literature control.

Chapter five
In chapter five guidelines for a zero – tolerance management approach to managing learner discipline in schools as well as some recommendations for further research study are outlined. This chapter also provides a summary and conclusion on the research study. The limitations of the study are also pointed out.

1.12 SUMMARY

Discipline is essential for the smooth functioning of any school. While learner discipline at schools is emerging as a serious problem, school managers and educators should also see this as an opportunity to introduce innovative approaches to managing learner behaviour. One such approach in dealing with this phenomenon is the adoption of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline.

The purpose of this study was to examine the efficacy of a zero – tolerance management approach towards learner discipline in schools. A brief review of relevant literature has revealed that the issue of a zero – tolerance approach to learner discipline in schools has been controversially implemented and hotly debated for several years in the United States of America. Chapter one has dealt with an orientation and overview of the study. In chapter two a critical review of relevant literature pertaining to this study will be undertaken.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one an orientation and overview of the study was done. In this chapter a literature review will be undertaken to enable the researcher to substantiate the study by quoting the literature closely related to the topic under study.

2.1.1 The aim of a literature review

According to Le Compte and Preissle (1993:152) a literature review is crucial to a study because it is a place where investigators explain to their readers the theoretical underpinning of the study. It explains the impact of the theory at every stage of the study from the formulation of the problem and the selection of the population through data collection and analysis to interpretation.

Smith (1995:21) argues that the aim of a literature review is to:
- take cognizance of what has already been published with regard to one's field;
- obtain ideas of research strategies and methodologies which have been employed; and
- investigate concepts to which the researcher relates and proves his/her expertise in respect of the relevant field of research.

Mouton and Marais (1992:43) argue that the aim of a literature review is to:
- gain new insights into the phenomenon; and
- develop new hypotheses about existing phenomenon.

Therefore, it becomes quite clear that in all research, a literature review is an important and integral part of the research. It helps the researcher look at aspects from different perspectives that may have been overlooked by others in research. A literature review also plays an important role in a particular field of the study in that it allows the research
to differ from other studies that have already been undertaken. Furthermore, it allows the researcher to add to what other researchers have already done and thereby give the researcher the latitude to depart from the findings of other researchers (Babbie, 1992:104).

2.1.2 **An overview**

According to Lewis (1997:404), discipline is a major component of a schools activity and is critical in establishing an environment, which facilitates learner’s academic achievement as well as their socialization. Discipline in a positive sense refers to learning, regulated scholarship, guidance and orderliness. It is in this sense that the learner is supported and guided towards the degree of self – discipline which is necessary for successful learning and to achieve adequate self – actualization and responsible and happy adulthood (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000: 14).

Disciplinary problems on the other hand refer to the manifestation of behaviour, which interferes with the teaching process and seriously affects the normal management of the school (Van Wyk, 2001: 196). The lack of learner discipline in many public schools throughout the world has long been a matter of great concern for school’s management and educators and, to a lesser extent, for learners themselves, parents and the general public (Wayson & Pinnell, 1994: 1534).

Educators in public schools in South Africa are empowered to discipline learners by virtue of their common – law status as persons, acting in *loco parentis* (in the place of parent). However, this power must be exercised in a proper and a reasonable manner and also in accordance with all legal prescriptions regarding educational discipline (Bray, 1992: 17 – 18). For example, the administering of corporal punishment at a school to a learner in South Africa has been prohibited in terms of Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a).

Also, the use of other punitive measures and strategies such as learner suspensions and expulsions without due process, to maintain discipline in schools has been severely
curtailed and in some cases even declared unconstitutional. Section 33 of the Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996b), the administrative justice clause, states clearly that:

1) everyone has the right to administrative action that is lawful, reasonable and procedurally fair; and

2) everyone whose rights have been adversely affected by administrative action has the right to be given written reasons.

While the banning of corporal punishment has been criticized by many educators, many of whom persist in its illegal use in the belief that it is necessary for education to take place, the government has attempted to fill the vacuum created in two ways. It has introduced school-level codes of conduct and parents have been given an unprecedented involvement in school affairs via representation on the schools governing body (Morrell, 2001: 292).

However, the lack of discipline continues to be a major problem in many public schools in South Africa. This is in spite of government’s intervention at policy level and the sincere attempts and strategies by school management to move away from the punitive nature of discipline towards a more corrective and positive approach (Van Wyk, 2001: 196).

Learner disciplinary problems range in severity from learners’ lack of concentration and neglecting to do homework, late coming, truancy and not adhering to the dress code of the school, to theft and acts of violence and vandalism (Mabeda & Prinsloo, 2000: 34; Van Wyk, 2001: 196). In addition, no single reason can be isolated to explain the phenomenon of ill-discipline but rather, there seems to be a multitude of possible reasons. Therefore, one needs to examine the various possible reasons for learner disciplinary problems as well as a possible approach in managing learner discipline in schools.

One possible approach to managing learner discipline in schools is the zero-tolerance management approach. It is within this context that relevant literature in the efficacy of a
zero-tolerance management approach towards learner discipline in schools will be critically analysed. In this chapter the researcher will first undertake a review of learner discipline in South African schools. Thereafter, several different management approaches to learner discipline will be examined and finally, a critical analysis of the zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline will be undertaken.

2.2 LEARNER DISCIPLINE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Learner discipline is ranked as one of the major concerns expressed by all stakeholders in the education process about public schools and the education system in South Africa (Mabeda & Prinsloo, 2000:34; Van Wyk, 2001: 196). This phenomenon has interfered seriously with the process of learning and teaching. According to Thompson (2002: 7) who conducted a comprehensive study into discipline in primary and secondary education in South Africa, confirms that is a breakdown in discipline in schools and this has to be remedied urgently.

Learner disciplinary problems in South African schools range from the rejection of reasoning, noise, physical violence, threats, theft, graffiti and vandalism, verbal abuse, lack of concentration, boisterousness and disrespect for authority, constant violation of the schools code of conduct, criminality, gangsterism, rape and substance abuse in and around the school (Mabeda & Prinsloo, 2000: 34; van Wyk, 2001: 196).

These disciplinary problems are often mirrored in the often-dramatic coverage by the media. These include the issue of learners carrying guns and knives to school (Mlangeni, 1997:3), the barring of unruly learners from school (Nel & Saliso, 1997: 1), the problem of truancy (Pillay, 1999:2), the issue of "dagga" discipline (Williams, 1997: 6), the locking of school gates in response to late coming (Tshabalala, 2002:13) and the enforcing of disciplinary measures against learners with unacceptable hairstyles (Ndlovu, 2002: 8).
According to Cameron (1998) seriously disruptive behaviour is now viewed by the media and the public as a phenomenon which is increasing in frequency and severity, and occurring at a much earlier age in children. While reviewing literature the researcher identified the following among the multitude of possible reasons to explain the lack of learner discipline in South African schools:

- The abolition of corporal punishment and its effect on learner discipline
- Lack of parental involvement
- The pervasive culture of ill-discipline
- Legacy of Apartheid
- The influence of external environmental factors on learner behaviour
- The impact of radical legislative and constitutional transformation on learner discipline
- Lack of discipline management strategies among educators
- Educators as poor role models

Having identified some of the possible reasons to explain the lack of learner discipline in South African schools it is now necessary to discuss each one in more detail.

2.2.1 The abolition of corporal punishment and its effect on learner discipline

In South Africa corporal punishment and the use of other punitive measures is often regarded as synonymous with good discipline (Van Wyk, 2001: 195). In South Africa the use of corporal punishment was in fact an integral part of schooling for most educators and learners in public schools until its banning in 1996 (Morrell, 2001:292). Corporal punishment was abolished in terms of Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a).

According to Section 10 of the Schools Act,

(1) no person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner and

(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.
In terms of definitions and the application of the Act school means a public school or an independent school which enrols learners in one or more grades from grade zero to grade twelve.

The abolition of corporal punishment was received with mixed feelings by educationists and other stakeholders in the education system. On the one hand many educators argued that it was indispensable to their work and without it discipline could not be maintained (Van Wyk, 2001: 196). For example, in interviews conducted by reporter Magazi (2002: 6), school principals in areas such as Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Nyanga feel the abolition of corporal punishment has disrupted the whole school system and has in fact caused a deterioration in discipline in most schools. Other reports seem to indicate that the impression among learners is that with the banning of corporal punishment they can do whatever they like as the school’s hands are tied (Anon, 2002: 13).

On the other hand, critics of the use of corporal punishment have applauded its abolition, describing it as a dehumanizing and barbaric practice and an infringement of a persons human rights that needed to be outlawed (Garson, 1999: 45; van Wyk, 2001: 292). They argue that this method seldom reformed wrong – doers and has no educative potential. Education psychologists maintain that corporal punishment did serious emotional damage, affected the self – esteem of learners and impacted adversely on academic performance (Morrell, 2001: 292).

According to Curwin and Mendler (1980: 110) any form of punishment that is not coupled with a message of caring will not effect lasting behavioural changes but will rather suppress temporarily the punished action. In South African schools many educators find it difficult to enforce discipline, especially after the abolition of corporal punishment since discipline is equated with corporal punishment (Ngcai, 1997: 17).

Curwin and Mendler (1980: 110) point out that physical (corporal) punishment is rarely an effective method of changing a person’s behaviour. It will instead model aggressiveness as a problem-solving model whereby learners learn that when in control it
would be appropriate to act in punishing ways. In other words aggression in the form of corporal punishment will breed aggression in ones’ behaviour and thereby creating disciplinary problems. Education psychologist, Charl Cilliers (cited in Van der Merwe, 2002a: 6) also found that corporal punishment was the “easy way out” in that educators punished the actions of learners but did not teach the wrongdoer the right behaviour.

Kader Asmal, the South African Minister of Education (Department of Education, 2000), has pointed out that discipline must not be punitive and punishment – oriented but rather as an educative and corrective measure in order to facilitate constructive learning. Furthermore, the focus should be on positive aspects of discipline in order to allow for individuality and creativity.

South Africa has since 1996 abolished corporal punishment. It has subscribed to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which prohibits any form of physical harm to the child and introduced guidelines on alternatives to corporal punishment with a code of conduct guidelines. The Schools Act even allows for parental involvement in school affairs via representation in the schools governing body. Notwithstanding these measures educators in South Africa still tend to use corporal punishment as a method to discipline learners (Department of Education, 2000; Foster & Smith, 2001: 120; Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000: 34; Van Wyk, 2001: 200; Van der Merwe, 2002a: 6).

According to Morrell (2001: 292) discipline has become a major problem, as effective alternatives were not immediately introduced with the abolition of corporal punishment in 1996. Guidelines on alternatives to corporal punishment as well as code of conduct guidelines were only introduced in 2000, four years after the abolishment of corporal punishment (Department of Education, 2000).

Van Wyk (2001: 200), in her investigation on school discipline, found that many governing bodies are not fully equipped to deal with misconduct of learners in schools. She found that the members of most governing bodies lack experience on such matters
while some members are illiterate or semi-literate, thus compounding the problem. She also found that the provincial departments of education provide very little, if any, training to these bodies on alternative disciplinary measures.

Having discussed the abolition of corporal punishment and its effect on learner discipline we can now discuss the lack of parental involvement as another possible reason to explain the phenomenon of learner discipline in South African schools.

2.2.2 Lack of parental involvement

According to Blandford (1998:32) an active partnership between parents and schools has great benefits. Parents can have a powerful effect on children’s behaviour ensuring that learners arrive at school on time, behave appropriately, have suitable clothing, necessary books and equipment and ensuring that homework is completed on time.

In South Africa the democratic transformation of schooling has envisaged a key role for parents (Morrell, 2001:294). The inclusion of parents and their representatives on the school governing bodies provide for their involvement in issues of misconduct in schools, as disciplinary procedures to be followed by the school must be set out in the code of conduct drawn up by the school governing body (Van Wyk, 2001:200).

Notwithstanding this, parental involvement in areas such as learner discipline in many schools has been lacking. According to Van Wyk (2001:198) many parents are reluctant to become involved in disciplinary issues involving their children, insisting that the school deal with the problem. According to Curwin and Mendler (1980:233 – 234) parents of troublesome learners are also reluctant to get involved in the affairs of the school as they feel uncomfortable with the risk of exposing their own difficulties to the school personnel. Also, the learners of these parents often misbehave at home in the same way they do at school and these parents do not want reminders of how inadequate they have been in parenting.
In South Africa media reports also seems to indicate that lack of parental support and lack of cooperation in maintaining discipline of learners can be linked to disciplinary problems such as lethargy, absenteeism and truancy. Also, parents’ failure to cooperate and collaborate positively with schools was a major contributing factor for the high failure rate, late registration, poor discipline, poor safety in classrooms and schoolyards and learners’ morale (Anon, 1997b:3; Bisetty, 2001:3; Mecoamere, 2000:1).

According to Rosen (1997:31) parents should be the school manager’s best friends when it comes to learner discipline. Also, parental involvement will encourage their children to do well in school and to comply with school rules. Warner (1994: 77) also points out that the involvement of parents is crucial and encourages learners to do well. According to Piek (1992:43) the progress of the learners educative development in the school context depends to a large extent on the effective contact with and cooperation between the parents and the school personnel.

Having discussed the lack of parental involvement and its effect on learner discipline, a discussion will now be undertaken on the pervasive culture of ill-discipline.

2.2.3 The pervasive culture of ill-discipline
A culture of ill-discipline seems to be a global phenomenon. In the United States of America annual Gallup Polls of public opinion have identified the lack of discipline as a common complaint about public schools. The poll found that increases in violent and disruptive behaviour of learners in schools have been accompanied by a proportionate increase in suspensions and expulsions (Mayer: 1999).

A similar national survey of educators in the United States of America found that 58% of respondents reported their lessons were regularly disrupted by learner misbehaviour. In Britain it was found that 48% of nursery school educators, 50% of primary school educators and 55% of secondary school educators reported that they spent an inordinate amount of time on matters of order and control (Fields: 2000).
According to Dlamini (1997: 8) in South Africa we have what he describes as the “pervasive culture of indiscipline” which is widespread. He argues that prior to the new political dispensation one of the tactics employed by the liberation movement against the South African government was to render the country ungovernable. This tactic generated a way of life in schools in which lack of discipline became a virtue, especially among the youth. He argued further that today the youth are still slaves of this old habit whereby they are unruly and averse to even legitimate authority.

In Gauteng steps are being taken to stamp out “lawlessness” in schools by the launching of the “Making Schools Work” campaign (Mohale, 2002:3). According to Ignatius Jacobs, MEC for education in Gauteng the “Making Schools Work” campaign has been launched as a joint venture between the government and community organisations to restore the culture of learning and teaching in schools. He said that schools needed to be saved from rowdy and disobedient learners who intended imposing their own rules to determine when they will attend classes and when they will wear uniforms (Mohale, 2002:3). Van Wyk (2001: 200) also pointed out appropriately that structures have to be put in place to address the issues of learner discipline if South African schools are to establish a positive culture of learning and teaching.

Having discussed the pervasive culture of ill-discipline a discussion will now be undertaken on the legacy of Apartheid as a contributing factor in explaining the phenomenon of learner discipline in South African schools.

2.2.4 The legacy of Apartheid

Historically the so-called township or African schools have been experiencing disciplinary problems which can be traced back to the days of Apartheid. According to Van Wyk (2001: 95), notwithstanding the new political dispensation and the drastic changes in education in post-Apartheid South Africa, most learners still attend poorly resourced schools in townships and rural areas. She argues further that these schools share commonalities such as poorly kept school facilities, disputed and disrupted authority relations among principals, educators and learners, poor attendance of learners and often
educators, lack of motivation and morale of both educators and learners, conflict and often vandalism, criminality, gangsterism, rape and substance abuse in and around the school. She maintains that this, together with poor socio-economic conditions and the country’s turbulent history has influenced school discipline negatively. Reports in South African media concur with this view in that much of the collapse in classroom discipline is occurring in mainly African townships as a result of decades of neglect whereby the authority of educators is constantly being undermined (Anon, 1997a: 10).

According to Grey (1997: 4) Apartheid has played its part in undermining family authority. In many cases the parents have substantially less education than their children do and this has given rise to a situation where the parent is intimidated by the child and feels incapable of disciplining him or her. In these cases the child brings an undisciplined attitude to school and, not being accustomed to bowing to the dictates of authority, becomes a big headache for educators.

Having discussed the legacy of apartheid and its effect on learner discipline we can now move on to the influence of external environmental factors on learner behaviour as another possible reason to explain the phenomenon of learner discipline in South African schools.

2.2.5 The influence of external environmental factors on learner behaviour
The influence of external environment factors on learner behaviour and its impact on the management of the school as an organisation cannot be underestimated. According to Curwin and Mendler (1998: 5) schools do not exist as isolated institutions untouched by the social events surrounding them. They point out that schools are a mirror image of what transpires in society and this includes out of school causes of disciplinary problems such as violence in society, the effects of the media such as television and the lack of a secure family environment.

Many of the most frequent classroom discipline problems in our schools are the same as those that have plagued educators for centuries such as teasing, talking without
permission, getting out of one's seat, disrespect towards educators and bullying. However, new disciplinary problems that have emerged and which are more serious in nature reflect many of the societal problems such as vandalism, drug abuse and arson (Bear, 1998). Rose (1995) also points out that today's public schools must deal with a younger generation swayed by influences from family deterioration to violent entertainment images.

In an enquiry into discipline in schools in the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Norway and the Netherlands, Bennett (1992: 3) found that the entire school staff were suffering from low morale and were pessimistic about teaching. They saw themselves as ill-supported and poorly rewarded professionals. They felt condemned to battle against poor learner discipline generated by such adverse tides in society as the decline in respect for authority, the rejection of moral standards, the break-up of families, unemployment, selfish materialism and the emphasis on violence for entertainment in the media.

In a study undertaken in South Africa by Van Wyk (2001:198) it was found that educators frequently attributed learner misconduct to factors outside the school. She pointed out that while schools could not be totally absolved of their responsibility for the poor behaviour of learners, parents and communities may contribute to the development of problem behaviour by failing to provide prerequisite social skills and support and by modeling inappropriate behaviour.

The impact of radical legislative and constitutional transformation on learner discipline will now be examined.

2.2.6 The impact of radical legislative and constitutional transformation on learner discipline

The signing into law of the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996b) and the Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) has impacted radically on learner discipline. School rules are no longer an ad hoc set of rules operating independently of other legislation, but form part of the
total legislation regarding education (Van Staden & Alston, 2000:298). School management now has to ensure that correct structures and procedures are put in place so that any disciplinary measures taken against ill-disciplined learners are administered fairly and reasonably in accordance with the South African Schools Act and Constitution.

For example, Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) categorically prohibits the use of corporal punishment while the Constitution with its Bill of Rights (RSA, 1996b), confers the full panoply of constitutional rights on the learners (Bray, 1992:24). Legislation has therefore had a direct bearing on school discipline and strategies for dealing with misbehaviour. This has impacted directly on learner behaviour and attitude.

On the one hand the schools code of conduct for learners has to be drawn up and applied in such a way so as not to be in conflict with the Constitution or any other legislative measures. The emphasis is now on human rights and this has raised learners’ expectations of their rights being respected and enforced. Therefore, when schools implement rules in order to exercise sound discipline the rights of learners have to be adhered to. At the same time it is expected for learners to appreciate both their rights and their responsibilities and adhere to the schools’ code of conduct (Van Staden & Alston, 2000:298).

On the other hand, ill-disciplined learners can constantly undermine the whole process by constantly challenging the legitimate authority of the school (Curwin & Mendler, 1980: 17). For example, recent newspaper reports indicate that learners in South African schools tend to interpret human rights in a negative way, and by insisting on their rights, they often infringe on the rights of educators and other learners. Also, since learners now know their rights and with educators running out of ideas on how to maintain discipline since the abolition of corporal punishment, they do whatever they please. Furthermore, legislation has also created a perception among learners that since they now have rights there is nothing to deter them from being loose and disrespectful (Magazi, 2002: 6; Naidoo, 1999: 9; Van der Merwe, 2002b: 3).
Having discussed the impact of radical legislative and constitutional transformation and its impact on learner discipline, a brief discussion on the lack of discipline management strategies among educators will now be undertaken.

2.2.7 Lack of discipline management strategies among educators

The management of discipline in schools is central to effective teaching and learning (Blandford, 1998:9). According to Van Wyk (2001: 198) many educators in South Africa have limited knowledge of disciplinary strategies and therefore most disciplinary measures tend to be reactive, punitive, humiliating and punishing rather than corrective and nurturing. Morrell (2001:292) concurs with this and also points out that even though illegal, many educators persist in using corporal punishment as a strategy to discipline learners.

According to Curwin and Mendler (1980: 109 – 110) disciplinary measures that are punitive have the effect of stopping a child’s misbehaviour for a short interval of time, but do not effect lasting behavioural change. It only suppresses temporarily the punished action. In South Africa it was found that equating discipline with punishment has also resulted in many educators being reluctant to adopt alternative methods of discipline. For example, punishment like detention requires the educator to be present after school hours to supervise the learners and many educators see this as a type of punishment that is ineffectual (Grey, 1997:4).

Van Wyk (2001:200) points out that educators need to be taught proactive and constructive disciplinary strategies as an alternative to punitive measures such as corporal punishment. Ramsey (1994:6) calls for innovative approaches to managing learner discipline while Squelch and Lemmer (1994:42 – 55) argue that a school disciplinary policy with a learners code of conduct will facilitate this process. In this way discipline will emphasize the educative value of the disciplinary measure to the wrong – doer in order to inculcate in the learner a sense of responsibility for his/her own actions and for the consequences of those actions (Department of Education, 2000:9 – 10).
According to Education Minister, Kader Asmal (cited in Singh, 1999b: 1), “We must protect the learner from arbitrary and capricious punishment and give teachers genuine alternatives”. In a study undertaken by Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:40) it was recommended that in-service training programmes should devote modules to discipline management as educators very often get into classroom situations where they are confronted with a lack of suitable strategies to handle behavioural problems.

Having discussed the lack of discipline management strategies among educators and its effect on learner discipline, we will now discuss educators as poor role models as another possible reason to explain the phenomenon of learner discipline in South African schools.

2.2.8 Educators as poor role models

Educators should inculcate self-discipline in learners under their charge and should therefore be consistent role models of socially acceptable discipline. On the other hand educators who behave in uncaring ways impact negatively on managing discipline in schools (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000: 40).

According to Summers (2002: 6), in South Africa there is a great concern at the moment at what appears to be the collapse of moral values at personal, community and national level. He asserts that this is also impacting dramatically on schools. For example, Bisetty (2001:3) found that among the factors causing havoc was the erosion of moral standards at schools. This was evident from the increasing number of sexual relationships between educators and learners and the dearth of mutual respect and dedication.

Van Wyk (2001: 198), in the research findings of a qualitative investigation which explored the perceptions and practices of discipline in Black urban schools, found that educators were regarded as poor role models. The findings indicated that the conduct of certain educators were unprofessional and often criminal. Examples of educator misconduct included: being unprepared for lessons; neglecting teaching duties; neglecting learners while furthering their own studies; being absent without reason; not coming to class; alcohol abuse; and engaging in sexual intimacy with schoolgirls.
Having undertaken a literature review to explain the phenomenon of learner discipline in South African schools it is also important to review briefly the various literature on approaches in which learner discipline in schools can be managed.

2.3 MANAGING DISCIPLINE

According to Blandford (1998:37; 98) effective management of learner discipline requires consultation, planning, commitment, constant review and evaluation. The school management should, in its implementation of the school disciplinary policy, reflect the needs of learners, educators, support agencies and the community. Therefore, the management of discipline in schools must involve all members of the school and wider education community.

According to Friedberg, Stein and Parker (1995:438) rather than having good discipline as a goal in itself, the school management must focus on all aspects of the school environment. Also, instead of stressing punishment and encouraging conformity, schools must recognise the individuality of learners and make the classroom and school community places where learners are happy to learn.

Curwin and Mendler (1980:33) favour a “three – dimensional” approach to learner discipline. These are:

- The prevention dimension whereby school managers and educators adopt strategies to actively prevent disciplinary problems and deal with stress associated with classroom discipline. For example, the educator can motivate learners to learn.
- The action dimension that refers to what action school managers and educators can take when, in spite of all the steps taken to prevent disciplinary problems, they still occur. This includes keeping simple records and having strategies to avoid escalating minor problems into major ones. For example, the educator can collect data on learners.
- The resolution dimension whereby school managers and educators develop strategies to resolve problems with the chronic rule breaker and the more extreme out – of –
control learner. For example, the educator can find out what is required to prevent another problem.

Jackson (1994:43) identifies three disciplinary models that he considers to be important when dealing with learner discipline. These are:

- The assertive disciplinary model that is adopted when the educator has the right and duty to assert oneself in the classroom by taking effective action. The educator can use legitimate authority to insist on one's right to be treated with respect and dignity by the learners, and to take appropriate action when such action is necessary or conducive to furthering the goals of education. In this way the assertive educator will be able to create a sense of security, order and control as well as a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom whereby learners begin to believe in the existence of rules and self-discipline (Jackson, 1994:44–47).

- The behaviouristic model whereby desirable behaviour is reinforced while undesirable behaviour is ignored. Good behaviour is usually reinforced by some form of reward such as merit slips or some form of approval (Jackson, 1994:53–55).

- The problem-solving model recognises the fact that when a learner is continually disruptive, there must be some reason for this. It may be a learning or emotional problem which requires skilled intervention in the form of therapy. Recognising that a learner has a problem does not mean that the learner should be allowed to pass this problem on to the educator or parents. Neither does it mean that the learner is given licence to disrupt the rest of the class. By means of a team approach, the educator, in cooperation with the parents the school principal, other colleagues on the staff, the councillor and, perhaps, the school psychologist, can help the learner to accept his/her own problem and resolve it to his/her own benefit and that of the group as a whole (Jackson, 1994:68–69).
The researcher favours a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline. Zero – tolerance implies that schools should develop principles and guidelines for applying a zero – tolerance approach whereby every transgression of school rules and expected behaviour, even if seemingly trivial, will be dealt with according to the schools disciplinary policy. This alternative and somewhat radical approach must be seen as an alternative management approach to the continual problem of learner discipline in South African schools.

It is in the context of the problems of learner discipline in schools in South Africa that relevant literature on the efficacy of a zero – tolerance management approach to learner discipline will be examined critically – not simply whether it is good or bad or whether it is succeeding or failing but rather on its application. While the concept zero – tolerance originated in the United States of America one would also have to bear in mind whether it would be suitable and effective if implemented in schools in South Africa.

2.4 CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE ZERO – TOLERANCE APPROACH TO LEARNER DISCIPLINE

2.4.1 Definition of zero – tolerance
Zero – tolerance policies are administrative rules intended to address specific problems associated with school safety and discipline (McAndrews, 2001:1). In terms of zero – tolerance policies all offences, no matter how minor, are dealt with according to the school’s disciplinary policy (Skiba & Peterson, 1999:2).

2.4.2 The origins of zero – tolerance
The term zero – tolerance originated in the USA. It grew out of state and federal drug enforcement policies in the 1980’s. The first use of the term was recorded in the Lexis – Nexis national newspaper in 1983 to refer to 40 submarine crewmembers that were reassigned for suspected drug abuse. In 1986 the term zero – tolerance was picked up and used by a U.S. attorney in San Diego as a title of a program developed to impound seacraft carrying any amount of drugs (Skiba & Peterson, 1999:2).
Zero-tolerance took hold quickly and was soon being applied to issues as diverse as environmental pollution, trespassing, skateboarding, racial intolerance, homelessness and sexual harassment. The fear that drugs and violence was spreading in schools throughout the USA provided the initial motivation for adopting zero-tolerance disciplinary policies in public schools by the late 1980's (Skiba & Peterson, 1999:2).

By 1993 zero-tolerance policies were being adopted by school boards across the country. In 1994 the USA Congress passed the Gun-Free Schools Act, which required states to legislate zero-tolerance laws or risk losing federal funds (McAndrews, 2001:1). It was during the 1990’s that this approach was broadened to include other offences such as school disruption, sexual harassment, possession and consumption of alcohol and drugs and eventually the violation of schools policies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999:2).

The adoption of zero-tolerance policies by school boards throughout the USA has been the subject of many debates. Hunter (in Lozada, 1998:5), senior associate executive director of the American Association of School Administrators, describes zero-tolerance as a “two-edged sword”. According to him everybody whom has implemented zero-tolerance policies have gotten really good results, but it has also “caused incredible administrative headaches that they didn’t anticipate”.

Curwin and Mendler (1999:1) describe zero-tolerance as “…another example of the road to hell paved with good intentions”. According to them, zero-tolerance was originally intended as a policy to improve safety in schools, by ensuring that all children, regardless of race, athletic ability or parental influence, follow the rule. Instead, it is used as an excuse to treat all children the same when they are in need of corrective measures.

According to Newcomb (1999:1) while the goal of a zero-tolerance policy is a good one, to reduce school discipline problems, and has been welcomed by “get tough” proponents, the reality of its increasingly broad application is creating ever increasing problems. She asserts that very often the punishment far outweighs the crime.
While critics of this approach have described it as inflexible, harsh, lacking common sense and unfair, proponents of the same argue that a tough approach is necessary to create an atmosphere of discipline (Cauchon, 1999; Johnson, 1999; Uhler & Fish, 1999).

### 2.4.3 Critics of the zero – tolerance approach

Zero – tolerance policies have been criticized for being too rigid, failing to take into consideration individual circumstances and often failing to differentiate between “good kids” who make the typical mistake of adolescence and the unruly delinquents who can bring learning to a standstill (Cauchon, 1999:1). For example, 6 year – old Jonathan Prevette was suspended for kissing a classmate on the cheek in terms of the schools sexual harassment policy (Lozada, 1998:8).

Critics of zero – tolerance policies also argue that in implementing the policies, administrators have cast a broad net, treating both minor and major incidents with equal severity to “send a message” to potential violators (McAndrews, 2001:1). For example, many school administrators apply the policy without discretion with the conviction that an unwavering application of zero – tolerance is necessary to deal with disruptive learners (McAndrews, 2001:1). Learners have been expelled for being in possession of cough drops and mouthwash, contraband that violates zero – tolerance, anti – drug policies while others for Halloween costumes that included paper sword and toy guns in violation of anti – weapons policies. This all – or – nothing approach has resulted in even exemplary learners being caught in the zero – tolerance net (Cauchon, 1999:1; McAndrews, 2001:1).

Johnston (2000:2) explains that a major problem with the zero – tolerance approach is the inconsistent applications of discipline policies. According to McAndrews (2001:2) a general counsel for four Indiana school districts concurs in that the biggest problem with zero – tolerance is inconsistent application and interpretation. For example, according to a study in 1997 by the Department of Education in the USA, only 31% of students who brought a gun to school and 18% who committed a drug offence in 1995 – 96 were
expelled. At the same time 10 year-old Shanon Coslet was expelled because her mother had put a small knife in her lunchbox to cut an apple despite the fact that she had turned it in to a teacher (Cauchon, 1999:3).

National statistics also tend to be sketchy with regard to the effects of zero-tolerance policies. While some show no clear effect, others indicate that zero-tolerance policies are working. For example, in a survey carried out by the National Centre for Education Statistics in the USA it was found that there were virtually no changes across minor misbehaviour or more serious infractions since the introduction of zero-tolerance policies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999:2). On the other hand a 1999 annual report on school safety found that since the implementation of zero-tolerance policies overall school violence declined from 155 school-related crimes for every 1,000 students age 12 to 18 in 1993 to 102 in 1997 (Grier & Chaddock, 1999:2).

Cauchon (1999:1) also argues further that even advocates of zero-tolerance are worried by the way in which school administrators are undermining the credibility of zero-tolerance systems by pursuing silly cases. For example, Derrick Sorenson, a 13 year-old Livonia resident was expelled for carrying a baseball bat to school (Anon, 2001:1), a 12 year-old was kicked out of his middle school for flashing a toy gun in class (Porter, 1997:1) while 18 year-old Lindsay Brown was arrested after a kitchen knife was found on the floor of her parked car (Cosh, 2001:1).

According to Cauchon (1999:2) a president of the American Federation of Teachers, the nation’s second largest teachers union, which had pushed hard for zero-tolerance policies, also commented as follows: “I’m terribly embarrassed when I read some of these cases. These are examples of adults not exercising proper responsibility. I’m always in favour of just plain common sense”.

The American Bar Society has also criticized zero-tolerance policies for failing to take into account the circumstances or nature of an offense or an accused learner’s history (Anon, 2001:1). Educators and other proponents of zero-tolerance have nevertheless
argued that this “one size fits all” approach is keeping children safe and making the school environment a better place for learning, even if it’s at the expense of a few good kids (Lozada, 1998:1; Uhler & Fish, 1999:1).

2.4.4 Proponents of the zero – tolerance approach

Proponents of the zero – tolerance approach argue that children must learn that unacceptable behaviour means certain punishment and that a tough approach is necessary to create an atmosphere of discipline (Johnson, 1999). They argue that zero – tolerance simply means all misbehaviour will have some sanction. It can include a range of punishments, including a note home or after – school detention (Cauchon, 1999: 2).

According to Cauchon (1999:2) an executive director of the National School Safety Centre in Westlake, California, also explains that zero tolerance and expulsion don’t have to go hand in hand and it doesn’t mean you bring the maximum punishment for every transgression. According to Grier and Chaddock (2000:1), even rigid discipline has to be imposed with common sense. School administrators need to judge individual infractions in a larger context of knowledge about their school’s rhythms and personalities.

Greengard (1999: 1 – 7) also points out that while zero – tolerance means different things to different people, the message is clear – “unacceptable and detrimental behaviour will not be tolerated under any circumstances”. Also, the point of zero – tolerance is that it backs up tough talk and rhetoric with real action. Uhler and Fish (1999) concur with this view and explain further that it would be misguided to suggest that zero – tolerance school policies are inherently bad. Rather, the real question is whether to impose a predetermined, uniform consequence, usually an extended expulsion, for specified misconduct such as possession of a weapon or drugs, regardless of the individual circumstances of the offense.

Whilst the debate on zero – tolerance continues it is clear that the efficacy of zero – tolerance policies must be balances with the need to take individual circumstances and differences in children into account. McAndrews (2001: 4) points out appropriately that a
zero-tolerance policy should be tailored to individual schools and their local needs. Also, while the policy should be flexible, it must nevertheless specify clear consequences for misbehaviour, with consistency of application.

He pointed out the importance of reviewing the policy each year while emphasizing that a sound policy must allow for some degree of discretion. For example, Westtown School, a private Quaker day and boarding school in a suburb of Philadelphia reviewed its one-strike no-nonsense zero-tolerance approach toward drug and alcohol offences where a child was immediately expelled towards a two-track system of discipline and treatment. The advantage of this system is that children who make mistakes have a second chance (Springen, 2001:1 – 2).

Although it is not part of an education policy, zero-tolerance, as a management approach to the problem of learner discipline, has already taking root in South African schools. In 1999 Barry Maytham, principal of Capricorn High School in Polokwane, Limpopo Province has produced a computer-based points system programme based on what he refers to as a “zero-tolerance” approach (Singh, 1999a: 5). What makes this system zero-tolerance is that the computer is used to record all offences caused by learners. According to him this programme can be used to record all positive and negative incidents, distinguish between minor misdemeanours and punishable offences. It also reflects all interviews and counselling sessions with learners while adjudication takes place on a point system of merits and demerits. This programme also accommodates recognition of achievements and accords wrongdoers the chance to redeem themselves.

Maytham pointed out further that the programme is flexible in its application, and individual schools can set their own norms. Furthermore, because recognition is given to positive behaviour and involvement, children are motivated to behave better and to participate more. He also said that experience has shown that both boys and girls have been motivated to earn such points while many have also done their best to ensure that they earned no negative points (Singh, 1999a: 5).
A recent United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (Unicef) study undertaken in South Africa has shown that violence against girls at school is less likely to occur where discipline is rigidly enforced (Kalideen, 2002:14) According to Heather Brookes, who led the study, “The schools that were the safest for girls were characterised by zero – tolerance of any form of violent behaviour, close monitoring of pupils, unified and consistent application of rules and emphasis on the core social values of respect” (Kalideen, 2002:14).

Notwithstanding the criticism the literature reviewed seems to suggest that a zero – tolerance approach can be successful provided that:

- it is applied with flexibility and discretion, taking into account individual circumstances;
- it gives principals the discretion to exercise fairness and common sense;
- it is tailored to individual schools and their local needs;
- it specifies clear consequences for misbehaviour, with consistency of application;
- it reviews the policy regularly;
- it is administered fairly and reasonably in accordance with the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a) and the Constitution (RSA, 1996b);
- it takes into account the context of schooling in South Africa;
- the school must have codes of conduct and policies in place; and
- it involves parents.

2.5 SUMMARY

According to Squelch (1993:239) “Discipline is important for maintaining order and harmony in the school and classroom”. She points out that disruptive and anti – social behaviour can have a harmful effect on teaching and learning and therefore schools have to have a school discipline policy which would include details of school rules and expected behaviour, as well as consequences of deviation from school rules.

In South Africa educators may discipline learners provided it is done in a lawful and reasonable manner and in accordance with all legal prescriptions regarding educational
discipline. Corporal punishment has been abolished and further debates on this issue serve no purpose, as it will not be reinstated in the foreseeable future. The abolishment of corporal punishment has nevertheless left a vacuum whereby educators need an alternative disciplinary approach.

In the meanwhile learner discipline continues to be a major problem in schools. There are many reasons for this phenomenon ranging from the abolition of corporal punishment and its effect on learner discipline, the influence of external environmental factors on learner behaviour and educators as poor role models. While educators have over the years developed strategies to deal with misbehaviour the manner in which schools management approach discipline is of vital importance.

It is within this context that a literature review on the efficacy of a zero – tolerance approach to learner discipline has been undertaken. Zero – tolerance can be seen as an alternative management approach to the problem of learner discipline in South African schools. When one examines the content of the “Making Schools Work” campaign (Mohale, 2002: 3) it is clear that schools’ management need an effective if not a radically alternative approach to learner discipline especially when it comes to issues such as school safety, substance abuse and gender intolerance.

In chapter three the research design and method used in this research study will be discussed in more detail.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter two the literature study formed the framework for the research on the efficacy of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline. In this chapter the researcher will describe the research design and method. According to Mouton and Marais (1992:7), research may be regarded as a collaborative human activity in which social reality is studied objectively with the aim of obtaining a valid understanding of it. This chapter focused on the research design and method applied in this study.

Berg (1995:24) views a research design as a plan and structure of investigation, which will enable the researcher to obtain answers to the research questions. Bogdan and Biklen (1992:58) on the other hand state that a research design “... refers to the researcher’s plan of how to proceed”.

The general aim of this research is to determine how a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline will assist in creating disciplined school environments. In order to attain the general aim of this research study, the following specific aims are to:

• explore and describe the experiences of school managers of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment;
• explore and describe the experiences of educators in the school and classroom environment;
• critically examine the concept and use of zero – tolerance policies;
• explain the nature and rationale for zero – tolerance discipline policies; and
• describe principles and guidelines (recommendations) for education managers to effectively implement a zero – tolerance school discipline policy.
In order to achieve this, a qualitative research design that is exploratory, descriptive and contextual is considered to be the most appropriate. The research method itself took place in two phases:

- Phase one: This phase consists of the pilot study, data collection, sampling, data analysis, a discussion on trustworthiness and ensuring the ethical correctness of the research.
- Phase two: This phase includes the explication of guidelines for education managers to effectively implement a zero-tolerance school discipline policy based on the research results, drawing of conclusions, making recommendations and pointing out possible limitations of the investigation.

A more detailed description of the entire research process undertaken by the research will now be undertaken.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

A qualitative research design was used in this study, employing an exploratory, descriptive and contextual focus. A brief explanation of each concept will follow.

3.2.1 Qualitative research

Qualitative research is an umbrella concept that covers several forms of inquiry in order to help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomena with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible (Merriam, 1998:5). According to Mouton and Marais (1994:205) the qualitative approach requires that the researcher interpret the real world from the perspective of the subjects of his investigation.

Merriam (cited in Cresswell, 1994:145) mentions six assumptions of the qualitative research design that the researcher takes into account:

- The primary concern with process, rather than outcomes or products. In this research study the researcher was concerned with the process whereby the perceptions of
school managers and educators on zero-tolerance discipline policies was constructed by their interaction within the school environment.

- The interest in meaning, namely, how people make sense of their lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. The researcher gave meaning to the experiences of school managers and educators with regard to learner's discipline in schools and in particular the classroom situation.

- The qualitative researcher being the primary instrument for data collection and analysis rather than through inventories, questionnaires or machines. The researcher was the primary instrument for data collection by being physically involved with the participants in the process of collecting data.

- The involvement of fieldwork whereby the researcher physically goes to the people, setting, site or institution in order to observe or record behaviour in its natural setting. The researcher was involved in fieldwork by physically going to the school managers and educators in schools to observe and record behaviour in its natural setting.

- Description in that the researcher is interested in process, meaning and understanding gained through words or pictures. The researcher has described in detail by giving meaning to what was said.

- The process of qualitative research being inductive in that the researcher builds abstractions, concepts, hypotheses and theories from details. The researcher has build towards theory as a result of the research findings.

Rudestam and Newton (1992:31) have pointed out appropriately that qualitative research is especially useful in the “...generation of categories for understanding human phenomena and the investigation of interpretation and meaning that people give to events they experience”.

3.2.2 Exploratory

According to Hitchcock and Hughes (1989:16) qualitative researchers are like explorers discovering and describing a new terrain. The aim with exploratory research is “the exploration of a relatively unknown research area” (Mouton & Marais, 1992:43). In the
South African context a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline can be viewed as a relatively unknown research area.

The qualitative exploratory approach will enable the researcher to share in the understanding and perceptions of others and to explore how people structure and give answers to their daily lives (Berg, 1995:7). This entails that the researcher will show willingness to examine new ideas and suggestions and not allow pre - conceived ideas and hypotheses to influence the research (Mouton & Marais, 1992: 43). In this study therefore, the researcher will be able to hear from education managers and educators how they experience learner discipline in schools and in particular in the classroom.

3.2.3 Descriptive

The descriptive paradigm is used to describe that which exists as accurately as possible without manipulating it (Mouton & Marais, 1994:44). According to Merriam (1998: 7 – 8) qualitative research aims at providing descriptions of phenomena that occur naturally, without the intervention of experiments or artificially designed treatment.

This study seeks to provide an accurate description of how school managers and educators experience learner discipline in public schools in Johannesburg, Gauteng, in order to develop and describe principles and guidelines for education managers to effectively implement a zero - tolerance school discipline policy. According to Mouton and Marais (1994:43) the researcher would be able to facilitate this process by following an open and flexible research strategy. The researcher will nevertheless be aware of the idea that to describe accurately would vary with context (Mouton, 1996:102).

3.2.4 Contextual

Contextual research studies phenomena because of their intrinsic and immediate contextual significance (Mouton, 1996:133). Contextual research also focuses on subjects within specific context in order to gain an understanding of the subjects within that context (Mouton & Marais, 1994:49). Lincoln and Guba (1985:189) also point out that
since individuals take their meaning as much from their context as from themselves, a phenomenon should be studied in its natural setting.

This study is contextual in nature because it is concerned with the unique context of the school and classroom situation of primary schools in the city of Johannesburg. This is to enable school managers and educators to produce an extensive description of their experiences in their specific context. In this way the researcher will also most likely unearth the true behaviour displayed by people when observed in their own environment and thereby own real life context (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:45).

Having discussed the research design it will now be necessary to give an exposition of the research method used.

3.3 RESEARCH METHOD
The research method took place in two phases.

Phase one

The aim of phase one was to obtain firsthand information from the participants themselves regarding their experiences. Phase one consisted of the pilot study, data collection, sampling, data analysis, a discussion on trustworthiness and ensuring the ethical correctness of the research.

3.3.1 Data collection
Bogdan and Biklen (1992:106) define data as “...the rough materials researches collect from the world they are studying”. In this study data was collected by means of semi-structured, open-ended, interviews, documents and field notes.

3.3.1.1 Semi-structured, open ended, focus group interviews
Interviews give an authentic insight into people’s experiences (Miles & Hubberman, 1994:91). In this research study semi-structured, open-ended focus group interviews
were conducted with schools managers and educators to find out their experiences of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment.

There are several advantages to this particular method of data collection:

- Interviews encourage people to describe their worlds in their own terms (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:3).
- Interviews also seek to describe and understand the meaning of central themes in the life – world of the interviewee. The main task is to understand the meaning of what is said. In this way the interviewer will be able to register and interpret what is said, as well as how it is said. During the course of the interview the interviewer must be observant of and be able to interpret vocalization, facial expressions and other bodily gestures (Kvale, 1996:175).
- The researcher can clarify any misinterpreted questions, obtain data of a personal nature and because it is a flexible technique make it possible to explore answers further (Kerlinger, 1986:440).
- Focus group interviews are fairly easy to manage as a small number of participants, usually between six to twelve, talk about issues that can be kept relatively confidential and analysis is more straightforward.
- The focus group session is conducted as an open conversation in which each participant may comment, ask questions of other participants, or respond to comments by others.
- Interaction among the respondents is encouraged to stimulate in – depth discussion of various topics.

In this research study school managers and educators were given the opportunity to describe their experiences of learner discipline without posing too many questions to them. The researcher only guided the participants towards certain themes He did not guide the participants towards certain opinions about the themes (Kvale, 1996:176). The researcher probed to ensure that the participants were participating in the interview (Thomas, 1990:117).
According to Burns and Grove (1995:13) the researcher will use intuition to gain a deeper understanding of the interviews. Streubert and Carpenter (1995:32) assert that intuition is an eidetic comprehension, insight, or understanding of what is meant in the description of the phenomenon under study. Through the different interviews with school managers and educators the researcher will develop an understanding of the commonalties of experiences of learner discipline in public schools and classroom environments. Streubert and Carpenter (1995:32) postulate that intuition requires the researcher to become totally immersed in the phenomenon under investigation.

The following will be the central questions in the interviews:

- What are your experiences of learner discipline in the classroom?
- What are your experiences of learner discipline on the playground?
- What are your perceptions on zero – tolerance discipline policies?

3.3.1.2 Documents

Documents are written records. They can provide first hand information (primary sources) based on direct experiences with the phenomena obtained through interviews or observations (McMillan, 2000:263). The interview data generated has to be documented and edited prior to it being analysed. There the spoken words of the interview have to be recorded and transcribed. This process is an essential aspect in the construction of reality in the research process (Flick, 1998:168).

While writing field notes the researcher has to listen carefully to hear the meanings, interpretations and understandings when educators describe their experiences (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:7). The researcher tries to register and interpret what is said as well as how it is said. In so doing the researcher will come to understand that educators’ experiences are not intrinsically more true than another. Also, the researcher will not be completely neutral, distant or emotionally uninvolved (Rubin & Rubin, 1995:12). Therefore the researcher will have to be sensitive to his own bias, emotions and interests as he continues to conduct and transcribe the interviews. At the end of the study the researcher will have to provide a balances report on the multiples experiences of educators.
Documents also provide additional “secondhand” information (secondary sources) based on information obtained as a result of a literature review relevant to the particular concern under study. They can be virtually anything written or printed such as letters, newspapers, diaries and books. Nonprint materials such as pictures, videotapes and films can also be used (De Vos, 1998: 390; McMillan, 2000:263). An intensive literature has been undertaken for the purposes of this research study.

### 3.3.1.3 Field notes

Flick (1998:170) describes field notes as “the classic medium for documentation in qualitative research...”. Since the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis in the research process in qualitative research, it usually involves fieldwork (Merriam, 1998:7).

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985: 183 – 185) field notes may be divided up into four categories, namely:

- Observation notes in which the researcher records what he saw and heard during the interview.
- Theoretical notes, which refer to deliberate, controlled efforts to extract meaning from observation notes.
- Methodological notes which include notes on operational practices such as the time schedule, the sequence and the physical setup.
- Personal notes such as the researchers feelings and experiences during the interview.

Field notes are not merely summaries of events but rather detailed written descriptions of what was observed as well as the researcher’s interpretations (McMillan, 2000: 260; Schurink, 1998b: 285). The researcher must also physically go to the people, setting, site and institution in order to observe behaviour in its natural setting (Cresswell, 1994:145). Furthermore, nothing is trivial and therefore whatever is seen, heard or experienced is recorded and considered.
3.3.2 Sampling

A purposive sampling method was used in this research. According to Cresswell (1994:14) "the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select informants that will best answer the research question". McBurney (1994:203) also asserts that a purposive sample is one that is selected non-randomly but for some particular reason. This method is based entirely on the judgement of the researcher regarding the characteristics of a representative sample (Bless & Higson, 1995:95).

In this study the participants were chosen from a specific target group whose opinions and ideas were of specific interest to this investigation. The method was purposive because the population in this study consisted of primary school educators (including school managers) in the city of Johannesburg.

The criteria for the selection of participants for inclusion in the study were as follows:

- School managers and educators must have taught for five years or longer.
- They must be presently teaching in a primary school in the city of Johannesburg.
- School managers include principals, deputy principals or heads of departments.

The criteria also ensured that the sampling method was convenient and purposive so that the likelihood that variability common in any social phenomenon was represented in the data (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994:45).

3.3.3 Pilot study

A pilot study helps investigators to redefine their data collection plans with respect to both the context of the data and the procedures to be followed (Yin, 1986:80). It also provides the opportunity to identify confusing and ambiguous language, and to obtain information about possible results.

A pilot study using group focus interviews was conducted with school managers and educators in the city of Johannesburg to determine if the wanted information would be gained by the questions posed and whether the method of questioning was suitable to attain in-depth information. The pilot study also helped the researcher to correct any
mistakes that may have occurred during interviews with regard to the interview itself, the environmental setting and the recording.

### 3.3.4 Data analysis

A data analysis was done according to Tesch’s method of open coding in order to identify themes and categories. Tesch’s method in Cresswell (1994:155) involves the following steps:

- Get a sense of the whole by reading through all of the transcriptions carefully. Jot down some ideas as they come to mind.
- Pick the most interesting, shortest document and go through it, asking yourself what it entails. Do not think about the substance of the information but rather its underlying meaning. Thoughts should be written down in the margin.
- Having completed several documents make a list of all the topics. Put similar topics together and arrange them into major topics, unique topics and left – overs.
- Take the list back to the data, abbreviate topics as codes and write the codes next to the appropriate segment of the text. In this way the researcher will realise new categories and codes.
- The most descriptive wording for topics can be turned into categories while related topics can be grouped together to reduce the total list of categories. Lines may be drawn between categories to show relationships.
- A final decision on the abbreviation for each category must be made while the codes must be alphabetized.
- Data material belonging to each category should be assembled and put in one place for preliminary analysis.
- Existing data should be recorded.

The researcher as well as an independent coder analysed the data and identified the main themes and categories (Krefting, 1991: 216 – 217). In this study the independent coder was an expert in the field of qualitative research. A protocol of the method as well as raw data in the form of tapes as well as transcriptions was given to her for analysis who then coded and categorized the data on her own. A discussion was held to reach consensus.
and to verify whether the categories and themes identified by the independent encoder correlated with the categories and themes identified with the researcher. Themes and categories that the independent coder did not identify were omitted from the results.

In this research study the data that was analysed comprised of verbatim transcriptions of semi-structured, open-ended, focus group interviews with school managers and educators about their experiences of learner discipline in the school environment and classroom situation. Field notes were also analysed.

3.3.5 Trustworthiness of the study

Guba’s trustworthiness model was used to establish the validity and reliability of the qualitative research (cited by Krefting, 1991:214–215). The four criteria for trustworthiness are:

• truth value determined by using the qualitative approach of credibility
• applicability determined by using the qualitative approach of transferability
• consistency determined by using the qualitative approach of dependability
• neutrality determined by the qualitative approach of confirmability


3.3.5.1 Truth value

Truth value establishes how confident the researcher is with the truth of the findings based on the research design, informants and context (Krefting, 1991:215). The truth-value of this study will be determined by using the qualitative approach of credibility. According to Krefting (1991:215) a qualitative study is credible when it presents such accurate descriptions or interpretation of human experiences that people who share that experience or perception would immediately recognise the descriptions.

In this research study truth value was enhanced by employing the techniques of triangulation and structural coherence.
• **Triangulation**

Triangulation implies “the use of multiple methods of data collection” (Mouton & Marais, 1994:91). In this research study triangulation is achieved through various techniques of data collection, namely semi – structured, open ended group focus interviews, documents and field notes. In this way information was gathered through school managers and educators describing their experiences of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment.

Member checking was done by “clarifying tentative findings with the participants” (Rudestam & Newton, 1992:39). Guba and Lincoln (1985:314) suggest that this be done regularly to ensure triangulation. The themes extracted through data analysis were confirmed with the participants to ascertain that it reflects their intent. There was also an independent coder to evaluate the data collected. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985:305 – 306) the validity of the information will be revealed by the similarity in information collected by each method.

• **Structural coherence**

This refers to the assurance that there are no unexplained inconsistencies between the data and their interpretations (Krefting, 1991:220). In this research study structural coherence will be enhanced by consistently focusing on educator’s experience of learner discipline in the school and classroom situation.

### 3.3.5.2 Applicability

Applicability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied or transferred to other similar contexts and settings or with other groups (Krefting, 1991:216; Poggenpoel, 1998: 349). Research meets the transferability criterion “when the findings fit into contexts outside the study situation that are determined by the degree of similarity or goodness of fit between the two contexts” (Krefting, 1991:216).

As qualitative research is contextual and because each situation is unique, the findings may be transferred but not generalized. According to Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216) the
responsibility for applicability or transferability lies with the person who wants to transfer the results. Therefore, the researcher has to present sufficient descriptive data to allow comparison.

3.3.5.3 Consistency
Consistency refers to the degree to which the findings of the research will remain consistent should the research be replicated with a similar sample and in a similar context (Krefting, 1991:216). Guba (in Krefting, 1991:216) views consistency within qualitative research as dependability, which implies variables that can be ascribed to identified sources.

According to Merriam (1988:172) the researcher will thus need to present an audit trail, describing in detail how data was collected, decisions made and themes derived. Rudestam and Newton (1992: 38 – 39) also points out in this regard that a detailed, dense description of the research is necessary to achieve dependability.

In this study a dependability audit was compiled as follows:
• A detailed description was given of the way data was collected and of how it was analysed.
• Written permission was obtained from the principals of the schools where the research study was conducted.
• Consent was obtained from each participant of the research to be interviewed.
• The researcher explained to each participant what was expected of him/her and the central request was presented to each subject in exactly the same words.
• An expert with extensive experience in the field of qualitative research was appointed as an independent coder.
• After the interviews had been transcribed and coded by the researcher, a protocol of the data analysis was presented to the independent coder, who encoded and categorized the data on her own.
• Thereafter, a meeting was arranged between the researcher and independent coder to discuss the results and to obtain the greatest possible degree of consensus.
3.3.5.4 Neutrality

Neutrality refers to the "degree to which the findings are a function solely of the informants and conditions of the research and not of other biases, motivation and perspectives" (Poggenpoel, 1998:350). According to Krefting (1991:217), objectivity is the criterion of neutrality that is achieved through rigor of methodology through which reliability and validity are established. Also in qualitative research the neutrality of the data is emphasized rather than the neutrality of the researcher. Furthermore, the criterion of neutrality is considered to be achieved when truth-value and applicability are established.

3.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Strydom (1998: 24) ethics is a widely accepted set of moral principles which offers rules and behavioural expectations about the most correct conduct towards participants by researchers. The following ethical considerations were taken into account during the course of the research study:

3.4.1 Competency of the researcher

According to Strydom (1998:31) an ethical obligation rests with researchers to ensure that they are competent and skilled to undertake the investigation they have in mind. The researcher has completed a BA Degree, BA Honours Degree, Higher Diploma in Education, a Further Diploma in Education as well as the theoretical examination for a M.Ed (Educational Management) degree. The researcher has been teaching for the past thirteen years and currently holds a head of department post at the Johannesburg Girls' Preparatory School. Extensive literature on qualitative research as well as topics pertaining to the study has been researched. The researcher has also undertaken not to make value judgements.
3.4.2 Researcher - respondent relationship

3.4.2.1 Confidentiality
According to Strydom (1998:28) confidentiality indicates the handling of the information in a confidential manner. The names of all school managers and educators who participated in this research study have been withheld.

3.4.2.2 Fidelity
The researcher has an obligation to remain faithful to his commitments (De Beer, 2001:14). This includes keeping promises and maintaining confidentiality. The researcher kept appointments as arranged and met all the participants timeously. The researcher also encouraged the participants to take part in the study by informing them of his credentials and proposed aim of the research.

3.4.2.3 Informed consent
Informed consent implies that adequate information on the goals of the research study and the procedures, which will be followed with all the possible advantages, and disadvantages will be rendered to the participants (Strydom, 1998: 24). The researcher undertook this.

3.4.2.4 Participation
According to Strydom (1998:26) participants must be legally and psychologically competent to give consent and they must be aware that they would be at liberty to withdraw from the investigation at any time. In this research study participation was on a voluntary basis including the right to withdraw from the research study at any time.

3.4.2.5 Permission
Written permission was obtained from the principals of public primary schools in the city of Johannesburg where the research study was conducted as well as from the participants themselves.
3.4.2.6 Privacy
According to Strydom (1998:27) privacy is that which normally is not intended for others to observe or analyse. The researcher has enforced the necessary precautionary measures whereby all participants reserved the right to decide for themselves to what extent their attitudes, beliefs and behaviour would be revealed (Strydom, 1998:28).

3.4.2.7 Veracity
According to Talbot (cited in De Beer, 2001:13) the researcher has an obligation to tell the truth and not to lie or deceive others. In this research study all the participants were informed about the methods that were going to be used, namely, observation, field notes and tape recording.

3.5 LITERATURE CONTROL

A literature control will be done to identify similarities and differences, which occur in the identified themes from the findings and those themes that are found in the literature. As such some themes may be found in the literature that will not be found in the research. Similarly, some themes that occur in the research may not be found in the literature (Cresswell, 1994:20 – 24).

After having completed phase one which was undertaken to obtain firsthand information from the participants themselves regarding their experiences, the researcher went on to phase two of the research study.

Phase Two

Phase two includes the explication of guidelines for education managers to effectively implement a zero - tolerance school discipline policy based on the research results, drawing of conclusions, making recommendations and pointing out possible limitations of the investigation. To accomplish this phase of the research study the data collected has
to be analysed in order to identify themes and categories. An analysis of the fieldwork undertaken in this research study will be dealt with in chapter four.

3.6 SUMMARY

This chapter provided a more detailed description of the entire research process including the research design and research method. The qualitative approach that is exploratory, descriptive and contextual to the research study was discussed. Methods of data collection included semi-structured, open-ended focus group interviews, documents and field notes. The method of data analysis, including the measures to be implemented in ensuring trustworthiness of the research was also expounded.

In chapter four the results gained from the analyses of the interviews with school managers and educators on their experiences of learner discipline in the school and classroom situation will be presented.
CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter three the researcher described the research design and method applied in this study. In this chapter the results of the data analysis will be discussed. The results are divided into themes and categories. While, for the purpose of discussion, categories are reported separately, there is in fact a dynamic interplay between them as will become evident. Although group focus interviews were conducted separately with school managers and educators to explore and describe their experiences of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment, common themes did emerge.

A brief outline of the operationalisation of the fieldwork will now be undertaken.

4.2 OPERATIONALISATION OF THE FIELDWORK

The empirical research process commenced with a formal written request to principals of various primary schools of the Gauteng Department of Education in the city of Johannesburg to conduct research at their schools. After permission was granted, formal appointments were then arranged with the schools for the interviews to be conducted on the school premises. Once the sample was purposefully selected, group – focus interviews were conducted. The researcher audiotaped the interviews and made field notes of his observations.

The first set of audiotaped interviews formed part of a pilot study for the research, and was transcribed by the researcher. The transcriptions were coded according to a set protocol in order to identify the underlying themes and categories. After having satisfied himself of the feasibility and correctness of the procedure, the researcher conducted additional interviews. The same procedure that was followed with the first interview was
repeated in each interview. Once the themes and categories became saturated, the interviewing of subjects was terminated. This point was reached after the sixth interview. Since many of the themes and categories identified in the pilot study correlated with those in subsequent interviews, it was decided to include the pilot study in the formal research.

Finally, the researcher presented the interview transcriptions and the protocol of the coding procedure, which was followed, to an independent coder who then coded the transcriptions on her own. A meeting followed between the researcher and the independent coder. The themes and categories were discussed and consensus was reached regarding the themes and categories.

A brief summary of the themes and categories identified through data analysis will now be undertaken.

4.3 THEMES AND CATEGORIES

The following themes were identified through data analysis.

- Disregard for authority
- Disruptive behaviour
- Educator empathy
- Educator inconsistency
- Parent apathy
- Social and environmental factors
- Teaching strategies

Each theme will be discussed and examples from the text of interviews will be given. The quotations are given verbatim without making any changes. If it is necessary to clarify any concept, the clarification will be given in brackets.
Literature will also be reviewed after each theme has been described. The literature control will be used to explain, support and extend the theory generated in this research. This will provide the researcher with a basic understanding of the research problem and the evidence that the study conducted was appropriately based on the current knowledge of the problem (Burns & Grove, 1995:108). The literature control will thus reflect the existing knowledge in the problem of learner discipline in schools. This will facilitate the researcher’s attempt to describe the principles and guidelines for education managers to effectively implement a zero – tolerance disciplinary policy. In certain of the categories, however, there will be no literature to support the empirical findings.

Table 4.1 below gives a summary of the themes and categories that were identified through data analysis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Categories</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disregard for authority</td>
<td>Abolishment of corporal punishment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of order and control</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Lack of respect</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disruptive behaviour</td>
<td>Aggressive behavioral patterns</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor academic performance</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Poor role models</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Punctuality</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Unacceptable learner behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator empathy</td>
<td>Concern for learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
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<td>Interest in learners</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Understanding learner behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educator inconsistency</td>
<td>Implementing disciplinary measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent apathy</td>
<td>Lack of a daily routine</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lack of parental involvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social and environmental factors</td>
<td>Home environment</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Media</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Themes and categories
A more detailed analysis of the themes and categories as well as a literature control will now be undertaken.

4.3.1 **Theme One: Disregard for authority**
Participants mentioned that the learners often disregarded the authority of educators. Three categories were distinguished, namely, abolishment of corporal punishment, lack of respect and lack of order and control.

4.3.1.1 **Abolishment of corporal punishment**
Participants felt that the abolishment of corporal punishment has to a large extent diminished the authority of educators in the eyes of learners. This feeling was captured when one educator reflected:

"I can tell you, they say no corporal punishment, talk to the children like you do with your own kids. But these kids, they come to your office – let's talk, let's counsel, let's not raise our voices – they walk out and they laugh".

In interviews carried out by reporter Magazi (2002:6) with principals in areas such as Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and Nyanga, the feeling was that the abolition of corporal punishment has disrupted the whole school system and has in fact caused deterioration in discipline in most schools. Other reports seem to indicate that the impression among learners is that with the banning of corporal punishment they can do whatever they like as the school's hands are tied (Anon, 2002:13).

It was also believed that no suitable alternative to corporal punishment has been made available to educators as a method of disciplining learners. One educator said:

"No corporal punishment! But do they tell you what you can do instead of corporal punishment that's going to help the child. I'm not saying that corporal punishment must come back or whatever. What I'm saying is give us the alternative. If corporal punishment is abolished then what is the alternative? So that we know we use the
According to Curwin and Mendler (1980:110) any form of punishment that is not coupled with a message of caring will not effect lasting behavioural changes but will rather suppress temporarily the punished action. In South African schools many educators find it difficult to enforce discipline, especially after the abolition of corporal punishment since discipline is equated with corporal punishment (Ngcai, 1997:17).

According to Morrell (2001:292) discipline has become a major problem, as effective alternatives were not immediately introduced with the abolition of corporal punishment in 1996. Guidelines on alternatives to corporal punishment as well as code of conduct guidelines were subsequently introduced in 2000, four years after the abolition of corporal punishment (Department of Education,2000).

4.3.1.2 Lack of respect

This refers to the lack of respect learners have for authority figures – educators and parents. Learners usually have to obey legitimate instructions of authority figures or be reprimanded from time to time. Participants stated that this was often not the case. One participant commented:

"I give you the grandmother who came yesterday... She has this foster child. She wants time to be respected. If you say four o'clock they'll come home four o'clock. He doesn't want to accept this discipline so he comes home when he wants to".

Grey (1997:4) found that in many cases the parents have substantially less education than their children do and this has given rise to a situation where the parent is intimidated by the child and feels incapable of disciplining him or her. In these cases the child brings an undisciplined attitude to school and is not being accustomed to bowing to the dictates of authority.
Another participant explained:

"I mean you reprimand a child. He listens to you may be for thirty minutes or for an hour at the most and after that it's back to normal. You can reprimand the entire class – you shout at them, you warn them that you're going to punish them, they won't be going on an excursion, they won't be participating in extra – curricular activities ... They'll listen to you and after a while it's back to normal like nothing happened".

Some participants find that learners are constantly fidgeting in class. The learners are always busy with something or another, moving about, touching one another, pinching one another, playing games and not listening to the educator. One of the participants confirmed this as follows:

"I find that today's modern child can't sit still. ...When they have to work they're rowdy or they're restless – pinching and touching each other...they're always jumping".

According to another participant:

"...people leave their desk without permission...there's chaos in the class".

One of the participants explained:

"Whilst you are teaching the child is getting up to some kind of mischief – again not attentive. Maybe doing some kind of homework or maybe playing a game ...eh ...just being a general nuisance in the classroom while the lesson is on".

Bear (1998) also found that the most frequent classroom discipline problems in our schools are teasing, talking without permission, getting out of one's seat, disrespect towards educators and bullying.
The participants mentioned that the way learners greet educators is different to the way they were brought up. Also learners greeted educators in a disrespectful way. One of the participants explained:

"She’ll barge into my class without knocking and come walk behind me and she’ll knock me behind – so howzit (how are you) there madam”.

Furthermore, learners would not even bother to greet or acknowledge educators. According to one participant:

"They don’t respect educators any more. I mean a simple thing like greeting your teacher... We teach kids in grade one – they go to the senior primary phase and I promise you that they would look at you and walk past and that child would never, never greet you and acknowledge that was my grade one teacher”.

4.3.1.3 Lack of order and control

Participants mentioned that there was a lack of order and control in the classroom. They used isolation, extra homework and detention to punish learners in order to maintain order and control in the classroom. One participant explained:

"...if a child is continuously misbehaving I isolate the child ... whatever they suppose to have done in class they will do it as homework. And they don’t get the worksheet. They have to photocopy the worksheet as a form of punishment. Because we are not allowed to send them out, we are not allowed to scream at them, so, that’s their problem – extra homework”.

Another participant explained:

"Well, I put them at a desk by themselves in front of me where they can’t interfere with anyone else ... sometimes I send them to the doorway so that they are just outside the classroom to separate them from the other girls who’s already sitting on the floor".
One participant said:

"They know now if they come in and they noisy I'm waiting with my detention book".

According to Curwin and Mendler (1980: 109 – 110) disciplinary measures that is punitive has the effect of stopping a child's misbehaviour for a short interval of time, but does not effect lasting behavioural change. It only suppresses temporarily the punished action. In South Africa it was found that equating discipline with punishment has also resulted in many educators being reluctant to adopt alternative methods of discipline. For example, punishment like detention require the educator to be present after school hours to supervise the learners and many educators see this as a type of punishment that is ineffectual (Grey, 1997:4).

4.3.2 Theme Two: Disruptive behaviour

Participants mentioned that learners often displayed disruptive behaviour. Five categories were distinguished, namely, aggressive behavioral patterns, poor academic performance, poor learner behaviour, poor role models and punctuality.

4.3.2.1 Aggressive behavioural patterns

Participants mentioned that some learners tend to be aggressive towards others, usually on the playground. They also felt that aggressive behaviour is often learnt in the home environment. According to one participant:

"...in the playground – pushing, hurting each other, name calling – those are the kind of discipline problems that we are finding on the playground".
Another participant added:

"... you have those children who become aggressive themselves. That's a discipline issue. They'll feel it's fine to hit up somebody if they've taken something and that's picking up from what they're seeing at home".

Curwin and Mendler (1998:5) have also pointed out that schools are a mirror image of what transpires in society and this includes out of school causes of disciplinary problems such as violence in society, the effects of the media such as television and the lack of a secure family environment.

Participants also mentioned that learners do not display any remorse when caught doing something wrong. One participant said:

"You know, another thing is that they don't have any emotions or what. They can hurt another child and think nothing about it, steal another child's things and think nothing about it".

Another participant echoed a similar sentiment:

"I'll give you a learner that urinates right next to you and then you stand there and ask where are you suppose to do this and he says do what - I didn't do anything".

4.3.2.2 Poor academic performance

Participants expressed the view that learners who displayed disruptive behaviour were also academically weak. One of the participants confirmed this by saying:

"But generally you'll find that the very same kids who have academic weakness also have behavioural problems".
Another participant pointed out that those learners who perform poor academically also have the tendency to be inattentive and restless in the classroom.

"Disruption stems from when the kid feels he is not part of your lesson ... in the form of not paying attention in the classroom – mind going elsewhere from the lesson".

She continued:

"...she always keep talking, she can't listen for very long periods".

4.3.2.3 Poor learner behaviour

Poor learner behaviour is often the result of learners looking for attention, the reason being that they do not get attention at home or from their peers at school. Some of the reasons for this are that many learners live with their relatives, both their parents work and parents often fight. One participant explained:

"Disciplinary problems come from looking for attention. That will be things like calling out, wanting the teacher to spend time with the child ... They want the attention they're not getting. Some of them are not getting enough attention at home".

Another participant added:

"A lot of our children are living with their grandparents or their auntie's or somebody else. They don't have much attention from mummy and daddy. Parents work full days and they want that love and attention. If they can't get it in a positive way they'll do it in a negative way".
One participant explained:

"Now my little girl is loud because she's trying to get that attention from me because she doesn't get it at home because they're always fighting. So she's becoming loud in the class and she's upsetting the group".

In a study undertaken by van Wyk (2001:198) it was found that parents can contribute to the development of problem behaviour by failing to provide prerequisite social skills and support and by modelling inappropriate behaviour.

Some participants mentioned that learners do tend to steal whilst on the school premises. This could be because they don't have certain items or because of peer pressure. There is also the perception that home circumstances and the media plays some role in this regard. One of the participants confirmed this by stating:

"In the senior primary we had this spate of stealing that actually boiled down to children trying to fit into their peer group. Not having what they need and not being able to get the pocket money to get whatever the other children were getting so they were resorting to stealing. That's coming directly from the home ...umm...exposure to the media".

Rose (1995), Bear (1998) and Bennett (1992:3) all found that today's public schools must deal with a younger generation swayed by influences such as family deterioration, decline in respect for authority, the rejection of moral standards and selfish materialism.

Participants also mentioned that earners do display violent behaviour. Some of them belong to gangs while others are influenced by the media or home circumstances. One participant related an incident to illustrate this:

"We had twins here last year...Today they are members of a gang who hire other children to beat up people. About a month ago, before we closed, on a Friday, they hired two boys to wait for somebody from our school and they stabbed him".
Another participant added:

"We had a big disciplinary problem amongst the boys. They were sharpening rulers to use as knives and that had come directly off a show they had seen on TV".

One participant commented:

"...you have those children who become aggressive themselves. That's a discipline issue. They'll feel it's fine to hit up somebody if they've taken something and that's picking up from what they're seeing at home".

Curwin and Mendler (1998:5) found that the behaviour of learners out of school has an influence on the learners' behaviour in schools. Disciplinary problems such as violence in society, the effects of the media such as television and the lack of a secure family environment does impact negatively on learners' behaviour in schools.

4.3.2.4 Poor role models

Participants have the perception that learners have poor role models, which is a contributing factor to learner discipline and that causes disruptive behaviour in the school. The role models of learner are typically people in the area in which they live or personalities on television programs who engage in actions such as drinking, dancing, playing music, driving flashy cars and who wear flashy clothes. One participant explained:

"Also role models. There's a lot of music, dancing and "dopping" (drinking) and that ... so who are their heroes — that thug who has the money to buy that new convertible BM. Then, he wears clothes that are flashed on TV — music videos. So whom do they aspire to be like? The rap stars, the guy who's got the flashy car and who hasn't worked a decent day but can entertain three, four nice squeeza's (ladies) from the area ... They caught up in that syndrome. Their heroes are people who have an easy life gained out of illegal means".
Another participant added:

"They even imitate their walk, their style, their mannerisms..."

One participant had this to say about the influence of the media:

"As far as the media is concerned, I know personally, a lot of these kids, you talk to them about television programs – what they view and so forth. They are drastically influenced by it. I'm looking at it mostly from the musical side, from the entertainment side, from the role model side – when you take to them you can see that there's a tremendous influence as far as the media is concerned".

According to Curwin and Mendler (1998:5) schools are a mirror image of what transpires in society and this includes the effects of the media such as television and the lack of a secure family environment.

4.3.2.5 Punctuality

Participants mentioned that late coming, especially in the morning, has a disruptive effect. Two major reasons for late coming are learners who get up late and the problem of learners living out of the area and having to travel long distances to get to school. One participant explained:

"The other kind of disruption is when the children come in to lessons late especially because of punctuality problems first thing in the morning".

Another participant commented:

"Getting up late, living out of the area, transport hassles – all kinds of problems".

Mabeda and Prinsloo (2000:34) have also pointed out that late coming is one of the reasons contributing to the phenomenon of ill – discipline among learners in schools.
4.3.3 Theme Three: Educator empathy

It became clear from the participants’ remarks that, notwithstanding the problem of learner discipline, they did display empathy in the form of concern and a genuine interest and understanding of learners’ unique circumstances. Four categories were distinguished, namely, concern for learners, flexibility, interest in learners and understanding learner behaviour.

4.3.3.1 Concern for learners

Participants displayed concern when learners were problematic or when they were too quiet and reserved in the classroom situation. One participant explained:

"...and if there is a child that is giving problems time after time I will call the child ... I’ll ask her if there is a problem ... I’ll let her do some small task. She must feel that suddenly this teacher is now ... he wants me to improve ...I found 95% as soon as she found out that I’m interested in her she found that well that’s the problem that then she changed her attitude always”.

One participant said:

... they don’t show what’s bothering them and hence they become very quiet and reserved in the classroom and then you begin to wonder what is going on. Meanwhile it is a manifestation of what is going on at home. Some children may internalise the problem. Other children will, sort of, voice the problem by doing wrong and invariably it is by doing the wrong thing to bring attention to themselves”.

Jackson (1994:68 – 69) has pointed out that educators should adopt a problem-solving model that recognises the fact that when a learner is continually disruptive, there must be some reason for this. It may be a learning or emotional problem which requires skilled intervention in the form of therapy.
4.3.3.2 Flexibility
Several participants felt that while there must be rules to control learners' behaviour, children need to know that they can make mistakes and that guidance and advice is readily available. Learners must want to come to school and must enjoy being in school. According to one participant:

... a flexible policy I think it works - not a policy that doesn't give you a chance. You know they are learners - they are children. Sometimes they still make mistakes you know. You have to guide them”.

Another participant explained:

“...I feel these are kids and they're going to come up with some behavioural problems or some kind of a problem that comes from the home...they need guidance, they need rules - it has to be there ... we don't have to go overboard and become like one of those army schools or something like that. You know this is a place where kids need to come and learn. So don't create that kind of a feeling where this place is a regiment type in the classroom”.

4.3.3.3 Interest in learners
Participants displayed a genuine interest in the welfare of the learner. One participant elaborated:

“So I say to the parents, both the mother and the father ... she's a beautiful child. All the children in my class are so wonderful. They're such good creations and I say appreciate your child. Try to discipline your child with love”.

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Another participant pointed out:

"You need to look if there are any other home problems, emotional problems – we need to maybe speak to other teachers that have taught the child because they might just look at their profiles – you know there might just be something you don’t know".

Jackson (1994:68 – 69) has also pointed out that by means of a team approach, the educator, in cooperation with the parents the school principal, other colleagues on the staff, the counselor and, perhaps, the school psychologist, can help the learner to accept his/her own problem and resolve it to his/her own benefit and that of the group as a whole (Jackson, 1994:68 – 69).

4.3.3.4 Understanding learner behaviour
Participants displayed a remarkable understanding of the possible reasons for learner disciplinary problems or disruptive behaviour. These include reasons as to why they react in certain ways or the failure to respond appropriately to people and situations. One participant explained:

"... the child who cries easily... who withdraws, who doesn’t want to get involved, who struggles to make friends and that’s emotional. Later it becomes a discipline issue. Their attitudes harden. Their behaviour shapes into bad behaviour but at this stage it’s the emotional things as they struggle to find their place in the world. Now they want love, they want care, they want security. When they’re not getting that they manifest it emotionally, withdrawing altogether and if those needs are not seen to now in two or three years time discipline problems will then emerge”.

Participants also pointed out that external environmental conditions and home circumstances plays a major role in the behaviour and attitudes of learners. One participant explained:
"Invariably there is some kind of link between what goes on at home and what goes on at school. Generally, when there is a family problem at home, it will manifest itself in the classroom ... because you are able to understand the situation you are able to work around the situation”.

According to another participant:

"The environment is ultimately going to have some kind of effect on the child...There’s one child who comes to my class late. Her mother leaves at 6 o’clock. When her mother locks up and goes away, she cannot come to school early because of the environment so she would sometimes go to the granny. Now her granny would give her chores to do and she cannot leave until those chores are done with the result that she’s now coming late to school”.

Participants felt that learners also respond positively to those educators who whom they feel tries to understand them.

"I think that from my experience that if the children can see that I understand them it plays an important role ... and also they can relate to me as an educator”.

4.3.4 Theme Four: Educator inconsistency

Participants mentioned that educator inconsistency was a contributing factor to the problem of learner discipline. One category was distinguished, namely, implementing disciplinary measures.

4.3.4.1 Implementing disciplinary measures

Educators are often inconsistent when meting punishment out to learners. According to one participant:
"I must say that the school must introduce a system where every educator is consistent. It might help to a certain extent. I mean inconsistency does create a problem".

At an individual level educators may discipline one learner and not another for the same infringement while collectively educators differed in their perception of discipline. This inconsistency has the tendency to confuse learners and contribute further to the problem of learner discipline. Another participant explains:

"I think you have to have a good system and you have to be consistent with that system. But now you’ve got to...you’ve got to stick to that and if you do it for one child and you don’t do it for the other the kids are going to see that you are not consistent in your rules".

One participant added:

"And also I find that discipline works best if it’s a whole school thing coming right from the top from the principal. Although each teacher will have their own discipline things in their class certain things need to be a whole school decision so that if one teacher says, for example, shouts or complains or reprimands children for walking into the hall talking and another teacher lets them just walk in, you know, we need to be on the same wavelength in some areas".

It was felt that educators should work as a team and apply disciplinary measures consistently so that the learners will understand and stick to them. It was also felt that while educators should have flexibility when applying disciplinary measures it has to be monitored to ensure a fair amount of consistency.

"Discipline is basically a team thing. I mean if teacher X is laxed, teacher Y is disciplined about something and the other teacher ... That creates confusion in the child. That's why I feel there are certain things that have to come via rules laid down. Everybody knows the
sanctions, the problems or the punishments and everybody has to apply it stringently according to the rules – no matter what type of individual you are”.

In a study undertaken by Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:40) it was found that since educators are inculcators of self – discipline in the learners under their charge they should be consistent role models of socially acceptable discipline. They also found that educators who behave in uncaring ways impact negatively on managing discipline in schools.

4.3.5 Theme Five: Parent apathy
Participants mentioned that parent apathy contributed to the problem of learner discipline. Two categories were distinguished, namely, lack of parental involvement and lack of daily routine.

4.3.5.1 Lack of parental involvement
Participants mentioned that many learners see very little of their parents – either they did not live with their parents or both parents worked. One participant explained:

“...we find that many of the children are not with their parents. They’re living with grandparents. Or secondly, if they’re with their parents, their parents work and they only get home half past seven – eight o’clock”.

Participants felt that the absence of an authority figure at home has contributed to the problem of learner discipline. According to one participant:

“So you find that maybe because of their home backgrounds, their parents have to work, there’s no authority figure at home to take care of the kids – kids are just left to run around until the parents come home at night”.

The absence of parents is especially detrimental with regards to learners with learning problems, as there is literally no one to assist them. One participant said:
"Now we have children who have lots of learning problems and the parents can't recognize this. Some parents work – two parents work. The granny takes care of the kids and they don't even see the kids, some parents. The grandmothers are illiterate some of them, not all of them, and they don't even understand what the children are learning so it's very difficult for us to have one on one with the parent".

According to Curwin and Mendler (1980: 233 – 234) parents of troublesome learners are reluctant to get involved in the affairs of the school as they feel uncomfortable with the risk of exposing their own difficulties to the school personnel. Also, the learners of these parents often misbehave at home in the same way they do at school and these parents do not want reminders of how inadequate they have been in parenting.

Several participants felt that many parents were indifferent to the educational welfare and discipline of their children. One participant explained:

"There's no parental involvement from some parents. When you keep in a child for detention and write a note home to say your child has misbehaved – so what, keep him in. You find that because parents are not involved with their children's discipline ... if a child has no fear, he'll never be disciplined".

In South Africa, media reports have also indicated that the lack of parental support and lack of cooperation in maintaining discipline of learners can be linked to disciplinary problems such as lethargy, absenteeism and truancy. Also, parents' failure to cooperate and collaborate positively with schools was a major contributing factor for the high failure rate, late registration, poor discipline, poor safety in the classrooms and schoolyards and learner' morale (Anon, 1997b:3 ; Bisetty, 2001:3 ; Meacoamere, 2000:1).

It was also felt that parents do not respond positively when requested to meet the educators or attending important parents meetings. Another participant explained:
"... you notice it from your parental meetings. The children you want to see – those parents you want to see invariably are the one’s who don’t pitch up. So that definitely tells you how much of interest are they showing in the kid’s performance".

Piek (1992:43) has also pointed out that the progress of the learners educative development in the school context depends to a large extent on the effective contact with and cooperation between the parents and the school personnel.

Several participants felt that some homes do not even discipline learners and schools therefore have an enormous task in trying to instill discipline into these learners. One of the participants confirmed this by saying:

“I promise, discipline comes from home so if they’re coming from home and they not being disciplined at home how are we suppose to discipline them”.

Van Wyk (2001:198) has also pointed out in this regard that parental involvement in many schools in areas such as learner discipline has been lacking. According to Blanford (1998:32) parents can have a powerful effect on children’s behaviour ensuring that learners arrive at school on time and behave appropriately.

There also seemed to be inconsistency between the home and school as to what constitutes unacceptable behaviour and what does not. One participant explained:

“Often with the discipline that we are trying to do in school – in the school environment is different to what the parents are doing at home – so there’s a conflict. The children are confused and they sometimes can’t relate to both forms of discipline”.

Furthermore, disciplinary measures taken by parents at home are often inconsistent with the disciplinary measures taken by educators at school. For example, parents often used corporal punishment as a means to discipline learners while schools are prohibited from doing so. One participant explained:
"... in the issue of corporal punishment, you'll say to the parents, the child is misbehaving or your child does not follow instructions, and they will say, well at home we smack them or we give them a hiding, and then obviously we don’t do that, we not allowed to ...”

According to Rosen (1997:31) parents should be the school manager’s best friends when it comes to learner discipline. Also, parental involvement will encourage their children to do well in school and to comply with school rules.

4.3.5.2 Lack of a daily routine
Participants mentioned that learner’s lack of a daily routine such as a set routine in eating, bedtime, watching television, doing homework and getting up in the morning could lead to inconsistent behaviour and eventually disciplinary problems. One participant explained:

"You see there’s no routine. There’s no bedtime, there’s no getting up in the morning, there’s no eating time, there’s no TV time – cut off time for television. They don’t have a routine – a set routine”.

It was felt that because there is no routine in the home environment learners had no structure or direction in their lives and this made it difficult for educators to establish a routine in school. One participant confirmed this by saying:

I say do homework, I say pack bag, put your bag away and I say ...eh ... get your uniform ready for the next day – hang up your uniform. Parents say ... eh ... I don’t have time to come home quickly or I can’t do this – your teacher is impossible because she now wants something to be done and I got no time for that".
4.3.6 Theme Six: Social and environmental factors
Participants mentioned that social and environmental factors contributed towards the problems of learner discipline in schools. Two categories were distinguished, namely, home environment and the media.

4.3.6.1 Home environment
The perception among participants is that the home environment of learners with disciplinary problems is in most cases characterised by physical abuse, marital conflict and domestic violence. One participant confirmed this by saying:

"...yes, again generally where we have domestic upheaval we have severe problems ...
I've got one kid in my class who has parents who are separated quite recently – divorced. This girl has the usual problems – she's coming to school late ...so any breakup in their home or home circumstances – it affects the kids".

Another participant added:

We've had quite a few cases of physical abuse towards the children. We've also picked up with the domestic violence between mom and dad. The attitudes that the children have, umm ... dad hits the mom or mom doesn't do this, that or the next thing – those attitudes and values are being shaped by what they're experiencing in their homes".

This is evident in their behaviour that is disruptive or even depicted in their writing and drawing. One participant explained:

"You know we have our creative writing. You can pick up how disturbed children are by things that are happening in their home through their writing and their drawings. The scenes they are depicting from home indicate that a lot of our children are under great stress".
In a study undertaken by van Wyk (2001:198) it was found that parents do contribute to the development of disciplinary problems in their children by failing to provide prerequisite social skills and support and by modeling inappropriate behaviour.

4.3.6.2 Media
Exposure to the media such as television impacts tremendously on learners' behaviour. Learners are constantly exposed to acts of sex, obscene language, vandalism and violence. According to one participant:

"Yeah, probably from the TV as well. I mean if you look at Yizoyizo it's fine to break a table in the classroom. It's fine to take your furniture and, you know, break it, write on the furniture, burn the school down ... These are things that are also wrong because the media is now portraying something that is not correct and children are learning from it".

Another participant added:

"I mean you think about the scenes that are on TV now and our children being exposed to E-TV late nights. They're watching all these things. I mean like our grade one kids. You'll be shocked and amazed at things they do in the classroom and things they tell you and talk about—sex, fighting, killing..."

Many of their role models are television personalities whose behaviour they imitate. According to one participant:

"Call any of them to address the assembly and give them the mike. You know that example of who their heroes are. They'll hold the mike facing that way. Now where did they see that? Who does it stylish like that. You see how subconsciously those influences are knocking them all the time".

In a study undertaken by Bennett (1992:3) it was found that schools in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Norway and the Netherlands had placed emphasis
on violence for entertainment in the media and this was adversely affecting learner
discipline in the classroom.

4.3.7 Theme Seven: Teaching strategies
Notwithstanding the problem of learner discipline in the classroom situation educators
have nevertheless developed a variety of strategies in order to motivate and encourage
learners to learn and get involved in other activities offered by the school. Three
categories were distinguished, namely, approach towards learners, classroom rules and
positive reinforcement.

4.3.7.1 Approach towards learners
While educators must have classroom rules it is also important to treat learners with
dignity and respect – not to embarrass, humiliate or insult them. In this way learners will
also treat educators with respect and dignity. One participant said:

"...although I feel strongly as I said before that don’t insult the child but be strict – no
tolerance ...eh ...disciplinary ...eh ...misbehaviour – be very strict with that”.

Another participant explained:

"I think the important thing for me for discipline is that you must show respect for the
children because you want respect from them. So respect is very important for me ...
"I will never ever, if I can help it, embarrass a child, humiliate a child in front of his
friends”.

According to Jackson’s assertive disciplinary model using legitimate authority to insist
on one’s right to be treated with respect and dignity, the educator will be able to create a
sense of security, order and control as well as a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom. In
this way learners will begin to believe in the existence of rules and self – discipline
4.3.7.2 Classroom rules

It is important to have classroom rules as a strategy to maintain learner discipline in the classroom. Classroom rules help to guide learners as to what is expected of them. According to one participant:

"I think you must have your rules. Lay out your rules from the beginning – stick to them".

Participants felt that it is also a good idea to involve learners in establishing classroom rules. One participant explained:

"I think you have to have rules in the classroom and the rules have to be made up by the kids, especially in the senior primary. Because if kids make up the rules they will stick to them. So really, you leading an introduction of democracy in the classroom and they'll stick to them".

Several participants felt that it is important for educators to be consistent and apply the classroom rules consistently so that learners do not get confused and grow up with the idea that rules are indeed important in their everyday lives. Learners must have rules as it guides them along the path of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not acceptable behaviour. One participant explained:

"If you bend the rule today a little bit – I know sometimes you got to bend it – but if you bend it today a little bit tomorrow you have to bend it a little bit more. At the end of the day there's no discipline left".

Another participant added:

"There should be rules for everything. I know the children thrive on rules because when I teach the children they know they can't overstep the line as far as rules are concerned".
Squelch and Lemmer (1994:42 – 55) also argue that schools must have a disciplinary policy with a learners code of conduct in order to facilitate the process of accepting classroom rules. In this way discipline will emphasize the educative value of the disciplinary measure to the wrong – doer in order to inculcate in the learner a sense of responsibility for his/her own actions and for the consequences of those actions (Department of Education, 2000:9 – 10).

4.3.7.3 Positive reinforcement

Participants mentioned that learners respond well to positive reinforcement. According to one participant:

"Generally you find that children respond very well to positive disciplinary forms, rewards and reinforcements".

She continued:

"Well, things like points systems with little rewards. That generally works quite well, especially with our children in the school".

According to Jackson (1994:53 – 55) educators should adopt a behaviouristic model whereby desirable behaviour is reinforced while undesirable behaviour is ignored. Some form of reward such as merit slips or some form of approval usually reinforces good behaviour.

4.3 SUMMARY

This chapter dealt with the data analysis and interpretation of the group focus interviews that were undertaken with school managers and educators. The aim was to explore and describe their experiences of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment. The themes and categories extracted from the research were discussed. Extracts from the interviews were shown to illustrate the various themes and categories. A literature control
was also undertaken in order to contextualise the findings of the study with the literature review.

Chapter five will focus on the summary, limitations and conclusion of the research study. Guidelines for educational managers to effectively implement a zero-tolerance school policy will also be presented as well as recommendations for further research study.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four the researcher undertook a data analysis and interpretation of the research results. A literature control was also undertaken. This chapter will conclude the study by giving a summary of the background of the study as well as the research design and method used. The results of the data analysis are summarized, guidelines presented including recommendations for further research study as well as limitations of the research are discussed.

5.2 SUMMARY

5.2.1 Background, problem and aim of study

It was pointed out in chapter one that there is a perception that learner discipline at schools is a serious problem that is rendering many schools as being ineffective institutions of teaching and learning. One approach to emerge in dealing with this phenomenon is the adoption of a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline. The purpose of this research study was to explore the efficacy of a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline in schools.

Against the background of the preceding discussion the research question was as follows: How can a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline assist in creating disciplined school environments?

The general aim of this research study was to determine how a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline would assist in creating disciplined school environments.
In order to attain the general aim of this research study the following specific aims were to:

- explore and describe the experiences of school managers of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment;
- explore and describe the experiences of educators of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment;
- critically examine the concept and use of zero - tolerance policies;
- explain the nature and rationale for zero - tolerance discipline policies; and
- describe principles and guidelines (recommendations) for education managers to effectively implement a zero - tolerance school discipline policy.

A literature review on the issue of learner discipline was subsequently undertaken in chapter two. Special focus was on learner discipline in South African schools, managing discipline and a critical analysis of the zero - tolerance approach to learner discipline. The South African perspective on how a zero - tolerance approach will improve discipline in South Africa was also discussed.

5.2.2 Research design and method

A qualitative research design that was explorative, descriptive and contextual was employed. This paradigm was chosen because of the relative newness of the topic to be discussed in the South African context.

The research design and method of data collection and data analysis were discussed in chapter three. The researcher conducted focus group interviews to explore the experiences of school managers and educators of learner discipline in the school and classroom environment and to ascertain from them their perceptions of a zero - tolerance approach to managing learner discipline.

Different techniques were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the research. For example, truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality. The results of the data analysis and interpretation were presented in chapter four where quotes from transcribed
Interviews were given to substantiate the themes and categories identified through analysis. A literature control was undertaken whereby these themes and categories were further compared with the relevant literature and discussed. Several categories could not be substantiated and thus reflects the unique contributions of this research.

5.3 FINDINGS

It became clear during the course of the focus group interviews and data analysis and interpretation that school managers and educators do experience problems of learner discipline at schools. The following themes were identified:

- Disregard for authority
- Disruptive behaviour
- Educator empathy
- Educator inconsistency
- Parent apathy
- Social and external environmental influences
- Teaching strategies

The themes mentioned above and the literature reviewed has provided the basis for the proposed guidelines formulated by the researcher. The guidelines focuses on two aspects, namely, principles whereby a zero-tolerance management approach towards learner discipline should be based and, guidelines for educators to use in dealing with the problem of learner discipline in the classroom situation.

The researcher will now present the following guidelines for education managers to effectively implement a zero-tolerance school disciplinary policy.

5.4 GUIDELINES

Interviews with school managers and educators have indicated that learner discipline in schools is indeed a problem. Having undertaken the task of analysing and interpreting the
data collected, the researcher is of the opinion that a zero – tolerance management approach towards learner discipline should be adopted with the following guidelines. These guidelines are not necessarily presented in any particular order of preference.

**Guideline One**
South Africa is a constitutional democracy and therefore all public schools, as organs of the state, and independent schools must abide by the Constitution, especially Chapter Two of the Bill of Rights.

**Guideline Two**
All schools must have a disciplinary policy aimed at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment. Since the school must take into account the context of schooling in South Africa it is imperative that this policy be reviewed regularly. It is also important for policies to be tailored to individual schools and their local needs.

**Guideline Three**
Schools should develop principles and guidelines for applying a zero – tolerance management approach to learner discipline whereby every transgression of school rules and expected behaviour, even if seemingly trivial, will be dealt with according to the schools disciplinary policy. This however, does not imply that punitive sanctions be applied each time. Other strategies such as counseling, pep – talks or serving the school in some way should be considered. The whole idea is for the school to assist the learner to grow and develop as a well rounded law abiding citizen of South Africa and this would only be possible if he/she is accountable and responsible for his/her actions.

**Guideline Four**
A zero – tolerance management approach must be based on certain basic principles so that the correct policies, structures and procedures are put in place to ensure that any disciplinary measures taken are administered consistently, fairly and reasonably in accordance with the Constitution (RSA, 1996b) and the South African Schools Act (RSA, 1996a).
Guideline Five
When applying a zero – tolerance approach all learners, when being disciplined, have the right to be treated in a fair and just manner and according to fair procedures. Therefore schools have to follow the correct administrative procedures when disciplining learners especially in terms of Section 33 of the Constitution (RSA, 1996b).

Guideline Six
When applying a zero – tolerance management approach to learner discipline it is important for schools to strive to attain a fine balance whereby the disciplinary policy deals with all transgressions of school rules and, at the same time, maintain a fairly reasonable level of flexibility and discretion whereby learners allowed to grow and develop inspite of “mistakes” they make. Educators should still be able to exercise their discretion and deal with situations on their merits. School principals especially must have the authority to exercise discretion, fairness and common sense.

Guideline Seven
Although zero – tolerance is a suggested management approach to learner discipline, the researcher is not suggesting that it be adopted as part of national policy. Rather, schools should adapt it according to its own unique circumstances. These circumstances could include location of the school, the socio – economic background of the learner, home circumstances and whether learners are from a disadvantaged background amongst other things. This makes it imperative for the school to involve parents actively in school governance.

Guideline Eight
Learners must be educated as to what is expected of them and what action will be taken against them if they disobey school rules and regulations or behave in an unacceptable way. At the same time parents need to be constantly informed of these expectations while educators need to work together and thereby be consistent in application when disciplining learners.
**Guideline Nine**

Minor and major incidents of learner discipline must not be treated with equal severity. From an administrative perspective this would cut down on the paper work. The school disciplinary policy must also specify clearly consequences for misbehaviour while educators must be consistent in its application.

**Guideline Ten**

The themes and categories of this research study have indicated that school managers and educators do experience problems with learner discipline in schools. While zero-tolerance is suggested as an approach to managing learner discipline in schools the following points will also assist educators to alleviate the problem in the classroom situation:

- Workshops must be held and seminars presented by the various provincial departments of education on suitable alternatives to corporal punishment as a method of disciplining learners.

- Life-orientation lessons at school must place emphasis on respect for legitimate authority as well as accountability and responsibility. Learners must be formally educated as to what is expected from them.

- Disciplinary measures must not always be equated with punishment. It can be linked to a system of rewards and privileges that learners are able to strive towards and attain. At the end of the day learners have to learn to be accountable and responsible for their actions. Punitive measures such as detention and being dropped from the schools sporting team may nevertheless still be used, depending on the circumstances.

- Support structures in the form of remedial educators, child psychologists and social services must be made available to clusters of schools by the various provincial departments of education to assist schools to work with learners who are problematic due to a variety of reasons, and academically weak and thereby disruptive in class.
• Educators have chosen the profession and must strive to be enthusiastic, committed, dedicated and hardworking. They must display concern, interest and understanding in the educational, social and emotional welfare of the learner. The provincial departments of education must, at the same time, provide support structures for educators.

• Educators must be consistent especially when disciplining learners. Educators should also work as a team and apply disciplinary measures consistently so that learner's will understand school and classroom rules and stick to them.

• Educators must have discretion and be flexible when applying disciplinary measures. Each learner is a unique individual and there are times when educators must strive to understand the circumstances leading to the learners’ behaviour.

• Educators must have classroom rules and learners may even contribute in the drawing up of these rules. These rules must be consistent with the disciplinary policy of the school.

• While educators cannot really control the social and environmental factors that contribute to the problem of learner discipline in schools they need to nevertheless communicate more often with parents. Parental involvement is of utmost importance in the educational welfare of the learner and in dealing with serious disciplinary issues.

• Educators must adopt a variety of strategies in order to motivate and encourage learners to learn and partake in other activities offered by the school.
Recommendations for further research study

Recommendation One
The concept zero – tolerance is relatively new in the South African context. It is recommended that further research be undertaken on the efficacy of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline in South African schools. This research study was also limited to the city of Johannesburg. Future research studies on this phenomenon must be more broadly based with special emphasis on the experiences and perceptions of educators in the townships of South Africa.

Recommendation Two
By using a qualitative approach that is exploratory and descriptive the researcher has embarked on a voyage of discovery to undertake a more structured survey research. While future qualitative research study on this phenomenon is recommended in order to stimulate new leads and avenues, it should ultimately form the basis for further quantitative research. It is therefore recommended that further quantitative and qualitative research be undertaken on the phenomenon under study.

Recommendation Three
It is recommended that future research should provide a more comprehensive study by:

• including more school managers and educators from a broad spectrum of schools (government and independent primary and high schools from different areas);
• including parents and learners from different socio – economic backgrounds; and
• undertaking different research designs and methods to include focus group interviews, individual interviews and through survey research such as questionnaires.

Recommendation Four
The problem of learner discipline is a growing phenomenon in South African schools. It is recommended that the various provincial departments of education play a bigger role in providing educators and parents with support structures in dealing with this phenomenon.
Workshops and seminars must be held regularly in educating the major stakeholders such as educators and parents with regards to the various management approaches (including a zero – tolerance approach) available in dealing with this problem. These seminars and workshops should also involve members from the South African Police Services, social services, child psychologists and any other organisation or individuals who have a meaningful and constructive contribution to make.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This research study does have certain limitations, inter alia:

- The research study was limited to primary schools in the city of Johannesburg;
- Most of the literature reviewed on zero – tolerance dealt with issue of learner discipline from an overseas perspective. Very little information on zero – tolerance was available from a South African perspective.

5.6 CONCLUSION

Discipline is essential for the smooth functioning of any school. While learner discipline at schools is emerging as a serious problem, school managers and educators should also see this as an opportunity to introduce innovative approaches to managing learner behaviour. One such approach in dealing with this phenomenon is the adoption of a zero – tolerance approach to managing learner discipline. This research study attempted to examine the efficacy of a zero – tolerance management approach towards learner discipline in schools. The researcher is of the opinion that schools need to adopt a zero – tolerance approach to learner discipline in order to ensure that schools remain institutions where good quality teaching and learning take place.
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05 March 2003

The Principal

APPLICATION TO DO RESEARCH

It will be appreciated if permission is granted for me to conduct interviews with some of the educators and the school management team at a time that will be convenient for you. The duration of the interviews will not be longer than one hour.

I am a post-graduate student at the Rand Afrikaans University. I am enrolled for an M.Ed degree, specialising in educational management. My research topic is “The efficacy of a zero-tolerance approach to managing learner discipline”.

Please be rest assured that these interviews are highly confidential. Your input in this research will be beneficial to providing guidelines in educational policies.

Thank you.

A. Noor Mahomed

Dr R Mistry (Supervisor)

Prof B R Grobler (Co-Supervisor)
First of all I would like to thank all of you for participating in this focus group interview. This is not a test of your competence as a school manager, rather for the purpose of my research study. I want to find out how you as school managers experience discipline in your school. I would like to add that this interview is very confidential and nowhere is your name or school going to be mentioned. Just a few points in order to facilitate the interview-Firstly, you need to be made aware that your experiences is valued as unique as it is based on your own opinions and perceptions and you do not have to agree or disagree with one another. Secondly, bearing in minds that confidentiality is ensured, please feel free to speak openly about your own experiences – both negative and positive aspects. Thirdly, for recording purposes, only one person should speak at a time.

What are your experiences as a school manager with regard to learner discipline in schools, be it in the classroom or outside the classroom, but within the internal environment of the school?

I’ve been in the service industry of education for the last twenty – four years. I can confidently tell you that it has deteriorated. The learner that was here 10 years – five years ago is no longer. Now be it a decline in moral values because the minister, the president himself, wrote an article on morality. Be it just an exposure to total freedom – that people can’t cope with and the manifestations is lying in our schools – that you can answer. But there’s generally a breakdown of discipline in the old fashion meaning of the word.

Could you give me some examples?
P1 I'll give you a learner that urinates right next to you and then you stand there and ask where are you suppose to this – he says “do what? I didn’t do anything.” So where do you start – teaching mathematics. We must teach them to talk the truth – know what is right from wrong. I don’t know if you people have experienced that ever?

P2 Mmmm

P3 Yes

P1 Look at …eh…what was that big girl last year?

P2 (child’s name)

P1 Total disregard for all forms of discipline. Total disregard for an adult figure – authority figure. She equates herself as an equal to (educator’s name) as senior as they are – and arrogantly. So what is it? Is it the home? Is it just the exposure of how people should be – teenagers? She hasn’t even knocked the teenager years properly – she’s still a baby.

P2 Their attitudes.

P3 Even in the junior primary. (Educator’s name) is now talking of senior primary. Even in the foundation phase – grade one. You find that even in the grade one classes discipline is really getting absolutely bad. At times you find it difficult to deal with.

P1 I don’t know if it was (educator’s name) class … about a year ago. Did they try to burn the class down or was it a boys prank? But at grade one level, the child wanted the burn the class down with a box of matches.
R  Do you think these problems come from the home environment or other influences?

P2  I think it's the home environment.

P3  Yes

P2  Because what we found is when we carried out a survey in the classes, we find many of the children are not with their parents. They're living with grandparents. Or secondly, if they with their parents, their parents work and they only get home half past seven – eight o'clock. There's a little boy, I know him. He's now in grade six or seven. His mom's a nurse and she used to work night shifts. He used to be alone at night at home, get himself ready and come to school. Now what used to happen, apparently he used to break into the house – if he got home and his mom was on duty and he didn't have the keys he used to break into his house. So you find that maybe because of their home backgrounds, their parents have to work, there's no authority figure at home to take care of the kids – kids are just left to run around until the parents come home at night.

R  And how do you feel in relation to the ill – discipline in the school – when kids don't behave. How do you feel about that?

P2  It can be very annoying, very frustrating, disillusioning and what we've actually tried to do is as a team we try to improve on discipline. So you try different methods and our final method is now we've introduced a merit and de – merit system. I can't tell you whether it's working because we just put it into practice. Hopefully, by using this system we'll be improving on our discipline.

P1  Me, I reached a level of total disorganisation. Firstly, for me, you can prepare, we have workshops on OBE, we explore the new curriculum, we come here with something that's going to be so meaningful for your learning area but do you
impart that knowledge or do you straighten the child first. I don’t know what comes first. I can tell you, they say no corporal punishment, talk to the children like you do with your own kids. But at home you instill a sense of values when you believe in saying that look when you lie there’s a higher power that’s going to punish you in some way or the wheel is going to turn and it’s going to catch up with you. It’s in you. But these kids, they come to your office – let’s talk, let’s counsel, let’s not raise our voices – they walk out and they laugh. Do they have that belief system or say the truth, feel guilty about it and change? Take your own daughter pointing to a colleague), she’ll grow up – you’ll bring her up in a certain way and you’ll tell her look, what you did is not what we do. Mom doesn’t do it. I didn’t do it. She believes in what you saying – that is wrong, this guilt, this hurt, this remorse. These kids don’t believe that. You know, I give you the grandmother that came yesterday – totally disciplined. She has a vision that you and I yearn for. She has this foster child. She wants time to be respected. If you say four o’clock they’ll come home four o’clock. You mess your clothes so I want you to wash them. To punish him you wash your own clothes. There’s discipline – you can see she’s concerned. But is the child ready for it. Where did he come from. He came from a system where there was nothing. He doesn’t want to accept this discipline so he comes home when he wants to. He mixes with people who are going to encourage him to find a easy way out. Easy in inverted comma’s because he finds life at home difficult, which is the right life, but for him it’s difficult. So where do we start?

P4 You see, discipline, it’s okay for a while. I mean you reprimand a child – he listens to you maybe for 30 minutes or for an hour at the most and after that its back to normal. You can reprimand the entire class – you shout at them, you warn them that you going to punish them, they won’t be going on an excursion, they won’t be participating in extra-curricular activities … They’ll listen to you and after a while it’s back to normal like nothing happened. So it’s becoming a real problem. I mean we are looking at alternatives but it doesn’t seem to be working. Another thing also – the so called black children, I mean the culture, the situation
...eh ... they are suppose to be talking loud because they feel if you talk softly you’re backbiting and so on. So another thing we have to consider is, you know, what is discipline all about? Is it just making a noise or not listening or things like that.

R  And how do you feel when they behave badly?

P4  Like (educator’s name) said – sometimes you just want to give up because you try and try all the time. And sometimes you just lost for words and look around for ways and means of disciplining them.

P1  It depends on the personality. I take things very personally. I’ll give you an example when I was at (school’s name). I was doing work when I received this phone call. It was Pick N Pay to say two of your kids were caught stealing and we got them on tape and they’re still denying it that they didn’t steal. So the guy says I got them on videotape. I’m going to report this to the cops. Now I took it personally. I felt disappointed. Did I fail those children? But I’m going to reach that level where I’m going to decide I don’t care a damn. You know why? There’s no support system. We had parent’s day. The class I sat in had forty learners. That’s forty different parents. Fourteen parents came. From that fourteen ten were parents we don’t want to see.

P4  And that is across the board hey – throughout the school. Not just one particular class. Communication is also not there between the parents and the school. It’s difficult to really address the situation.

R  Is the approach by educators towards learner discipline consistent?

P4  You see that’s another problem. Teachers’ are not consistent – where they behave for one teacher for one lesson and when the next teacher comes in I mean it’s a different situation. It depends. His demands might be different.
But overall, if you really look at the whole situation, discipline is really a problem. Not only in the classroom – even outside during breaks and things. I think I’ll go totally mad if I really have to teach the bigger children – really. I still think that now with the JP’s – with the grade one’s and that, we can still cope. I sometimes wonder how the senior primary teachers cope with these children.

That’s why we had to change the system here. Last year we definitely had a discipline problem. That’s why this year we tried to make it more classroom based where one educator would teach a number of learning areas instead of teachers moving around too much. So we’re trying it out this year because last year it was definitely a problem. When they change classes they become more disruptive then...

I’ll tell you another thing. We had twins here last year. If you met their father and you understand the world he comes from and the kind of discipline he instills – its total physical. In terms of physical size of the father and his two sons – he’s an imposing figure. He’s huge and he hits boy. He was having problems with his kids with that kind of discipline. You know, we talking about consistency right. So the school has this no corporal punishment policy. We were total failures. We had endless problems with those kids. So what is right for those kids? We thought that perhaps one extreme is no good. Its harsh, it’s brutal, it’s savage, it’s dark age’s type – so the school is more reformist system when it came to discipline. So we had worse problems then he was having at home. So what kind of discipline – what’s consistent for those kids? Today they are members of a gang who hire other children to beat up people. About a month ago, before we closed, on a Friday, they hired two boys to wait for somebody from our school and they stabbed him. So the doctor phoned to say we have a scholar from your school. So, what is consistent. Should we have been physical with those two because their home is like that or should we say listen, talk, counsel, reprimand, keep it simple, don’t infringe on his human rights … Infringing on human rights is a big issue.
Another thing is that these learners know that the teachers can't do anything. Basically reprimand them and refer them for counseling as you said. So they take advantage of the situation as well.

There's no parental involvement from some parents. When you keep in a child for detention and write a note home to say your child has misbehaved - "so what!" "Keep him in!" You find that because parents are not involved with their children's discipline we find that if you tell your child, I mean if you tell my son the teacher says I'm going to call your mom in - immediately the child is scared. But if we tell our children I'm calling your mom or your dad to school - fine. Then they'll rattle his phone number off. So there's no fear. So if a child has no fear he'll never be disciplined. A child has got to fear an authority figure in order to behave.

Just talking about this - there were two brothers, the one is still here. When you reprimand them they walk out of your office and use the public phone - the teacher wants to hit me and the father will come ...eh ... the guy who gave us a lot of trouble last year - his one brother is in grade six this year. His father was sitting here when we had a meeting and he spoke to you very abruptly.

I'm not sure...

So we get parents like that. Children will phone their parents to say listen, come to school, they got me in the office here. So, who they scared of?

Another thing is, as (educator's name) mentioned, ten years ago we didn't have this problem. It's also because our schools are no longer community based where you know, we have daily contact, I mean, with parents in the area - where we would be meeting them at the supermarket or wherever. You bound to meet
parents who are in the community. Like this here, I mean, we lucky if there are 10% that are from our community. So it makes it even more difficult.

P1 You talking about the quality side – you take care of mine and I take care of yours. So he’s the soccer coach and he’s got all the kids in the community coming to his team so he instills that – I’ll tell your dad. They know they’re going to socialise. It will reach home. Our own cases, the teacher used to tell us – hey listen I’m going to tell your aunty or your mother or father. And we knew that that’s genuinely going to happen because this person is saying that to us so that, not we tow the line, but we molded in a way that has worked for us.

P3 But you see, then parents were very involved in the child’s discipline. Like I say, now if you tell the child I’m going to tell your father or you know the mother well – maybe she works at Checkers. They don’t care. And previously our parents were in contact with our teachers because it was a community-based thing. But now kids don’t ... are not even afraid of their parents. So how do you discipline your child? I’ll have to say that if you scold a child a parent will come to you ... I remember being in trouble the one day because a parent came to the principal to complain that madam is too cheeky in the classroom. Now the child is used to the mother whispering to her, and talking softly and sweetly to her. I mean we’ve got to be loud or the class would never hear us and if you not a loud person and you discipline your class you going to have forty kids’ jumping on you. So what you find is that their parents feel that you shouldn’t be raising your voice to their child because I don’t, I’m his mother. And you shouldn’t be hitting the child because I don’t. I’m his mother. When then do you come in? How do you discipline a child like that. And then those children know that if my madam touches me my mom is coming to school and she’ll be in trouble. So the child wouldn’t listen to you. So you find that it’s like a losing battle.
P4 I must say that the school must introduce a system where every educator is consistent. It might help to a certain extent. I mean inconsistency does create a problem.

R Do you feel children don’t respect educator’s any more?

P2 No. No they don’t respect educators any more. Especially the older they grow. I mean a simple thing like greeting your teacher. I think that’s very important. I mean that’s the way we’ve been brought up. Even if you saw your teacher during the week — end you would greet your teacher with respect. I mean we teach kids in grade one — they go to the senior primary phase and I promise you they would look at you and walk pass and that child would never, never greet you and acknowledge that was my grade one teacher. Maybe one out of forty would come and do that. That alone will tell you that the respect is gone. There is no respect.

P1 That’s a key word in this whole thing. I’ll tell you — you know (name of place), the coloured area (name of area). They were thugs but go and drop off a passenger or something in the area the same scholars — howzat meneer! That is lacking. You live your own private lives but yet you respect that person who’s trying to better your life. We’ve lost it. We are people who genuinely try to better people’s lives. Whether we like it we’re in that business. And if learners don’t have respect for that person then I don’t know. Is it the entire scenario in the country — cops on the go slow, they taking bribes, jobs for pals... Are these kids being exposed to that? Are they believing that that’s the way of life? I don’t know what they think, genuinely. But I think we have a problem. Even the naughtiest child we had in those years, now, in retrospect, was mild compared to the problems we having

P3 You know, another thing is — is it that they don’t have any emotions or what. They can hurt another child and think nothing about it, steal another child’s things and think nothing about it. So, where does it all come from — is it the home? Is it
because there are no parents at home. Is there nobody to guide them? And we are trying to lead them the right way – it's just not happening.

P2 You know what I believe? I believe discipline starts at home. And if a parent can step down on their child at home and if you discipline your child as an authority figure ... I mean I personally teach my kids that it doesn't matter who the adult is. As long as he is an adult he is uncle so and so or she is auntie so and so. Because I feel the moment the child calls the person on their first name, already their respect is broken, There’s no kind of respect. And like this little girl we were talking about, (child's name). She'll budge into my class without knocking and come walk behind me and she’ll knock me behind – so howzit (how are you) there madam? So what you doing today? Can I have some tea? You know, I mean there’s no respect. So I just feel that, you know, I think it stems from the home and we unfortunately have to put up with it because of parents not doing their duty – because of them not being at home. Look it’s a selfish world where, as a mother, I feel the same. It’s what do you do for your child. Do I come to work, earn a living so I can provide for my child or do I not provide luxuries for my child – sit at home but look after my child at home and give my child lunch when he gets home from school etc. So it’s like a selfish world. It’s what decision you make that can affect your child in the future,

P1 Also role models. If you look at cultures. There’s a lot of music, dancing and dopping (drinking) and that. Basically there’s nothing wrong with that if it’s done in moderation. I’m not saying that it’s wrong, right. But if you take those three key elements in their areas – so who are their heroes? That thug who has the money to buy that new convertible BM. Then, he wears clothes that are flashed on TV music videos. They have an image. They have a rough image okay. So, who do they aspire to be like? The rap stars, the guy who’s got the flashy car and who hasn’t worked a decent day but can entertain three, four nice squeeza’s (ladies) from the area or that guy who gets up, goes decently to work and he wears a suit
and he lives a grey life like an accountant? They caught up in that syndrome. Their heroes are people who have an easy life gained out of illegal means.

P2 Yeah, probably from the TV as well. I mean if you look at Yizoyizo it’s fine to break a table in the classroom. It’s fine to take your furniture and, you know, break it, write on the furniture, burn the school down … These are things that are also are wrong because the media is now portraying something that’s not correct and children are learning from it. So, I mean, you’ve got to look at all these kind of things. I mean like you listen to the kids in grade one … I remember when I was in high school, I was in matric and we had Dallas on TV. My mom wouldn’t allow me to watch Dallas. That’s it you know. There’s bad scenes in it. I mean you think about the scenes that are on TV now and our children being exposed to E TV late nights. They watching all these things. I mean like our grade one kids. You’ll be shocked and amazed at things they do in the classroom and things they tell you and talk about. So what I’m saying is there’s absolutely no control, no set discipline in their homes. So, you look at discipline. We read a bit of a psychology background it actually tells you that if you discipline your child they talk about discipline in those books that I’ve read up – it actually tells you that a simple thing like having a set bath time or bath routine for your kids, a set meal time, a set homework time, that already is a discipline on its own and that leads to a secure, confident adult. Now if you leave your child or your child baths when he wants, eats when he wants – it’s like a ship lost at sea. You’ve got to give your child direction.

P1 And they yearn for that. Children want that kind of discipline in their lives – that there’s a structure – really. We don’t know it but children want to have exactly what she says – this is the time to do your work, eat at this time, play together at this time and then it’s your time – they want all this.

P3 You know there was a little boy in my class and whenever he comes to school in the morning you’ll find him sleeping. Eventually I asked him what time do you do
to bed. He says, you know, he didn’t want to speak so I called in the parents. The parents say the child is on the streets till 11 – 12 at night. Now a little boy like that. We would never allow our six-year-old child to be on the street at that time. Yet this child was on the streets till 11 – 12 o’clock. So he’s too tired. When he comes to school he sleeps because there’s nobody at home. So, I mean, it’s a sad situation if you really look at it because there is nobody at home. Who’s going to control these children. And we again, on the other hand, will never leave our child alone. We’ll always find somebody that please when my child comes home or he’ll go to some neighbours house or to a families house. Whereas this child is on the street till 11 – 12.

P2 You’ll find our little grade one’s – they’re little, only six years old. I don’t think you’ll let your six year old daughter take a train from the station, walk from the school, go to the station, takes the train home and then takes a taxi or walks to their house. You wouldn’t allow your six-year-old to do that you know what I mean?

P3 And that also, at what time of the morning. Sometimes half past six – six o’clock in the morning. That’s the time these five and a half, six year olds leave right.

P1 Let me tell you another thing. The country will have to get a set of common values – an identity. If you look at the old system – you were an Indian, you lived in an Indian area. You all had something common – your culture was the same. You had an identity. Each one knew that this is acceptable in an Indian kind of a world and this wasn’t. We grew up in that kind of environment. Right now what is the culture? We don’t even know these guys culture properly. And our kids are being influenced by the majority whereas we should be imposing a form of a structured culture.

P3 And you would never says it’s an Indian child. She speaks exactly like them. You’ll never make out it’s an Indian child.
They even imitate their walk, their style, their mannerisms... It’s just the majority...

Call any of them to address the assembly and give them the mike. You know that example of who their heroes are. They’ll hold the mike facing that way. Now where did they see that? Who does it stylish like that? You see how subconsciously those influences are knocking them all the time.

Now bearing in mind what you’ve said what would your views be on a zero-tolerance discipline approach or zero-tolerance policies. By zero-tolerance I mean should schools develop principles and guidelines for applying a zero-tolerance approach whereby every transgression of school rules and expected behaviour, even if seemingly trivial, would be dealt with according to the schools disciplinary policy. What are your views on that – adopting a zero-tolerance approach?

It’s a brilliant concept. I love the idea. I understand where you coming from. If you drive down to Kwazulu-Natal this week – end and you’re driving 160 they’ll lock you up – no questions asked. They’re going to put you through that inconvenience of locking you up, appearing 24 hours later before a magistrate – the law will take its course right. What you do here in school? You send the little (little child) out. Or the father goes to district D10. They sent my child out during teaching time. So somebody phones. Do you know that’s contrary to SACE? You not suppose to send the child out unaccompanied. What happens if he takes a bus and gets raped or kidnapped. He came to school. His father dropped him off. Do you see the implications? So if you want this thing to work it has to be a separate unit. Like those days they used to have remedial teachers, special education teachers, guidance counselors and that. You will need maybe two educators qualified to deal with those kinds of issues. Because these people will get so
bogged down, or the office would get so bogged down with these trivial issues as well...

P2 Like a mini court.

P1 Yes – go there and sort it out.

P2 You see if there is a zero-tolerance policy it must be a policy whereby not only teachers are educated with it but most important, parents are educated. Because now, all that parents know is that you not suppose to use corporal punishment on the child, there’s verbal abuse … So if parents are aware that this is zero-tolerance as far as discipline goes it will make our lives easier as well. Because if a parent is aware that my child is not suppose to step out of line and know the rules. If a child is taught that from the parents when he comes to school he’ll also know that it applies here and it applies there. And like Mr Ismail said the sad part here is a child knows the rules – oh, we going to his class I’ve got to walk straight, I’ve got to shut my mouth and I’ve got to walk in a certain manner. But if I go to her class I’ll do my own thing. So what I’m saying to you is that if it’s zero-tolerance it’s got to be zero-tolerance for everybody – parents and every teacher must abide by it. And that’s the only way you’re going to maintain discipline.

R Do you think we should have a zero-tolerance approach on every aspect of discipline?

P2 Okay, there are degrees of discipline. There are degrees of wrong doings. Maybe you know … mmmm … personally I feel there should be a no and a yes. And as far as possible there shouldn’t be comparisons between levels of discipline. As long as you transgress you will be punished for it. We should draw up a strong policy as far as discipline goes. Involve everyone in it…

P4 Be consistent!
R And how will this be in relation to the constitution of the country bearing in mind chapter two – the chapter on human rights.

P1 We’ll be uplifting their human rights. By instilling this kind of discipline – bath at this time, keep clean and do this basic hygiene … we’ll be enhancing their human rights. I like this zero – tolerance a lot. Really, it’s a brilliant idea. But, like they spent so much of money on the SGB – spreading the word in the communities that they should take ownership of the school and that parents are suppose to run the school and all that. They must invest that kind of money in doing the same thing about discipline. Children are ill-disciplined and let’s address that issue at a different level altogether.

P4 It filters down from the top. A guy can commit a murder and nothing happens to him.

P1 It’s his human rights again. They can talk and bring people in to tell you on the technicality – that you didn’t follow procedure and protocol. That is why you need a unit to operate independently to address this issue. Like counselors are independent of educators on your school staff.

P3 At the end of the day it all boils down to the home.

P1 The communities have to be educated as to the problems we are facing and how they are hampering this discipline coming through by not attending teacher conferences, by not responding to our letters that please come se us, we have a problem – by always taking the side with the learner and not listening to the school. That’s where it’s breaking down. You are crying for the parents help and parents come and tell you shit. Okay fair and square now I’m washing my hands of her. Five times you won’t do that but the sixth time you’ll say listen, I’m tired of this. Every parent seems to be blaming me so to hell with it. That’s zero – tolerance. So I think they have to be educated – press reports and supplements in
the newspapers, community meetings – the way they did with this SGB a few years ago. A lot of money was spent.

P3 You know what another thing I found is – a big thing is made of corporal punishment. No corporal punishment! But do they tell you what you can do instead of corporal punishment that’s going to help the child. Because if you think about our parents, right, and some of us have been through it where our teachers inflicted corporal punishment on us. What is wrong with us? We’re disciplined. We’re bringing our children up in a disciplined way. But that’s only because there was a method being used. Corporal punishment was the method. I’m not saying that corporal punishment must come back or whatever. What I’m saying is give us the alternative. If corporal punishment is abolished then what is the alternative. So that we know we use the alternate it’s going to be the means of growing that child up into being a disciplined adult.

P4 There is a whole booklet on alternatives.

P2 No, but it’s not working. The alternatives are not working. They’re just too soft. Like I said if a child is not afraid of a parent coming in because the child, you know, transgressed in any way then who else would the child be afraid of. So the corporal punishment thing worked. All the other alternatives don’t work. Something that’s going to be strong enough is going to make a difference.

P3 But what helps the child to feel that way? It’s the parent. The child comes to school with the idea that you know what my parents are not going to do anything to me – he’s really going to finish the teacher. So he’s to happy to come with the parent. And that is what’s happening. Where the child is at fault the parents are not dealing with that. They come to deal with the teacher that is not at fault. They actually make it sound as if the teacher is at fault.
P4 They have to be educated as to what is acceptable and what is unacceptable behaviour. I mean my child. When I went to parent's day she was scared as to what I'm going to say. You know she had to draw a cricket bat in her book. She's in grade one. And she was more scared of me than the teacher. Because I won't accept that kind of cricket bat that she drew in her book. She kept on telling me before I went for the meeting don't shout at me because of the cricket bat because I made a mistake. So it's important, I mean, the home environment. The parents play a very vital role in discipline.

R Thank you very much. I'm certain that today's interview will contribute tremendously to my research study.