

## CHAPTER 6

### NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATORS' LIVED STORIES

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this study the narratives of the participants became a way of understanding their lived experiences regarding discipline. Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 20) write that:

*Narrative inquiry is a way of understanding experiences; it is collaboration between researcher and participants, over time in a place or in a series of places and in social interaction with the milieu.*

In this chapter will provide an explanation of why educators practice school discipline the way they do. I argue that in understanding the lived experiences of educators it may be helpful to understand the motivation behind the way they act. Linking my argument with the quotation above, I worked collaboratively with the sample group of nine educators. The interviews conducted assisted in my understanding of their current behaviour. This chapter follows the line of reasoning expressed by Ana Radebe in her narration of reminiscences (available on the internet), which she calls 'Memories of the Old Struggle – Challenges to New Democracy'. One of her respondents wrote:

I was 10 years old when the Soweto uprising took place. I was a student at the primary school. I remember the morning of the 16 of June, we went to school, but we were told to go back to our homes. I was scared as my home and my school were very far from each other. Since that time every year that the uprising in Soweto is commemorated, my mother cries because she feels that many children died because of random gun shooting  
(<http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/books/curwin99book.html>).

In interrogating the quotation cited above, the writer described emotional experiences of how he/she felt in the 1976 unrest and how this impacts upon present feelings and attitudes. The rationale for this chapter is therefore to intellectually interrogate the information provided by each participant. An earnest attempt will be made to identify the defining moments that led to his/her current views and practices on school discipline. However, as Grotevant (1998, 1103) explains, individuals may interpret and experience the same event differently. It is thus important to keep in mind that those who took part in the inquiry are just a sample of

educators from one circuit in the Nkangala Region of the Department of Education, Mpumalanga Province. The schools where these educators are currently teaching are experiencing problems in the maintenance of discipline. Some of the staff members may share similar childhood experiences; this may help me to begin to understand why they act the way they do. They do not, of course, necessarily represent the total experiences of all educators.

## 6.2 PROCEDURE IN ANALYSING PARTICIPANTS' LIVED EXPERIENCES

This chapter represents an account of nine sample educators' personal and practical experiences. I will therefore begin by discussing the exploration of their experiences in relation to classroom discipline practices and then follow (in the next section) by indicating significant incidents or events in each participant's past that has influenced the way they are currently acting. I will then analyse and interpret these events to establish how past occurrences and experiences have led to specific decision taking. The approach taken in this procedure is a narrative one (Clandinin 1989, 124), therefore the following themes will be used to discuss participants' lived experiences:

- The impact of corporal punishment on participants' current classroom discipline practices
- Significant incidents experienced by each participant
- Current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices
- Aspiration for the future.

In providing an account of their experiences, the participants began by giving the date at which they started teaching and proceeded to discuss their other experiences. In accordance with Creswell (2005), I found that the participants' presentation could be broken down into useful categories – a beginning, a central section leading up to a crisis point or watershed period, and an outcome. As Creswell puts it:

Stories in narrative research might include the elements typically found in a novel, namely time, place and scene, the sequence might be the development of a plot as this unfolds, the emergence of a crisis or turning point and conclusion or denouement (Creswell 2005, 480).

Questions asked during the interviews covered the themes mentioned above. A tape-recorder was used with the permission of the participants; it was then easy for me to go back to the recorded data. Before giving an account of participants' experiences using these themes it is

necessary to present some basic background information on each of the participants in the study.

### **6.2.1 Tau's lived experiences**

Tau has been teaching since 1986 in secondary schools in Nkangala Region. Like all nine participants in the study he is permanently appointed. When he started teaching, he used corporal punishment as a method of restoring order in his class. He was punished by his parents at home and by his educators at school; they used a stick and lash respectively.

At home he was punished for refusing to perform his daily routine and at school he was punished for not doing his work, coming late and for making a noise. Taking the cue from his own secondary school educators he adopted the style of explaining to the learners what their offences are. Looking at how current learners behave, he feels that, if he had the opportunity to revert back to corporal punishment, he would make use of this. The highlights of my interviews with him follow below.

#### **(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Tau's current classroom discipline practices**

When asked how the use of corporal punishment impacted on his current behaviour, Tau responded by saying that the torture he and his fellow learners experienced is always on his mind when he sees learners behaving defiantly. In the past, learners were afraid of teachers and the corporal punishment they were able to inflict.

Tau explains:

The torture we were faced with, is always reflected back when I see learners defying authorities. In the past learners were afraid of teachers and corporal punishment.

Tau clearly wishes that he had the power of using physical punishment – he feels that this would induce the required response from the learners. He made it clear that when he was young he was afraid of educators who use corporal punishment.

#### **(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Tau.**

During my first interview with this participant, Tau told me that he hated his Mathematics teacher. In a follow-up interview I explored with him the reasons for this. Tau gave the following explanation:

Mathematics is a demanding and very difficult subject. My teacher used to come early in the morning to offer morning lessons. Because I had a younger sister to take to the pre-school every morning I was always late. He did not want to know why I was late and he chased me from his class and punished me. This incident influenced me to discourage my learners to take Mathematics in Grade 12.

This is an indication that Tau's educator was intolerant of his late-coming but did not take the trouble to find out the reasons why Tau was always late for his Mathematics class. The results of this incident were that Tau hated Mathematics, misdirected his anger and consequently discouraged his learners from taking Mathematics in Grade 12.

**(iii) Tau's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

Tau shared his experiences by mentioning his current behaviour in relation to classroom discipline practices. He explained:

Each educator should formulate classroom rules with learners and when a learner contravenes a rule, the educator should ask him or her to read the rule and suggest ways to change the unacceptable behaviour. Educators must not shout learners, they must talk to them and show them their mistakes; together they should work out a plan on how to correct a bad behaviour.

He indicated that as a learner he was not told why he was punished. He feels that this is why it is difficult to cope with the new methods of managing discipline. He is of the opinion that if he begins by telling learners their mistakes, they would think he was condoning their bad behaviour. One can interpret Tau's statements to mean that each educator should ensure that the rules in his/her class are laid in consultation with learners. Together they should come up with a plan to deal with misbehaviour. In a nutshell, Tau was emphasising that if educators and learners work together they will succeed in managing classroom discipline.

**(iv) Aspiration for the future.**

During my third interview with Tau, when asked about his aspirations for future he replied: "I want to see myself out of the teaching fraternity, perhaps owning a business".

This indicates that Tau is displaying great frustration; he would rather leave the teaching profession completely and take on a very different venture. The cause of this frustration lies in the fact that Tau has ran out of options; he thinks that corporal punishment is the only solution to lack of discipline.

**(v) Synopsis of Tau's lived experiences**

From the foregoing discussion it is apparent that Tau sees corporal punishment as giving educators power over learners; he views this as a measure to curb learner defiance. The intolerant and impatient behaviour of his own educators (one in particular) led to his anger and frustration and he misdirected his anger and concluded by saying that leaving the profession was the best option open to him.

**6.2.2 NKWE'S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

He started teaching 19 years ago. He taught at a primary school before coming to secondary school. When he started teaching, corporal punishment was regarded as an effective method of disciplining learners. He also joined other educators in using it. As a learner he was subjected to corporal punishment mainly for defying his educators. To his educators and parents punishment meant discipline. Even at home he was punished but his mother first informed him exactly why she was punishing him.

Although his educators punished him, he admired them because they were doing their work, and the result was that the learners passed their exams well. According to him today's educators do not make themselves very available to the learners; nor do they prepare their lessons with enough care. Many learners even prefer to be disciplined (sent out of the class) rather than being in the classroom for the lessons. Methods used by educators, according to him, are not effective. As a youngster he learnt to be responsible because he was punished by his educators and parents. He mentions that his female educators talked to him. Currently he uses a code of conduct to discipline learners.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Nkwe's current classroom discipline practices**

In his response to how corporal punishment affected him as a child, Mr Nkwe replied that he has noted that corporal punishment is the last resort in dealing with learner discipline. When he was a learner, educators were harsh and the system at the time allowed educators to punish learners physically. Many learners grew stubborn; others left school because they could not cope with the punishment they received. Today learners are allowed to make choices; if they do not listen they will fail. If they do not do their homework, educators send badly behaved

learners outside – some of them enjoy this and at the end of the year they fail the examinations. As an educator he has learnt that talking to learners is more effective, although it takes time.

### **(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Nkwe**

During the follow-up interview Mr Nkwe emphasised that he has learnt that it is best to talk to learners first, before disciplining them, although there are those who will not listen. It is vital for the learner to know his or her mistakes before receiving a punishment or being disciplined. Currently Mr Nkwe talks to his learners before disciplining them. Learners accept the discipline and promise not to repeat the mistake again. This is what he said in the interview:

I have learnt that it is best to talk to learners first before disciplining them, although others refuse to listen. It is vital for the learner to know his/her mistakes before receiving a punishment or being subjected to disciplinary measures. Currently I also talk to my learners before disciplining them – they usually accept the discipline and promise not to repeat the mistake again.

Mr Nkwe emphasises the importance of talking to learners before disciplining them. By so doing their mistakes are highlighted and the discussions enhance acceptance of guilt and promote correcting and improving classroom discipline practices

### **(iii) Nkwe's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

In sharing his current classroom discipline practices, Mr Nkwe mentions that he uses a code of conduct to discipline learners. He explained by saying:

Our school code of conduct clearly indicates that a learner who abuses drugs, who comes late to school, who victimizes other learners, who disrupts the school, should be disciplined, meaning school management and the school governing body will talk to this learner. If he/she continues behaving in this unacceptable manner, he/she will appear in front of a disciplinary committee; if found guilty, he/she will be given a sanction, it can be final warning, detention nor suspension depending on the offence.

From this explanation Nkwe feels that a learner who violates the code of conduct should be disciplined by SGB. He gives all the steps of the code of conduct that can be implemented, depending on the seriousness of the offence. Nkwe is therefore aware of other alternatives to corporal punishment.

**(iv) Aspiration for the future**

In the final interview held with him, Mr Nkwe said that he wanted to see himself reformed in terms of the way he disciplines learners. In the past discipline and corporal punishment were one and the same. He now knows that pain is not the solution, although he himself was a product of the corporal punishment system. Mr Nkwe wants to reform and move away from the way he has been managing discipline in the past. He has come to appreciate that pain and fear are not the solution, despite the fact that he has experienced corporal punishment. Needless to say Mr Nkwe supports the abolition of corporal punishment by the South African Schools' Act (SASA 1996, 84).

This is how he puts it:

I want to see myself reformed in terms of the way I discipline learners. In the past discipline and corporal punishment was the same. I now know that pain is not the solution, although I am the product of corporal punishment.

**(v) Synopsis of Nkwe's lived experiences**

It can be deduced from the foregoing discussion, that Mr Nkwe acknowledges that corporal punishment was harsh and led to learners being stubborn. Currently learners have options regarding their school career. Like other participants Mr Nkwe encourages discussing disciplinary problems with learners so that they can be encouraged to acceptance of guilt and a change of behaviour. He also believed that a code of conduct can be helpful in addressing learner misbehaviour.

### **6.2.3 NARE'S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

Nare is a qualified teacher who has 20 years teaching experience. It goes without saying that she is a permanent educator. She joined the teaching fraternity when the use of corporal punishment was rife. She, like many others, made wide use of corporal punishment in the past. As a learner she was punitively punished both at home and at school. At school she was punished for shouting at other learners, defying educators and talking back at educators. However, she now feels that a conducive environment is a prerequisite for proper teaching and learning.

She has learnt that if you are not doing your work, you will feel pain. She indicates that her parents wanted her to become something in life. She saw no difference in the way her parents and her educators disciplined her. Her parents laid down rules which she was supposed to obey and at school there was a code of conduct to observe. Her parents also used to tongue-lash her. She is very receptive to any new methods of disciplining. She indicates in her view corporal punishment made her what she is today. If she was allowed to do so she would gladly go back to using corporal punishment to control poorly-disciplined learners.

Her experience is that excessive control at home creates disciplinary problems at school. When she was a child her parents came to school to instruct educators to punish all the children in the family. This experience has encouraged her to visit learners at their homes to meet the parents and keep them in touch about the learners' school performance. Some parents even demanded that she punitively punish their children, but often these learners would become stubborn and refuse to take punishment. The abolition of corporal punishment came as a blow to her. Currently she allows the learners to make choices – to choose whether they want to learn or not. She makes sure that she is very well prepared for all her lessons because this is a way of making her lessons attractive to her learners.

Since the abolition of corporal punishment she has also started tongue-lashing learners. She was influenced in this by her parents. Tongue-lashing certainly has an impact; most of her learners, she says, start doing their work because they do not want to be embarrassed. The way her parents tongue lashed her has influenced her to use the same strategy when disciplining learners.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Nare's current classroom discipline practices**

During the first semi-structured interview with Mrs Nare she explained that her parents lashed her and they indicated the wrong things she had done before punishing her. This is what she said:

My parents lashed me. They indicated the wrong things I had done before punishing me. At primary school most educators used a stick to discipline me. At secondary school most male educators use a cane but female teachers used a stick very minimally.

From the discussions with Mrs Nare she used words such as “lash”, “cane” and “stick” quite freely. It became clear that when she was a child she was corporally punished both by her

parents and her educators. She singled out female educators as those who used corporal punishment minimally.

**(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Nare.**

In outlining any significant incident she had experienced Mrs Nare alluded to the fact that she had learnt at home that if she was to develop as a responsible adult, she should not misbehave. If she disobeyed pain would be inflicted. At primary school this idea was reinforced. At secondary school she learnt that punishment is the only way to make learners read and do their work diligently.

Mrs Nare's responses highlighted the fact that corporal punishment was the order of the day when she began her teaching career. Pain was inflicted on learners at both primary and secondary school. She felt that she had benefited from the corporal punishment she received at home and at school. The punishment she had received at home had matured her but at school she only experienced fear and pain

**(iii) Nare's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

During the interview with Mrs Nare she indicated that currently a Code of Conduct is used to discipline learners. Learners' parents are also called to school if necessary. If they do not react in any way then their children are prohibited from attending lessons. By way of explanation, she said:

A code of conduct is used to discipline learners. Their parents are called to school, if they do not honour the invitation, learners are suspended from classes".

Mrs Nare also emphasises the importance of having a code of conduct and maintains that the involvement of parents is critical in disciplining learners.

**(iv) Aspiration for the future**

Mrs Nare concluded our interviews by saying that she wanted to see herself implementing new methods of discipline but she reiterated that we should not forget that corporal punishment had been a formative aspect of her childhood and made her generation what they are today, although it was painful. If present policies remain she will abide by the book and discipline learners by using modern approaches to classroom discipline practices – always being aware of new improvements

She explained:

If policies are still the same I think I will discipline learners the way I am disciplining them today, perhaps with some improvements.

Although she acknowledged the painful experiences of corporal punishment she had suffered, she had learnt to be punctual. She also feels that if disciplinary policies were to be reversed, she would continue using improved new methods, in other words internalizing current new ways of classroom discipline practices.

#### **(iv) Synopsis of Nare's lived experiences**

In summarising Mrs Nare's evidence, one concludes that the extent of the punishment she received at home and at school were an important influence in her life. She admits this was a painful and fearful experience, but she feels that the punishment she received at home has made her a more mature person. Despite the trauma of corporal punishment, she learnt to become a reliable member of society. Thus, although there were negative consequences there were also positive things that she learnt from both the school and home environment. She would be willing to use a code of conduct or any other innovative way of managing classroom discipline.

#### **6.2.4 PHALA'S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

Phala, similar to the other participants, is a permanent educator who has taught for more than ten years. As a qualified educator he has been teaching Grade 12 learners for the past four years. Mr Phala was punished by both his parents and his educators at primary as well as secondary school. To his educators and parents, corporal punishment and discipline, he says, both meant the same thing. When he started teaching he corrected learners' bad behaviour by corporal punishment. He says he believes he is what he is today because of corporal punishment. He was punished for not doing his school work, for being late and for not abiding by the rules. His parents withdrew certain benefits, for example they left him at home when they went into town.

According to Phala sometimes educators themselves cause disciplinary problems, because they do not master their subject matter and this tends to make their lessons boring. As a result

learners begin to skip classes and neglect their work. He makes sure that his learners have plenty of work to keep them busy. He has also noticed that in the past learners were afraid of educators, they respected them, and every learner wanted to become an educator. He puts this down to the use of corporal punishment, because very few learners want to become educators. Learners do not have respect for educators, nor do they fear them. If given a chance again Mr Phala would appreciate being allowed to use corporal punishment to punish poorly disciplined learners.

He argues that at home parents are still using corporal punishment and because educators are also acting on behalf of parents, they too should be allowed to use corporal punishment to reinforce the physical punishment children receive at home. Because of the punishment he received as a child he learnt that for effective teaching and learning to take place, there should be respect. Previously learners were afraid of their educators and respected them. When disciplining learners, he currently makes sure that learners are aware of their mistakes. He also prepares his lessons carefully and finds that no learner wants to miss his classes.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Phala's current classroom discipline practices**

During the interview with Mr Phala it was noted that he spoke of the word "whip" and that he was corporally punished. He explained:

My educators at primary school and my parents at home both used a whip. At secondary school they also punished me. I was punished there too, but not in the same way as my educators in primary school.

Mr Phala was very negative about the punishment he received at school. According to him it was acceptable to be punished at home by his parents but wrong to be punished by educators at school.

**(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Phala.**

Sharing some significant incidents that he has experienced, Mr Phala explained that his experience had taught him that for effective teaching and learning to take place, there should be respect between learners and educators. He felt that in the past, when he was at school learners respected their educators, whereas this was no longer the case and this has a negative affect on discipline. In the past educators were responsible and willing to sacrifice their time

for the learners, and educators were apt to punish the learners far more readily. From the foregoing responses and the emphasis on respect, I am tempted to say that Mr Phala appears to feel that respect, sacrifices and being responsible gives educators the justification to restore order in the class through the use of corporal punishment.

### **(iii) Phala's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

When Mr Phala was asked to share with me how he is currently dealing with classroom discipline he explained:

Disciplining learners differently will pose a management problem. When disciplining learners we are guided by rules, hence we discipline them the same.

His explanation implies that the use of a code of conduct can help solve classroom discipline. Furthermore, he condemns discrimination when disciplining learners. SASA (1996) has laid down certain measures to manage discipline effectively.

### **(iv) Aspiration for the future**

In concluding our interview, Mr Phala indicated that unless there are changes of policy in the education system, he will continue to comply with SASA regulations. In his own words he said:

It will depend, if there are no changes in our education system, I will use approaches prescribed by the Act.

I saw this as meaning that he also accepts that realistically speaking there will be no return to the use of corporal punishment.

### **(v) Synopsis of Phala's lived experiences**

In my discussions with Mr Phala it became apparent that he felt differently about the corporal punishment he received at home and school. The corporal punishment received from his educators was viewed as negative. He cherished the view that mutual respect between the learner and the educator is critical for effective teaching and learning to take place.

### 6.2.5 TLOU'S LIVED EXPERIENCES

Tlou is a permanently appointed educator. She has been teaching for the past 18 years. She is an Educational Specialist tasked with the responsibility of assisting educators in the Commerce department. Tlou is also very active in netball at the school.

Ms Tlou was exposed to corporal punishment when she was a learner, and also at home as a child. The corporal punishment she received from her educators has made her fear her educators. At secondary school, female educators chased her outside the classroom for not doing her work; male educators also punished her. When started teaching she used corporal punishment because it was the only effective method of correcting bad behaviour. Although she used corporal punishment when she started teaching, she later changed and now sends poorly-disciplined learners outside for not doing their work. Just like her parents did to her, she usually talks to the learners and admonishes them before disciplining them. Whenever a learner in her class misbehaves, she remembers how she was punished. The scars of the past have made had an effect on her; she no longer wants to use corporal punishment, and opts instead to send learners outside if they misbehave.

Ms Tlou was punished for disobeying rules, defying educators, fighting with other learners and dodging classes. She believes that learners in the past were not given a chance to explain why they were behaving in an unbecoming manner. She has therefore made it her business to talk to the learners first and explain to them why she is disciplining them. She went on to say that it was impossible to change bad behaviour without entering into a discussion and involving the learners.

#### **(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Tlou's current classroom discipline practices**

Ms Tlou explained during the first interview:

When I was a learner I was severely punished by my educators. I would really like to implement new approaches to discipline because the punishment I received from my educators when I was at school still torments me when I feel I must discipline my learners.

From her responses it is noted that she regrets the manner in which she was punished. She is saying that the punishment she received at school is still haunting her. So much so that she is

prepared to accept and experiment with new methods of disciplining learners. She wants to make learners realise that to feel pain is not an option.

## **(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Tlou**

In the interview with Ms Tlou she explained that experience had taught her that mutual respect is very necessary in the classroom:

My experience has taught me that for effective teaching and learning to take place, there should be respect between a learner and the educator. In my youth I was sometimes punished for mistakes I did not even make, and even now I still hate the educator who punished me unjustly.

The above discussion simply meant that a healthy relationship is a condition for effective teaching and learning. She was not happy that she had been punished unjustly and this had affected her negatively.

## **(iii) Tlou's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

During a follow-up interview, Ms Tlou responded by saying that she does not believe there will ever be a time when it can be said that all aspects on discipline have been covered.

She said:

Although the department has introduced new ways of managing discipline, we are still clinging to the past. Unless we are all taken on board and told how to implement new approaches, we will always prefer corporal punishment. Today's learners are very difficult to handle.

Ms Tlou blames the education authorities for poor management of classroom discipline. She also feels that classroom discipline is a wide problem and will continue to be a debatable issue.

## **(iv) Aspiration for the future**

In concluding the interviews with Ms Tlou she added:

Things change every now and then. If we still have the same basic education system, where corporal punishment is prohibited, I will use modern approaches.

Like four of the other participants she is willing to accept change and implement the new approaches to discipline, but she will never forget what happened to her in her past.

**(v) Synopsis of Tlou’s lived experiences**

Although haunted by her past experiences, Ms Tlou is eager to use modern approaches to discipline. To her too, mutual respect is necessary to assure learners of the educators’ support, thus enhancing trust and a sound learner-educator relationship. The fact that educators are still clinging to the past is an indication of their resistance to change. As far as she is concerned, there is no turning back to the use of corporal punishment.

**6.2.6 THOLO’S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

Tholo started teaching in 1993 (in the same school where she now teaches) a year before South Africa became a democracy. He only used corporal punishment for two years; thereafter he had to exercise discipline over learners in accordance with SASA (1996).

As a child he was punished punitively at home and at school. He hated the manner in which he was humiliated by his mother, sister and primary school educators. At home his mother called him *sekobo*, meaning ugly; his sisters called him *ditsebe*, meaning ears, and primary school his female teacher called him *mosesane*, meaning thin. All these names influenced him when he started teaching. He learnt from this experience that nicknaming and labelling humiliates learners, and has therefore always avoided calling learners by such names.

At secondary school Mr Tholo was also punished, but he always remembered his primary school educator who called him *mosesane*. He was not happy at secondary school because he was not given a chance to lodge his concerns or explain before receiving punishment. His father whipped him and so did his secondary school educators.

Mr Tholo indicated that he will never forget his secondary school principal, who slapped him for walking on the school veranda – and this when he was unaware that it was a not allowed. Even today when he speaks of this principal, he remembers the pain and wishes that he could resolve the matter and receive an apology. He swears that he will not so much as slap learners even if he is angry. He hates any educator who calls the learners names like “stupid”, or “lazy”. He is currently discouraging learners not to sing in the choir because he was also

punished during choir practice for something that he was not guilty of. He encourages learners to indicate their preferences on a sporting code of their choice at the beginning of the year. It is very rare that he disciplines learners. He prefers to talk to the culprits himself but in serious cases he sometimes refers them to the principal.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Tholo's current classroom discipline practices**

The impact of his corporal punishment as a child on Tholo's current classroom discipline practices was revealed as follows:

I would like to share with you my experience of being slapped for walking on the veranda by my secondary school principal. I was new at the school and no one told me that we were not allowed to walk on the veranda. I did not see him coming. I only saw myself kneeling down, I thought I was fainting. This incident always brings bad past memories of my secondary school years. The first thing that comes into my mind is this principal. Even now when my learners make me angry, I start to wonder if I can do the same. The fear of this principal haunted me for the rest of my school years.

From what Mr Tholo said, the fear of the unjust treatment and humiliation he suffered at the hands of his principal has never been forgotten and it plagued him for the rest of his school years. Even now he is aware of it to the extent that he does not want to see anything similar happening to his learners. Mr Tholo clearly objects to the indiscriminate use of corporal punishment he received in the hands of his former secondary school principal. He particularly objects that no warnings were issued before the corporal punishment was meted out. The message to be derived from his statement is that learners should be kept informed of all new school regulations and procedures. .

**(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Tholo**

In the second interview Mr Tholo exposed the following significant incident from his school days:

There was a female educator who called me *Mosesane* because I was very thin. The teacher reminded me of my mother and my sisters who called me names. I hated this educator. Because of this I never call the learners by nicknames. My father whipped me just as my educators did at secondary school.

From what Mr Tholo has said labelling causes humiliation and is degrading of one's self image. He hates any educators who call learners by peculiar or insulting names.

**(iii) Tholo's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

In a follow-up interview Mr Tholo explained:

The punishment I was given by the principal makes me hate music. I do not encourage learners to sing, and I influence them to participate either in soccer or netball. I realise that the principal did not even consider my interest. As an educator now, I discuss the available choices with my learners first before allowing them to choose the sporting code of their interest.

From the foregoing discussions it is noted that Mr Tholo has certainly been influenced by what happened to him when he was a learner. As an educator now, he discusses matters with his learners first before they choose what they are interested in doing in the line of sports and other extra-curricular activity. He also feels that educators should not decide on behalf of learners – they should be given opportunity to make their own choices.

**(iv) Aspiration for the future**

During the third interview Mr Tholo saw his future in relation to classroom discipline practices by saying:

I want to see myself managing discipline effectively. I would not like to revert back to the use of corporal punishment.

This statement above appears to imply that he has learnt that corporal punishment is not the solution to current classroom discipline practices – and that trying other methods will be the best option.

**(v) Synopsis of Tholo's lived experiences**

Mr Tholo is categorically against the indiscriminate use of corporal punishment by educators, especially if no warning is given to learners. He expresses concern about the domination by educators – where they take matters into their own hands and decide on the future of the learners without involving them. Another serious concern was calling learners by unacceptable names. Tholo felt this had a negative impact on teaching and learning and hampers a sound educator-learner relationship. Like other participants he is of the opinion that there should not be any talk of reverting to the use of corporal punishment.

### 6.2.7 TSHUKUDU'S LIVED EXPERIENCES

Tshukudu is a permanently appointed educator with a three-year qualification. Her interviews indicated that she too had been corporally punished when she was a child at home, at primary and at secondary school. At home she was warned first and at school her educators used a cane without any warning. When she started teaching in 1989, corporal punishment was the major disciplinary method, so she had no option but to use it.

Ms Tshukudu is convinced that she is what she is today because of corporal punishment. Due to the use of corporal punishment at home, she learnt to respect her parents and accept their decisions about acceptable behaviour. At school she learnt to fear her educators who were very strict. When she was a learner, it was very rare to find learners talking back to educators. If they did, they were taken to the principal's office and punished. Today, in contrast, learners do as they wish. After the abolition of corporal punishment she adopted her parents' style – that of warning learners before disciplining them. She punishes poorly-disciplined learners by giving them more work after school, especially if they come to school late. She also uses a code of conduct to discipline learners. According to her, a disciplined educator seldom has disciplinary problems in the classroom. If she/he is late for her/his classes, learners also tend to be late. She likes to set an example and feels that this makes learners easier to control.

She explains that she will not forget her secondary school principal who used to stand on the veranda watching learners as they arrived in the morning. All learners would start running as if someone had ordered them to run. When he approached the gate, every learner made sure that he/she was inside the yard to avoid punishment from the principal. When corporal punishment was abolished, she adopted her principal's style. If she went to class and found learners making noise, she would stand at the door and look sternly at those making the noise. Without saying a word, the culprits will then keep quiet. She then asks the monitors to make a list of the offenders. After school those learners are told to remain behind. The manner in which she was disciplined by her principal has influenced her to manage discipline differently.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Tshukudu's current classroom discipline practices**

During her interview Ms Tshukudu explained that it is difficult to say which disciplinary method is the most effective, but because things normally change for the good, she feels that the new approaches are the best ones to follow. She explains the above by saying:

The past is gone but the past shapes the future and the past influences the future. We were punished and tortured but we did not learn to be responsible.

From the above evidence I conclude that Tshukudu feels that one will not necessarily become responsible simply because one has been disciplined by the use of corporal punishment. Ms Tshukudu acknowledges the past, and believes that she is what she is today because of what happened in the past.

**(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Tshukudu**

Ms Tshukudu outlined some incidents that she feels were significant:

At home I was warned first for the wrong things I had done. My parents told us rules such as we should not come home late, we must not fight, and we should always wash dishes before doing our homework. Failure to obey these rules meant punishment. At school a cane was used to punish us and we were not told why we were given a particular punishment.

From the above it would seem that Ms Tshukudu appreciates the punishment she received at home, and obeyed the house rules. But she feels that the punishment she received at school was negative. One could further say that she learnt from the punishment she received at home, and would approve of making class rules that should be obeyed if discipline is to be avoided.

**(iii) Tshukudu's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

During the second interview Ms Tshukudu explained:

We are guided by the code of conduct. All learners are disciplined in the same manner. Looking at the nature of the misbehaviour, privacy will be awarded to the affected learner.

It is apparent from the foregoing statements that the participant was concerned about the matter of uniformity in disciplining learners, and this can only be achieved by using a code of

conduct. She is also aware of allowing a learner some privacy when the offence is discussed with the educator. She accepts that multiple methods will be helpful in maintaining classroom discipline.

#### **(iv) Aspiration for the future**

In the third interview, where I wanted to know about her future, Ms Tshukudu was quick to explain that she thinks there will be no turning back to corporal punishment. If the law still dictates that no learner should be punitively punished then there will, she hopes, be new improved ways to discipline learners.

#### **(v) Synopsis of Tshukudu's lived experiences**

Although Ms Tshukudu was punished and tortured by what she went through, she claims not to have learnt to be responsible in the process. She compares the punishment by her parents and that by her educators. According to her, punishment meted out by her parents was because she failed to obey the rules laid down by her parents. She recommended the use of code of conduct to promote uniformity. Punishment for a misdemeanour should be in accordance with its severity. Like four of the other participants she does not wish to go back to the use of corporal punishment.

### **6.2.8 KWENA'S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

Kwena began his teaching career at a secondary school. He is a qualified educator with REQV 15. According to him a conducive environment, one where learners and educators are self-disciplined, is important. He also maintains that educators too (not only learners) should be self-disciplined.

As a learner and a child he experienced discipline that instilled fear. To his parents and educators, disciplining meant punitively punishing. Mr Kwena claims that at school he was whipped and at home he was also lashed, but his father first took the time to talk to him before he was punished.

When Kwena began teaching in 1989, he also used corporal punishment, but minimally. He says that he will never forget that as a learner his choirmaster punished him for an offence of which he was innocent. Even today he still has those emotional scars. His educator was convinced that he was making noise but this was not so. Currently, because of this, he is not encouraging learners to sing in the choir. When he thinks of the day he was punished, he wishes that educator could come and apologize to him. His grievance lies in the fact that he was not given a chance to give his side of the story when the presumed offence was discussed in the presence of his mother.

As an educator he currently he uses modern methods of punishing both disciplined and poorly-disciplined learners. He hopes to imprint on the children's minds only good things so that they can remember him by. Mr Kwena learnt not to make any negative impression on learners because these tend to leave scars in their minds for the rest of their lives.

As a youngster his father warned him for not doing his work so he apologised and promised not to repeat the mistake. Currently, Mr Kwena has adopted his father's style but has gone further by allowing learners to declare in writing that they will never repeat their mistakes again. He also talks to offenders, issues warnings and gives detention when disciplining learners.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Kwena's current classroom discipline practices**

Like all other participants Mr Kwena was asked to respond on how corporal punishment has affected his current classroom discipline practices. To this he replied:

I would like to disagree with those educators who want corporal punishment back. It is time that educators become self-disciplined. If an educator is not preparing lessons well, learners will challenge them in class and they will feel embarrassed. We know we cannot forget that as educators we were previously humiliated by the system. Our parents used to instruct our educators to punitively punish us for the offences we did at home. We must accept change although what happened in the past will always haunt us.

It is apparent from these statements that Mr Kwena discourages the use of corporal punishment and stresses that self-discipline must be shown by both learners and educators. He mentions that when educators prepare their lessons well, disciplinary problems will be minimised, learners will be challenged and they will actively participate in the classroom.

The fact that parents are instructing educators to punish learners makes it clear that these parents are unable to control their children, and the noble idea of working collaboratively as stakeholders in education is defeated. He feels that current educators are apt to think that learners are challenging the authorities but that this is often untrue. Discipline to him mean team work – parents, educators and learners should all be equally responsible for classroom discipline.

**(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Kwena**

During the second interview, Mr. Kwena in his response to questions posed to him stated that

As a learner I will never forget my choir master, he punished me for something I had not done. Even now, I still have an emotional scar from that incident. The educator was convinced that I was making noise. As a result, currently I do not encourage learners to join the school choir.

Mr Kwena thus confirmed that he was influenced by his choirmaster and now discourages learners not to participate in music. This shows too that there are no rules laying down acceptable and unacceptable behaviour of the choristers during choir practice. Although Kwena claimed that he was not making noise, there was apparently no rule in force that prohibited noise-making during choir practice. He claims that the emotional scar of this incident has led to his negative attitude towards singing as an extra curricular activity.

**(iii) Kwena's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

Kwena's responses regarding his current classroom discipline practices are as follows:

At home we are five boys and two girls, my father had herd of cattle. As an elder son, it was my responsibility to make sure that we had milk the cows before going to school. One Monday I had a morning class. I woke up late and I requested my brother to milk the cows. Unfortunately my brother did not do what I had asked. He simply went to school and so there was no milk. During break we went home as usual and there was no milk, so we could not eat. My father wanted me to explain why there was no milk. I failed to give him the answer. My father then warned me that if he gave me work to do I should not delegate the tasks assigned to me. He also said that if I was unable to do the task I should inform him. He told me to apologise for what I had done and I did so and promised not to repeat the mistake. As an educator I adopted my father's style. When a learner misbehaves, I call him/her, show him/her the mistake, warn him/her and ask him/her to apologise and make a commitment not to repeat the mistake again.

From the evidence above I noted that Mr Kwena focuses on the value of explaining and discussing the nature of the learners' misbehaviour. This procedure should be followed because the process affords the learner the opportunity to apologize for the mistake and commit himself/herself not to repeat the same mistake again. The consultative process is important to reveal any tension that might prevail between and educator and the learner who misbehaved.

#### **(iv) Aspiration for the future**

During the final stage of the interview Mr Kwena's responses revealed that despite the negative and positive experiences of his past experiences, he is willing to proceed with life and his career in a spirit of adapting to change. He therefore said:

I do not want to go back to corporal punishment if the law still dictates that no learner should be punitively punished, I will use the code of conduct.

#### **(v) Synopsis of Kwena's lived experiences**

Mr Kwena appreciated the manner in which his father talked to him. He was also willing to apologize. The incident influenced him and this resulted in using a similar approach with his learners. According to Mr Kwena education is cooperative process, in order to have an effective classroom discipline practice, learners must be consulted. Mr Kwena sees the code of conduct as a way of replacing harsh corporal punishment. He says that he will never revert back to the use of corporal punishment even if he is allowed to do so.

### **6.2.9 PHUTI'S LIVED EXPERIENCES**

Phuti, similar to the other participants, is an experienced teacher. She has been teaching for more than 6 years. She began teaching at a secondary school in 1993, three years before the abolition of corporal punishment. As a child she was punished by her primary educators as well as her parents. Currently she still thinks of her grade 2 educator who punished her with a ruler. One of her fingers is deformed because of this punishment, and because of this, when she started teaching she believed that an educator should not strike out in anger at a learner. She believes that learners should be self-disciplined. She always talks to learners and challenges them about important behavioural and moral issues.

According to Ms Phuti, discipline should come naturally. People should discipline themselves. She said that discipline has to do with putting order to a disorderly situation.

**(i) The impact of corporal punishment on Phuti's current classroom discipline practices**

When asked to comment about the use of corporal punishment and its impact on current classroom discipline practices, Ms Phuti explained:

I felt bad about the punishment I got from my primary educator. My finger is deformed, and when I look at my finger I swear to God that I will never punished learners who misbehaved or make them feel pain, especially when you are angry.

From what Ms Phuti says here, she has learnt that disciplining learners requires one to be sober minded. Learners will trust you if you tell them their mistakes, with experience she will make sure that she is not imprinting bad memories in children's minds.

**(ii) Significant incidents experienced by Phuti.**

During the follow-up interview Ms Phuti, mentioned of her learners:

I want to develop trust before disciplining them. Currently when I look at my finger I picture a bad memory of my educator.

From Ms Phuti's experiences, it is evident that she will always have the disturbing memory of the unfortunate incident at the hands of her primary educator. Ms Phuti will always be reminded of the punishment she received at school. Moreover she is resentful than no one even apologised for causing her disability. She also sees anger as a contributory factor in the cruel incident. She points out that a negative experience such as this could well undermine the sound relationship between educator and learner – a relationship which is critical to teaching and learning.

**(iii) Phuti's current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices**

During the second interview Ms Phuti explained that she uses different approaches to manage her classroom discipline:

My approach differs. It will depend upon the situation I found myself in. If an older child misbehaves in front of the class, I go out and discontinue teaching. I know the class will deal with the offender.

From her evidence it is clear that Ms Phuti encourages the class to become part of the disciplinary process and in so doing teach other learners to become responsible. Her approach in this regard was different from those mentioned by other participants.

**(iv) Aspiration for the future**

In the last interview, the participant Phuti explained:

I see myself as able to inculcate self-discipline in learners, although it takes time I hope to achieve this.

This indicates that Ms Phuti is confident that she will not have a problem in disciplining learners, especially with her background of a negative experience – the incident that left her with a deformed finger. This memory lives with her and has influenced her decision not to inflict pain, but rather inculcate self-discipline.

**(v) Synopsis of Phuti's lived experiences**

The discussions with Ms Phuti revealed that anger is not necessary to maintain classroom discipline. Indeed, it may well lead to learners being injured. She also emphasised the importance of trust between the learner and the educator. This trust can be built up when an educator almost sees the learners as his/her own children. Discipline should never be vindictive and acrimonious. Ms Phuti alluded to the fact that the application of discipline is primarily determined by the situation that caused the problem, and that the solution is derived from the circumstances surrounding it. One particular method of managing classroom discipline, as practiced by Ms Phuti, is making a discipline programme a classroom project.

**6.3. ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF PARTICIPANTS' CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE PRACTICES AND EXPERIENCES**

In this section I will analyse the data gathered and presented in the previous section with the aim of determining whether the lived experiences of educators did, in some shape or form, influence their perceptions, approaches to and strategies adopted for coping with classroom discipline.

### **6.3.1 The impact of corporal punishment on participants' current classroom discipline practices**

A common thread that runs through this study is that participants have all been exposed to corporal punishment in their homes and schools as learners. The question that I will now address is whether this experience has in any way changed their own perceptions about corporal punishment. Discipline includes the rules that are set for behaviour as well as the punishment meted out if these rules are broken. The smacking of children has been encouraged and condoned during the time when participants were learners. The findings of the study suggest that an educator who has become accustomed to powerful and traumatic punishment finds it difficult to control learners with diplomatic reasoning or appeal to logic (Yeats 1990, 49). However, participants in the study are aware of modern ways of dealing with classroom problems. In the past corporal punishment had its role in maintaining discipline in the class. Currently, it is important that participants to put more emphasis on reinforcing positive behaviour and ignoring bad behaviour. They must draw the attention of the misbehaving learner to that of a learner who is behaving appropriately. (Mwamwenda 2004, 279).

The current culture of defiance of authority by learners reminded participants of the punishment they were faced with as learners. The negative experience of being abused often does not result in refraining from child abuse as adults. Typically such children who are abused, neglected by their family or traumatised by their circumstances, are at risk of underachieving academically, have poor school attendance and may drop out of school more frequently (Garson 2003, 2). Parents of participants did not adhere to the call of the school when called to address disciplinary problems. Currently participants as educators are also experiencing the same challenge. This trend was confirmed in this study. Parents who avoid working with the school do so because they feel they will be “put down” (Hunter 1990, 112).

In chapter 4 cultural practices of learners in sample schools were mentioned, it was therefore assumed that these cultural practices affected classroom discipline practices. Educators should therefore make value judgements as what is good or bad behaviour because of their training and background. Participants in the study emphasised on blaming the past. Living in a new democratic climate, participants should strive towards using techniques that are directed towards definite desired changes (Bany & Johnson 1965, 24

Five participants who were subjected to beating and corporal punishment as children wished that they could have the power to avenge themselves by using corporal punishment. They felt that inflicting pain would induce the required response from learners – acceptable behaviour. All participants mentioned that corporal punishment was used both at home and at school when they were young. They highlighted that the education system of their time encouraged corporal punishment which was harshly meted out; they observed that this tended to make learners stubborn but also helped to restore order. Although the memories of the pain and humiliation conjured up negative emotions, they have taken some positive lessons from the experience and still believe that the aim of the punishment (restoring order and maintaining control over learners) justifies the method. Two of the participants specifically stated that they would welcome a return to using corporal punishment if this was permitted again at some time in the future. One respondent declared that if he was not allowed to use corporal punishment again he would seriously consider leaving the teaching profession. This raises the question whether he is perhaps still meting out corporal punishment.

In some of the narratives participants' experiences with corporal punishment clearly reveal associated elements of sadness, pain, vulnerability and fear. These elements may be indicative of at least some degree of trauma being linked to corporal punishment. In cases where participants did experience these emotions they sought help (counselling) from their friends or parents. It is interesting therefore that despite this, a number of the participants were still in favour of the use of corporal punishment.

The nine participants mentioned that currently learners are given an opportunity to choose the form of sanctions that they would prefer in cases where they are misbehaving. To some of the participants, this implies that the learners are given responsibility for deciding about their future, but often they misuse the opportunity and misbehave. According to four participants, female educators in the past used corporal punishment less often than their male counterparts, but that did not alter their belief about the value of corporal punishment.

Four of the participants held a different opinion on the value of corporal punishment. They expressed strong negative connotations to the corporal punishment they had received at school. To them it was acceptable for parents to punish their own children at home, but they did not think this should be permitted at school. The manner in which they were punitively

punished made them change their views on whether there was anything to recommend using corporal punishment. Their memories of the humiliation and pain that they suffered converted them to the use of alternative forms of discipline and they have indicated that they would like to use modern ways of managing classroom discipline, including the use of the code of conduct. They have no wish to revert back to the use of corporal punishment. It thus appears that being subjected to corporal punishment as a child does not automatically mean that the same people, as adult educators, would choose to use it. What seems to be of greater importance is the range of strategies modelled to educators when they were young. If children are exposed to a range of disciplinary strategies it affords them the opportunity to reflect on the alternatives and choose what they feel aligns best with their own values and convictions.

All the participants indicated that as learners they were given no warning at school before the corporal punishment was meted out, whereas at home their parents did discuss the misdemeanours and warn them about behaving badly. But at school the rules according to which they had to live were compiled by those in authority and seldom discussed. One participant mentioned that at school, especially in secondary school, no one explained the school procedures and rules, and hence he became the victim of being punished for merely walking on the veranda.

This line of reasoning is in direct opposition to the ideas discussed in Chapter 2 (Theories of Discipline) on the behaviourist approach to discipline. It seems to be more aligned to the cognitive school of thinking – thereby indicating the value of discussing rules and discipline with learners.

Reflecting on their lived experiences, two participants said that even though they were subjected to harsh disciplinary methods as learners, it inculcated a sense of being self-disciplined and promoted responsibility for one's own actions. It could be inferred from this line of reasoning that educators may justify harsh disciplinary methods as serving a higher order goal, namely that of teaching learners self-discipline.

From the narratives it has also emerged that some parents who cannot control their children at times referred their children to educators for punishment, thus shifting their responsibility to educators. Because corporal punishment has been abolished in schools, educators find themselves in a predicament. This appears to be an indication that parents are under the

misapprehension that the school is a centre where pain can be inflicted on a learner in order to change her/his unacceptable behaviour.

### 6.3.2 Significant incidents in participants' past

All of the participants cited important events in their lives that were associated with some form of physical punishment. The legacy of these experiences and how they gave meaning to this differs from person to person. It was clear from one participant that his educator was intolerant of late-coming and punished him without trying to establish the reason for this behaviour. Instead of condemning the punishment he has projected his frustration and anger towards the subject and thus discourages learners to take Mathematics in grade 12. Another participant's finger was deformed as a result of being beaten with a ruler and she has taken the decision not to use any physical punishment on her learners, but rather to discuss the misbehaviour with them. It was noted from the responses made by six of the participants that talking to learners enhanced acceptance of guilt and promoted improved learner behaviour. Three participants indicated that they benefited more from the physical punishment received at home than at school. For them the goal of achieving a well-behaved class through the use of corporal punishment justifies the method. Some of the participants even justified deeds of labelling, belittling and humiliation as serving the greater cause.

What emerged vividly is the fact that significant events in the past did have an influence on how teachers think about discipline (for example associating it with fear and pain) and how they are dealing with discipline in class.

This can be summarised as follows:

Table 7: **Significant incidents in participants' past**

#### INCIDENTS OF THE PAST

*My mother tongue-lashed me as a child  
I was beaten and lashed*

*I was warned before I was punished  
My father talked to me and showed me how  
to behave*

#### CURRENT PRACTICES

*I tongue-lashed my learners  
I want to see myself managing discipline effectively. I would not like to revert  
back to the use of corporal punishment. I prefer talking to learners;  
sometimes I refer them to the principal  
I hope to use talking through warning  
I discipline learners by talking to them and show them the important values  
in life*

### 6.3.3 CURRENT BEHAVIOUR IN TERMS OF CLASSROOM DISCIPLINE PRACTICES

#### (a) Negative reflections

Negative reflections of participants' experiences were revealed by the use of these words and statements:

"I also think that the **torture** we were faced with is reflected back when I see learners **defying** authorities. In the past learners were **afraid** of teachers and corporal punishment."

"He **slapped** me for something I was not guilty of."

"My fingers **were red**. After school I went home **crying**."

"**Pain** forced learners to do their work."

"Corporal punishment is different because learners are made to **feel pain** as a way of keeping order enforced the culture of commitment by the stick."

"I **used a stick** to try to change a **bad** behaviour."

"When teachers **used a lash** they thought that they were disciplining me."

"From teachers, I learnt that I will **feel pain** if I do not do my work."

"At home my parents used a **lash** to discipline me. At primary school my teachers also used a **stick** to call me to order."

"Corporal punishment is different because learners are made to **feel pain** as a way of keeping order enforced the culture of commitment by the stick."

My mother called me **sekobo** (ugly), my sister called me **ditsebe** (ears), my educator called me **Mosesane** (thin).

The punishment they received as learners left emotional scars on the participants and shaped their current behaviour and attitude towards discipline. Participants perceived that currently learners are uncontrollable. While they feel that corporal punishment forced them to live in fear and thus observe all authority to avoid punishment, this did not heal the hurt they felt and anger they developed. If the current educators were allowed to use corporal punishment, this would only bring an image of order, while hatred, fear, pain, anger and all manner of negative feelings will develop, which would culminate in more violence. Corporal punishment is therefore an ineffective shortcut to the inculcation of long-term self-discipline. One participant was influenced by his principals who stood in front of the school to watch learners

as they rushed to classes. The sight of the principal was a symbol of torture and pain. With fear dominating their lives learners will never be able to express themselves freely and cultivate creativity.

**(b) Positive reflections**

From what the nine participants said in their interviews I was able to identify the following statements, as positive reflections on classroom discipline:

“Discipline maintains order.”

“I am what I am because of corporal punishment.”

“Corporal punishment made learners responsible.”

“Educators’ control tactics were reflective of the times.”

“Discipline meant creating an environment conducive for teaching and learning.”

“Educators were respected people.”

“Educators in the past were responsible and willing to sacrifice their time for learners, therefore it was very easy to punish learners.”

“Educators in the past continuously analysed their teaching methods, although they were punishing us they were doing their work and teachers were always accessible.”

“I will use corporal punishment because parents at home are still punishing their children.”

“We have lost their respect; using corporal punishment will bring back our respect.”

“The effectiveness of corporal punishment is seen in the fact that learners are afraid of you.”

“Today learners are allowed to make choices, if they do not listen, they will fail.”

“My parents set rules to be obeyed. If we failed to obey them we were punished.”

My interpretation of the statements above is that educators currently cannot maintain order in their classroom. They feel that they need a stick or lash to help to create an orderly teaching and learning environment. The participants appear to view discipline as a way of maintaining order, and say that this is a prerequisite for effective teaching and learning. This is also confirmed by Oosthuizen *et al.* (1994, 59) who write: “Discipline protects the pupil”. In an orderly environment, discipline protects a pupil against the unruly and undisciplined behaviour of his fellow pupils. Van der Westhuizen (1994, 223) says that if one has to act in a disciplinary way, it can be negative or positive. Negative discipline entails punishment while

positive discipline aims at influencing the person to behave differently. It is clear that the nine participants in my study are aware of their failure to create order in their classrooms. I interpret this as calling for help.

According to SASA, to achieve good discipline every school should have written code of conduct (SASA 1996, 60), participants mentioned that when using a code of conduct RCLs (for learners), SMT (for management), SGB (for both parents and educators) should be involved but in their schools this was not available. I regard this as positive because they know what to do and they know that a code of conduct can create a well organised and good school. One participant mentioned that he condemns the discrimination between learners when disciplining learners. The use of a code of conduct will remove the danger of discriminatory punishment.

The notion of spare the rod and spoil the child comes to mind when interpreting the findings of my research – particularly so when certain participants claimed to have achieved success today because they were punished corporally as children. To them it is best for learners to feel pain by using the stick because they will benefit, they will become something in life. From what the participants said I noted that there was a comparison made between current educators and the previous generation of educators. According to these participants corporal punishment was justified in the past because educators were doing their work; learners did not want to miss classes; they came early to school. They compare this to the current situation where learners dodge classes and educators fail to call them to order. One is also tempted to say that with the punishment they received at home, learners were moulded and taught to be responsible. Oosthuizen *et al.* also confirmed this by seeing discipline as a scripturally based principle (1994, 59). They feel that the scripture sanctions the right of an educator to mould the child, thereby placing him on the right path (Bayliss 1991, 8)

It is evident from the positive reflections mentioned above, that educators are paternal/maternal figures. They should always be accessible and sacrifice their time for learners, because they should have the interest of learners at heart. One positive reflection noted from one of the participants (in the light of the fact that corporal punishment cannot be used) is that of making classroom discipline a classroom project by allowing learners to censure offenders. Learners must be taught to be responsible to get the most out of their education. They must always be given the opportunity to explain why they behave the way they do. This is

confirmed by Wolk (2002), when he says bad behaviour can be prevented by establishing a shared value system in the classroom that encourages students to monitor their own behaviour. The point I also want to make in relation to positive reflections is the link between the home and the school, and the contrast thereof. At home participants mentioned that parents set rules, if one disobeyed these rules he/she was to be punished. Informal education in the home cannot be translated into formal education at school, because in the three sample schools there was no code of conduct or school rules. These schools were unaware that a clearly drafted set of school rules serves as a reciprocal code of conduct between pupils themselves and pupils and teachers (Oosthuizen *et al.* 1994, 27). The participants in this study are currently warning learners not to misbehave. They are being made aware of what is expected of them and what actions will be taken against them if they are disobedient. Participants know that corporal punishment is a thing of the past but some have regrets that it cannot be used again.

From what participants said it is clear that both negative and positive incidents have contributed to the manner in which learners are being disciplined. When I analysed participants' experiences there was an indication that although they were punished as children, there were positive reflections that affected the manner in which they are managing classroom discipline currently.

#### **6.3.4 Aspiration for the future**

In this study participants' lived experiences informed the importance of classroom discipline practices. It appears that some had no hope that they will ever manage discipline effectively without corporal punishment. One participant even indicated that if he is not allowed to use corporal punishment in the near future, he would rather leave the teaching profession. He saw himself failing in future. As was mentioned in chapter 4, I am frequently called in to intervene in the three sample schools, especially on issues of classroom discipline. At times, parents complained that the SMT has not been assertive enough in dealing with learner discipline. Unfortunately it is true to say that several participants were not eager to develop an environment that is caring, pleasant, relaxed, friendly, yet orderly and productive. They still believe in making learners feel pain and be in fear of their educators.

Participants recognised that the current classroom discipline practices offer great challenges. It was noted that participants wanted to move away from the punishment to an approach

which is clearly focused on building and sustaining a positive relationship in our school community. Because the only means that they know of controlling learners (i.e. corporal punishment) has been taken away, they have lost all hope of maintaining classroom discipline. It was also mentioned by two participants that although their educators punished them, they behaved responsibly, did their work and helped the learners pass. In other words these educators subscribe to the statement:

“Be responsible for yourself and allow kids to take responsibility for themselves” (<http://www.ascd.org/readingroom/books/curwin99book.html>). Current educators seem discouraged to go to class, they are never on time for their periods. This makes their future regarding classroom discipline bound to fail, despite all the efforts by the Department of Education to provide alternatives to corporal punishment. It is not that the alternatives offered by the department are without merit – it is probably more a case that these suggestions are new and untested and the educators are hesitant to use them.

Seven participants (although not in the same words or statements) wished to improve on the old way of disciplining learners and use alternative methods. They did mention that talking to the learners might be the best method of disciplining them. These participants were influenced by their parents and female educators to use talking as a disciplinary measure, but in my observation of the participants they were not very successful in implementing this strategy and their classes were often unruly. Two participants were willing to inculcate self-discipline in learners, and saw the necessity of educators also being dedicated to self-discipline. Self-discipline does not come easily, but is only achieved through concerted efforts. Participants, however, found themselves in somewhat of an unwieldy situation. Many of the learners currently in the secondary schools were in primary school at a time when corporal punishment was still practised. These learners have not been exposed to situations where educators discuss learners’ misbehaviour with them and may regard it as a sign of educator weakness. Participants realise that they cannot turn back the clock, but they are experiencing severe difficulty in dealing with current disciplinary problems through the avenue of discussion of problems with learners. The only option open to them is to implement current policies or leave the profession. Participants saw their situation as totally disempowering.

The feeling of disempowerment does not deter participants from trying to use other strategies. The following two statements summarize their attitude:

This experience left a mark in my life and I realised that sometimes educators can punish you for a mistake you did not do. Currently before I discipline a learner, I make sure that I communicate to them the mistake they did and then together agree on the form of discipline.

My finger is deformed because of the punishment I got from my primary school educator. The punishment made me to develop new ways of disciplining learners rather than relying on old methods. I discipline learners by talking to them and show them the important values in life.

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

From the data presented there are many points that reflect the educators' awareness of approaches to achieve good and positive discipline. In analysing and interpreting participants' lived experiences elements that are associated with ineffective disciplinary practices also emerged:

- Vague or unenforceable rules; sometimes no rules at school. The importance of a set of clear rules became very obvious to me when I was observing at the schools.
- Inconsistent educator responses to misbehaviour; when educators are inconsistent in their enforcement of rules, classroom discipline is generally poor (see also Gottfredson 1989).
- Punishment which is excessive or meted out without support. Docking 1982; Doyle 1989; Maurer and Wallerstein 1984 have found that the results of corporal punishment are unpredictable, even when it is successful at inhibiting inappropriate behaviour, corporal punishment still does not foster appropriate behaviour.
- There was lack of commitment on the part of educators to establish and maintain appropriate learner behaviour as an essential precondition of teaching and learning.
- Lack of warm school climate characterised by concern for learners as individuals. This was lacking in the three sample schools. Educators did not support learners in their academic and extracurricular activities.
- Educators referred problematic learners to principal instead of principals mainly dealing with serious infractions. This confirms that educators failed to handle routine classroom disciplinary problems.
- Educators did not explain the connection between learners' misbehaviour and their imposed sanctions.
- Educators viewed discipline as something imposed from outside the classroom.

The participants presented their lived experiences, mainly those dealing with classroom discipline practices. However they did also mention other contextual factors that affected discipline at school. Focus areas in this chapter were the analysis and interpretation of the impact of corporal punishment on current classroom discipline practice, significant incidents of participants' past, and current behaviour in terms of classroom discipline practices, including their aspiration for future. There were reflections on how their behaviour was influenced by their constructed meanings especially in relation to their current classroom discipline practices.

It was revealed from what the participants said that they were influenced by their lived experiences. All nine educators had something to relate about their experience of the disciplinary action they were subjected to. This is captured in the rubric: *“The past is always part of me, especially when learners make me angry”*