

**The management of discipline of learners in special schools**

**by**

**Engela Susanna van der Linde**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree**

**MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS**

**In the Faculty of Education**

**At the**

**UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

**NOVEMBER 2019**

## DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation/thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree MAGISTER EDUCATIONIS at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other tertiary institution.”



.....  
Engela van der Linde

November 2019

# ETHICAL CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA  
Faculty of Education

## RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

<b>CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b>	<b>CLEARANCE NUMBER:</b> <b>EM 18/04/03</b>
<b>DEGREE AND PROJECT</b>	<b>MEd</b>  The management of discipline of learners in special schools
<b>INVESTIGATOR</b>	Ms Engela van der Linde
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>Education Management and Policy Studies</b>
<b>APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY</b>	06 June 2018
<b>DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b>	10 December 2019

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:** Prof Liesel Ebersöhn

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chaya Herman'.

**CC** **Ms Bronwynne Swarts**  
**Prof Chaya Herman**

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

## DEDICATION

*I dedicate this research to my Heavenly Father and thank Him for instilling in me a passion for helping children, as well as the emotional resilience to persevere in the face of so many ongoing challenges.*

*I also dedicate my study to Maeder and Evett Labuschagne for always supporting me, both emotionally and financially.*

*You helped me to realise my dream and I will always be humbled by your kindness.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing this dissertation was a journey which I could not have completed without the support of my family and friends. I would like to thank:

- My supervisor, Professor Chaya Herman, for your invaluable guidance, support and academic insight. Your endless patience with me has enabled me to find my voice.
- The staff of the University of Pretoria for being supportive throughout my journey, in particular Dr. Michelle Finestone and Professor Onwu.
- To my husband, Melvyn, and my children Nicka and Henlo for your patience, support and encouragement throughout my academic journey. Your unconditional love guided and motivated me at times when I felt discouraged.
- My parents and family (Spoelstra and Van der Linde) for your continued belief in my ability to achieve. Your words of wisdom and reassurance was a beacon of light that guided me through the dark passages.
- My friends (Piet, Tiaan and Danielle), for your willingness to be a soundboard for my studies and patiently listening to my progress.
- Praneeta, for your continued belief in me and for being such an amazing mentor. From the day we met, your encouragement has had such a profound impact on my career and for that I will always be grateful.
- Johan and Karen, we started this journey as fellow students and ended it as friends. Your support along the way has been of immeasurable value.
- To all my colleagues who encouraged me to pursue my dreams, including those I am unable to mention by name due to reasons of confidentiality. Your immense contribution, not only to this study but to the field of education in general, cannot be overstated.
- Lizelle and Anton, for all your valuable inputs towards the end of this process. The result is a work that I am truly proud of.
- All my participants for trusting me to make a difference in the lives of others.

## ABSTRACT

### **The management of discipline of learners in special schools**

The lack of learner discipline in ordinary schools is a universal concern. Managing learners' discipline is even more challenging in special schools since learners with special educational needs (LSEN) struggle with a wide range of difficulties that impact their behaviour. Many of these learners do not readily recognise authority and have a very hard time following school rules. These are often secondary problems stemming from primary conditions, such as communication disorders which are complex and difficult to manage.

This case study was conducted at a special school in the Gauteng province of South Africa. A sample of 18 members participated in the study by answering semi-structured interview questions. The goal of this qualitative study was to answer the main research question: How do special schools manage learner discipline? To do this, the nature, intensity and frequency of the disciplinary issues of learners in special schools had to be explored. The unique challenging and disruptive behaviours of individual learners in special schools include but are not limited to ADHD-associated behaviours, extreme aggressiveness, the throwing of tantrums, verbal abuse and direct threats towards teachers and other learners, hitting, biting and scratching teachers, severe defiance, and severe bullying. These behavioural challenges have a negative impact on both the quality of teaching and learning as well as on the safety and security of all school stakeholders.

The findings of this study were interpreted through the theoretical lens of the social model of disability, as learners in special schools are accommodated using measures implemented from a social premise. While using the medical model of disability as a base, teachers and other staff at the research site currently apply the principles of the social model of disability to accommodate learners with behavioural problems in spite of the limitations of this model. These environmental accommodative measures have also

proven successful in removing spatial barriers and assisting the staff in managing learner behaviour.

This study used Charles' (1989) definition concept as a working definition for the management of discipline in schools focusing on preventive, supportive and corrective discipline. The literature review focussed on these concepts in relation to the management of discipline of learners with special educational needs.

As postulated by Charles (1989), the goal of preventative discipline is to prevent disruptive behaviour before it occurs. In terms of preventative disciplinary measures, the school chosen for this study used its code of conduct alongside the well-established classroom rules to serve as the basis for managing learner behaviour.

Supportive discipline, on the other hand, refers to support strategies that are developed to assist an individual acquire social and behavioural competence. In line with existing literature, effective supportive disciplinary measures are focused on individualised strategies developed by multi-disciplinary teams to assist individual learners. It must be noted that parental input and support is a vital component of this process. The findings of this study, which are detailed in the closing chapter of the dissertation, indicate that the environmental accommodations made for learners from the premise of the social model of disability are, to an extent, successful in removing environmental barriers within the educational context and assisting staff in managing learner behaviour.

The third pillar of discipline management, corrective discipline, refers to measures that help redirect poor behaviour when it does occur. This is aligned to Charles' (1989) definition of discipline. Corrective discipline is therefore not a punitive disciplinary measure, but instead focuses on providing individual support to help correct current behavioural patterns and prevent further inappropriate behaviours from developing.

Key words:

special schools, challenging/disruptive behaviour, preventative discipline, supportive discipline, corrective discipline, social model of disability.

## LANGUAGE EDITOR

**COPYWRITING &  
EDITING SERVICE** 

**DECLARATION OF EDITING**  
25 November 2019

This is to certify that I, the undersigned, performed a language edit on the dissertation:

**The management of discipline of learners in special schools**

by

Engela van der Linde

The text was reviewed and edited using the 'track changes' function. As such, the document I submit is fully editable, and the author is entitled to accept, reject, or modify my changes and suggestions. The final version of the document, submitted for assessment or publication by the author, may differ from that suggested by me.



Anton Ferreira  
[snapshot.za@gmail.com](mailto:snapshot.za@gmail.com)  
0846600601



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADHD	:	Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
BA	:	Bachelor of Arts degree
BA (Hons)	:	Bachelor of Arts degree: Honours
B.Ard	:	Bachelor of Occupational Therapy
B.Ed	:	Bachelor of Education (Field of specialisation)
B.Ed Hons	:	Bachelor of Education Honours
B.Prim Ed	:	Bachelor of Education: Foundation Phase
DSM-5	:	Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition
FED	:	Further Diploma in Education (Field of specialisation)
HED	:	Higher Education Diploma (Field of specialisation)
HOD	:	Head of Department
ICD10	:	The International Statistical Classification of Disease and Related Health Problems, 10 <sup>th</sup> version of the WHO
LSEN	:	Learners with Special Educational Needs
MBA	:	Master of Business Administration
M.Ed	:	Master of Education
ODD	:	Oppositional Defiant Disorder
OT	:	Occupational Therapist
PGCHE	:	Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education
SASA	:	The South African Schools Act 84/1996
SGB	:	School Governing Body
SIAS	:	The policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (2014)
SLD	:	Specific learning disability
SMT	:	School Management Team
VDO	:	Verdere Diploma in Onderwys

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1	RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	1
1.2	PURPOSE OF THE STUDY .....	3
1.3	RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	3
1.3.1	Main research question .....	3
1.3.2	Research sub-questions .....	4
1.4	METHODOLOGY.....	4
1.4.1	Interpretive Paradigm .....	4
1.5	RATIONALE .....	5
1.6	SPECIAL SCHOOLS.....	7
1.7	CLARIFICATION OF DISABILITIES/BARRIERS TO LEARNING .....	8
1.7.1	Psychological manifestations of disabilities/barriers to learning .....	11
1.8	THE LIMITS OF THE STUDY.....	12
1.9.	RESEARCHER BIAS .....	12
1.10	ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION.....	14

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	INTRODUCTION.....	17
2.2	CONCEPTUALISING DISCIPLINE.....	17
2.3	DISRUPTIVE OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS .....	18
2.4	PREVENTATIVE DISCIPLINE .....	20
2.4.1	Preventative discipline and school management .....	21
2.4.2	Preventative discipline by the educator .....	22
2.4.3	Learner code conduct as preventative discipline.....	24
2.5	SUPPORTIVE DISCIPLINE.....	25

2.6	<b>CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE .....</b>	<b>29</b>
2.7	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>31</b>

**CHAPTER 3:  
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**CHAPTER 4:  
METHODOLOGY**

4.1	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.2	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>40</b>
4.3	<b>CASE STUDY RESEARCH.....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.3.1	<b>Advantages of case study research .....</b>	<b>41</b>
4.3.2	<b>Disadvantages of case study research .....</b>	<b>42</b>
4.4	<b>THE CASE STUDY .....</b>	<b>42</b>
4.4.1	<b>The special school as research site .....</b>	<b>42</b>
4.4.1.1	<b>Background of the school .....</b>	<b>42</b>
4.4.1.2	<b>Sample .....</b>	<b>44</b>
4.4.2	<b>Types of disabilities accommodated within the school .....</b>	<b>47</b>
4.5	<b>DATA COLLECTION PLAN.....</b>	<b>48</b>
4.6	<b>DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES.....</b>	<b>50</b>
4.7	<b>DATA ANALYSIS .....</b>	<b>51</b>
4.8	<b>CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS.....</b>	<b>53</b>
4.9	<b>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS.....</b>	<b>56</b>
4.10	<b>CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>57</b>

**CHAPTER 5:  
ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

5.1	<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>59</b>
5.2	<b>SUMMARY OF THE THEMES AND CODES .....</b>	<b>59</b>
5.2.1	<b>The disciplinary issues of LSEN learners in special schools .....</b>	<b>60</b>
5.2.2	<b>The impact of disciplinary issues on the teachers, the other learners and the learners themselves .....</b>	<b>63</b>
5.3	<b>MANAGING DISCIPLINE .....</b>	<b>67</b>

<b>5.3.1</b>	<b>Preventative discipline</b> .....	<b>67</b>
5.3.1.1	School code of conduct .....	67
5.3.1.2	Establishing classroom discipline through classroom rules and order .....	73
<b>5.3.2</b>	<b>Supportive discipline</b> .....	<b>76</b>
5.3.2.1	Establishment of a multi-disciplinary team .....	77
5.3.2.2	Parental support and involvement.....	81
<b>5.3.3</b>	<b>Corrective disciplinary structures</b> .....	<b>84</b>
<b>5.4</b>	<b>SUMMARY:</b> .....	<b>85</b>

## CHAPTER 6:

### THE APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY TO THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

<b>6.1</b>	<b>MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY</b> .....	<b>88</b>
<b>6.2</b>	<b>SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY</b> .....	<b>89</b>
6.2.1	The impact of the attitude of teachers and therapeutic staff on discipline management .....	89
6.2.2	Multi-disciplinary team .....	95
6.2.3	Environmental accommodations .....	97
<b>6.3</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>98</b>

## CHAPTER 7:

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

<b>7.1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>101</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>104</b>
7.2.2	Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education .....	105
7.2.3	Recommendations for the Department of Higher Education .....	106
<b>7.3</b>	<b>SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>7.4.</b>	<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>106</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....		<b>108</b>
<b>ANNEXURES</b> .....		<b>118</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	: Admission Policy of the research site	9
Table 2.1	: Four key identities of challenging – “HELP”	28
Table 3.1	: Conceptualising disability using the medical model versus the social model	35
Table 4.1	: The current post establishment of the school for the academic year 2019	44
Table 4.2	: Biographical information of the research participants and pseudonyms	45
Table 4.3	: Summary of enrolled learners in the 2018 Academic Year	47
Table 4.4	: Data collection plan	48
Table 4.5	: The behavioural challenges of learners with special educational needs	53
Table 5.1	: Sub-heading discipline	68

# CHAPTER 1:

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Lack of learner discipline is a universal concern. Joubert and Serakwane (2009, p.125) stated that:

“Discipline continues to be one of the most puzzling and frustrating problems confronting educators today, more so than even before.”

Poor discipline can also be viewed as a generalised problem in all schools, both locally and internationally. Numerous authors (Emerson, 2016; Van Wyk and Pelsler, 2014; Mestry and Khumalo, 2012; Bray, 2005) have published articles focusing on learner disciplinary problems, while many existing studies focus on the disciplinary problems of learners with special educational needs (Grossman, 2006; Kelly, Carey, McCarthy & Coyle, 2007; Kokot, 2006). However, none of these authors specifically explored the disciplinary problems of learners with special educational needs (LSEN) placed in special schools within the South African educational context. This study aims to address this gap in literature.

LSEN have a range of difficulties that impact on their behaviour, including difficulty following school rules and a lack of recognition of authority (Emerson, 2016). These troubles stem from their primary disability/impairment such as communication disorder, which is complex and difficult to manage. In addition, “students with emotional and behavioral disabilities often exhibit higher levels of acting out or aggressive behavior” (Emmer & Sabornie, 2015, p.186). In the South African context, learners with special educational needs are placed in “segregated” special schools (see section 1.6). It can therefore be assumed that managing learners’ discipline is even more challenging to manage in special schools than in ordinary

public schools due to the disability-associated characteristics of the enrolled learners.

The South African Schools Act 84/1996 (SASA) guides and assists school management teams (SMTs) and the staff of ordinary public schools in dealing with learner misconduct. However, this legislative framework focuses only on ordinary public schools and does not recognise or make provision for special schools. Therefore, the staff of special schools which includes the principal; deputy principals; heads of department; grade heads; educators and therapeutic staff have to manage the disciplinary problems experienced by LSEN in line with the legislative framework focused on ordinary schools. More recently, the policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS) (DoE: 2014) proposed strategies to deal with unacceptable behaviour. The policy promulgates the assignment of a mentor to support the learner, raising awareness and offering strategies to help learners and staff deal with disruptive behaviour during assemblies, the revision of the school code of conduct, and establishing open communication channels between internal and external stakeholders. As SIAS was promulgated in 2014 and implemented in phases from 2015 to 2018 in line with the principals of White Paper 6, the effectiveness of the proposed strategies to curb and/or manage learner discipline in special schools has not yet been established.

According to Meltz (2014, p.20), educators' views are shaped by their "personal experiences and direct contact with diversity and background, not on the disability of the child." Therefore, educator attitudes and perceptions will have a direct impact on the way they manage the disciplinary problems of LSEN (Pather, 2011). Villegas (2007 cited in Meltz, 2014, p.21) stated that when an educator is presented with an incident, their reaction towards it will be informed by their personal belief system which is "predictive of future actions". The White Paper 6 clearly states that all learners are capable of learning and are therefore entitled to support. It suggests that educational structures could meet the needs of all learners, acknowledging and respecting their differences by "changing attitudes and environments" (Hay & Beyers, 2011, as quoted by Meltz, Herman & Pillay, 2014, p.2). Essentially, a teacher's approach towards managing learner discipline will be influenced by either the

medical model of disability or the social model of disability. It will also be informed by their personal understanding of disabilities. These models are the two prominent ways of understanding disabilities within the South African Special School context. When applying the principles of the medical model to their understanding of a learner's disability, their understanding will be informed by the medical classification of the disability and the possible ways in which the particular disability could present itself. Their focus would therefore be on the possible medical interventions required to assist the individual to fit into society (Haegele & Hodge, 2016). In the case of the social model, a teacher will view the disability as a social phenomenon that requires both medical and social interventions to enable the individual to acquire social and behavioural competence (Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017). Bear (2015) recommends that within the social model of disability, special schools should make environmental accommodations and "seeks to remove all barriers to learning" as they accommodate learners with a vast array of disabilities and could be viewed as inclusive sites of learning (Khumalo and Hodgson, 2017, p.108). This statement is aligned to the policy of inclusive education in South-Africa which was developed in line with the principals of the social model of disability.

## **1.2 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to explore how special schools within the South-African context manage disciplinary infringements of LSEN and how their understanding of special needs impacts on the strategies they employ to deal with unacceptable behaviour.

## **1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

### **1.3.1 Main research question**

The main research question asks: How do special schools manage learner discipline? How does the educators' understanding of special needs impact the strategies they employ to deal with unacceptable behaviour?



### **1.3.2 Research sub-questions**

1. What are the disciplinary issues of LSEN in special schools?
2. What are the challenges faced by staff in maintaining discipline in special schools?
3. How do school stakeholders deal with these disciplinary issues?
4. Which structures within the school environment have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN?

## **1.4 METHODOLOGY**

### **1.4.1 Interpretive Paradigm**

My research employed the interpretive paradigm in conjunction with the theoretical framework of the social model of disability to answer the main research question.

According to Phothongsunan (2010), researchers who employ the interpretive approach work from the belief that the social world is constructed by human beings and therefore investigate how the participants perceive and make sense of the world. Through the interpretive paradigm, the critical purpose of the researcher is to gain insight and in-depth information on the lived reality of the participants (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The purpose of such a study is not to generalise the findings, but to explore the meanings that participants attach to the phenomenon under investigation. By using this paradigm for my research, the participants' stories were used to understand their experiences with managing discipline in special schools.

The research design was a qualitative case study. One of the advantages of doing case study research to answer the main research question is that it allows for the utilisation of multiple sources of information (Rosenberg & Yates, 2007). My research took place within a bounded system, namely a special school. The participants were representatives from the school's multi-disciplinary team, including representatives

from the school management team, the school-based support team co-ordinator, specialised teachers, therapists, psychologists and/or counsellor, parents/guardians and representatives from the local department of education (SIAS, 2014)(cf. Annexure A: Support Services)

My intention with this study was to uncover what is known about the management of discipline in special schools through the theoretical lens of the social model of disability.

## **1.5 RATIONALE**

As a Senior Educational Specialist in the Inclusion and Special Schools Unit (district office-based), I work with learners experiencing learning and behavioural difficulties on a daily basis. Supporting these learners, their parents and their schools, including the respective school governing bodies (SGB's), forms part of my core responsibilities. Within the current legislative framework (The Constitution of South-Africa and The Bill of Rights, The South African Schools Act, and The National Education Policy Act and Regulations), I am finding it increasingly difficult to assist special schools to effectively manage and support learners who present with behavioural challenges due to the complexity of their special educational needs. In conducting this research, I hoped to expand my own knowledge so that I could more effectively assist learners, parents and special schools to manage these challenges.

There is a scarcity of literature on the management of learners in special schools. The literature on discipline, especially in South Africa, focuses mainly on learners in ordinary public schools (Bray, 2005; Emerson, 2016; Mestry&Khumalo, 2012; Van Wyk&Pelser, 2014) and is silent when it comes to the disciplinary challenges of LSEN in special schools. The studies of Van Wyk and Pelsler (2014), Mestry and Khumalo (2012) and Mestry, Moloï and Mahomed (2008) suggest that there has been a noticeable increase in the number of disciplinary infringements, as well as an increase in the severity of the misconduct in South African schools. In these studies, the authors all highlight the fact that learner misconduct has a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning taking place at educational institutions. Mestry et al.,

(2008) explored the zero-tolerance approach, where disciplinary measures are centred on punitive measures to curb disciplinary problems in educational institutions. Research on learner discipline in the South African context has also suggested that the problem is partly centred around the lack of strategies in handling learners with disciplinary problems (Wolhuter & Van Staden, 2008 in Kourkoutas & Wolhuter, 2013). Rossouw's (2003, p.424) research pertaining to ordinary schools classifies "serious" misconduct as "constant absenteeism, vandalism, theft, smoking dagga, bullying, examination dishonesty, assault, exposure to pornography and gambling." Other local studies exploring the management of LSEN in mainstream schools (Emerson, 2016; Meltz, Herman & Pillay, 2014) focus on inclusive educational practises.

International literature on management in special schools is also scarce. Cooper and Jacobs (2011) conducted a study in Irish special schools which identified a multitude of disciplinary infringements. These include continuous physical violence such as kicking, punching and biting; bullying; verbal assault towards peers and staff; limited to no co-operation in classroom activities; the throwing of objects in class (including books, chairs and desks); and destructive such as destroying their own and other learners' work. In addition to these, Foxx and Meindl (2007) highlighted behaviours observed in learners on the autism spectrum, including head-butting and general aggression towards anybody in close proximity and the indiscriminate use of objects as weapons; kicking over of and banging on desks; and the destruction of objects within the classroom. Interestingly, Foxx and Meindl (2007, p.83) remarked that "aggression can be an especially problematic form of maladaptive behavior because it always occurs in a social context in that someone must be present to be the target of the aggressive act." Therefore, it can be concluded that challenging and disruptive behaviour will have an impact on the observer of the as these actions present themselves when there are others around.

Having considered previous research findings such as these to help shape and guide this study, the goal of my research was to add to the local and international literature and contribute to the existing knowledge on the management of learner discipline in special schools.

## 1.6 SPECIAL SCHOOLS

According to SIAS, a special school is one “equipped to deliver a specialised education programme to learners requiring access to high-intensive educational and other support either on a full-time or a part-time basis” (DoE: 2014, p.10). The support provided to learners at special schools includes specialised support, adapted curriculum and assessment, specialised learner teacher support materials and specialist teachers (DoE: 2014).

The placement of a learner in a special school is determined by their disability classification, which in the South African context is made by a healthcare practitioner using accepted diagnostic criteria (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), 2013; or the International Statistical Classification of Disease and Related Health Problems, 10<sup>th</sup> version of the WHO (ICD10)). SIAS (DoE: 2014, p.9) outlines the different domains of specialised support as provided by special schools, namely: general health and mental health; vision; hearing; communication; motor; cognition (level of intellectual functioning); neurological and neurodevelopmental impairments (including epilepsy, cerebral palsy, attention deficit disorder, specific learning disabilities, traumatic brain injury, foetal alcohol syndrome and autism); and serious behavioural problems. The classification of learners’ disabilities occurs after the relevant psychological, speech -, occupational- and physiotherapy assessments and medical diagnoses have been completed. The aforementioned is indicative of the role the medical model of disability, as is evident in the domains of support, plays in the placement of learners with special educational needs in special schools. The medical model of disability, when informed by the ICD10, is a legitimate way of classifying and categorising an individual’s disability (Ong-Dean, 2005). Ong-Dean (2005) further states that the classification according to the medical model of disability lends itself to the recognition of disabled individuals’ rights and needs by institutions. This statement can be generalised to educational institutions, where these institutions will recognise the disabilities of their learners and the characteristics of their respective disabilities and/or barriers to learning. Within the academic sphere, Emerson (2016), Reindal (2008) and Thomas

(2010), acknowledged the merit of disability and the impairment classification of the ICD10.

Ultimately, the domains of specialised support will inform the placement of the learner in the appropriate special school in order to meet the learner's specific educational needs. Providing such specialised support requires, among other things, that the learner-teacher ratio is lower than in ordinary public schools. This statement will be further unpacked in Section 4.4.1. Further to this, adaptations and accommodations must also be made for individual learners within the classroom to ensure that an inviting environment prevails – one that promotes a culture of teaching and learning by the educators, who should adopt the social model of disability.

Within the South-African special school context, there are more than 465 special schools. Regardless of the level of intellectual functioning of their learners, all these special schools enrol learners with neurological and/or neurodevelopmental impairments as well as learners presenting with serious behavioural problems – as in the case of the research site.

## **1.7 CLARIFICATION OF DISABILITIES/BARRIERS TO LEARNING**

In the special school context, a vast array of disabilities and barriers to learning are accommodated. In order to clarify these concepts, the admission policy of the research site (2013, p.22-23) was included. Its inclusion is essential because all the participants in the research made mention of the various disabilities/barriers to learning in their respective interviews. This document assisted me in understanding the “terminologies” the participants used whilst referring to the various disabilities accommodated at this special school and minimised possible preconceptions or misunderstandings as a result of my prior knowledge of disabilities/barriers to learning. Because it is used in their induction programme for newly appointed members of staff, it forms the very basis of the staff's understanding of disabilities/barriers to learning.

**Table 1.1: Admission Policy of the research site (2013, p.22-23)**

<b>“DISABILITIES: BARRIERS TO LEARNING</b>	
Attention deficit disorder with /without hyperactivity (ADHD)	<i>ADHD refers to a chronic disorder that initially manifests in childhood and is characterized by hyperactivity, impulsivity, and/or inattention. Not all of those affected by ADHD manifest all three behavioural categories. Can lead to difficulty in academic, emotional and social functioning. May be associated with other neurological, significant behavioural, and/or developmental learning disabilities.</i>
Autistic spectrum disorders	<i>Autistic spectrum disorder impacts the normal development of the brain in the areas of social interaction and communication skills. Children typically have difficulties in verbal and non-verbal communication, social interactions, and leisure or play activities, find it hard to communicate with others and relate to the outside world. A medical practitioner, preferably specials (paediatrician or psychiatrist), must diagnose learners.</i>
Behavioural/conduct disorder (including severe behavioural disorders)	<i>Learners with behaviour / conduct disorder usually have little concern for others and repeatedly violate the basic rights of others and the rules of society. Children and adolescents act out their feelings or impulses in destructive ways. Offences often grow more serious over time. Such offences may include lying, theft, aggressions, truancy, the setting of fires and vandalism.</i>
Blindness	<i>Loss of useful sight. Blindness can be temporary or permanent. Damage to any portion of the eye, the optic nerve, or the area of the brain responsible for vision can lead to blindness &lt;3/60 in the better eye, after maximum correction.</i>

Cerebral palsy	Cerebral palsy describes a group of chronic conditions affecting body movements and muscle coordination. Caused by damage to one or more specific areas of the brain traumatic, infectious, or developmental. Major types include spastic, dystonic, athetoid and ataxic and they can be quadriplegic, diplegic or hemiplegic. A medical practitioner must make the diagnosis.
Deafness	Learners who experience a <u>severe</u> hearing impairment and who depend on specialised education support. Hearing must be assessed through an auditory test and the hearing loss should be more than 61 dB at 0, 5; 1; 2 and 4 KHz in the better ear.
Deaf-blindness	Deaf-blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs different from children with deafness or children with blindness
Epilepsy	Disorder caused by the sudden over-activity of brain cells and characterized by repetitive attacks of a diverse nature. Seizures (or convulsions) occur when there is abnormal electrical discharge in the brain. This may be triggered by chemical imbalance or a structural abnormality. Seizures differ in cause, nature, severity, management and long-term effect.
Hard of hearing	Learners who experience a moderate hearing impairment and who are in need of additional specialised support. Hearing must be assessed through an auditory test and the decibel loss must be more than 31dB for persons under the age of 15 and more than 41dB for persons 15 years and older.

<p>Mild to moderate intellectual disability</p>	<p><i>Learners with an intellectual disability have significantly lower than average intellectual ability and deficits in social and adaptive functioning, that is, limitations in such areas as communication, social, daily living or movement skills. Learners with mild to moderate intellectual disability are academically functioning on level below 75% of that of their peers. IQ tests are no longer considered appropriate.”</i></p>
---	---

### 1.7.1 Psychological manifestations of disabilities/barriers to learning

The admission policy of the research site (2013, p.70-71) also gave insight into expected behaviours of learners with disabilities/barriers to learning. The psychological manifestations were classified under three headings:

- Attention;
- Organization;
- General and social.

In line with the focus of this study, I extracted the sections on attention and social in relation to the psychological manifestations, as it pertains directly to the disciplinary problems experienced by the enrolled learners:

*“The following behaviours may indicate the possibility of a learning disability if observed over a period of time:*

*Attention: Difficulty concentrating/focusing; easily distracted; difficulty sitting still/restless; displays off-task behaviour; lack of productivity; seemingly confused at times; fidgets; impatient; talks excessively; impulsive (acting without thinking and without seeming concern for consequences; saying one thing and meaning another; blurts out answers; interrupts); displays memory problems.*



*Social: Social situations difficult, noticeably out of place in the group setting, misinterprets what others say, tone of voice, facial expressions, the subtleties in social situations; lacks awareness of one's personal space; difficulty in establishing friendships."*

Looking at the research site's admission policy, it is clear that the school management team and the school governing body has a well-developed understanding of the respective disabilities/barriers to learning and the possible behaviours which can be expected as a result. The psychological manifestations of the various disabilities mentioned in the admissions policy is in line with the observations of Nash, Schlosser and Scarr (2016, p.170), who stated that "disruptive behaviour at school, especially in the most troubled pupils, often masks underlying processing and learning difficulties."

## **1.8 THE LIMITS OF THE STUDY**

As deduced from the literature (Maree, 2013; Creswell, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Hays, 2004; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001; Creswell & Miller, 2000), I identified certain limitations of case study research which applied to my research. For one, a large amount of data was gathered, which made data analysis a complex undertaking – particularly when trying to identify commonalities and deviations in the data. The findings of this case study research also cannot be generalised to the greater population, though it did lead to greater insight into the phenomenon under investigation (Maree, 2013).

As I am an external stakeholder at the research site, I have to declare my researcher bias at the onset of the study.

## **1.9. RESEARCHER BIAS**

My occupation places me in a supervisory capacity over special schools. My duties include the investigation of parental complaints as received by members of the

executive council, the head of the Department of Education and the media. A large proportion of these complaints for parents or guardians pertains to the management of discipline within special schools. In my experience, parents and guardians have a perception that special schools should be able to deal with the challenges of LSEN, regardless of the intensity or frequency of the challenges the learner might present with – even if their child seriously compromises the safety and security of the school community in its entirety. Secondly, they seem to believe that the staff of special schools, as the so-called experts in the field, should have the capacity to develop preventative, supportive and corrective strategies for their enrolled learners, ones that are focused on the acquisition of social and behavioural competence. Thirdly, they tend to view the implementation of prescriptive disciplinary measures by the disciplinary committees of special schools, as stipulated in the legislative framework, as insensitive towards the learners with special educational needs. These perceptions of parents informed my research questions directed to the staff of the research site. As part of my research, I hoped to also uncover examples of how staff at this special school (educator- and therapeutic staff) effectively manage learner discipline.

Because I am a stakeholder within the Gauteng special school context, I explored the topic's potential researcher bias and considered the advantages and disadvantages of doing research within one's own organisation. My strongly held views on the topic, built up from years of hands-on experience, meant that I had to identify and declare these attitudes and by keeping a research journal, I was able to reflect on my findings. Reflexivity is a critical introspection to uncover potential bias and predispositions, which could have an impact on the research findings (Johnson, 1997; Creswell & Miller, 2000).

According to Unluer (2012), the disadvantage of doing research within your own organisation is that it could result in the loss of objectivity. Unluer (2012) points out that the researcher will be confronted with role "duality" (in the case of this study, district official/researcher), and recommends that they should find a way to balance these roles. Though I'm currently involved with the Inclusion and Special School Unit as a district official, I am not part of any schools in particular, nor am I involved with

their day-to-day functioning. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) recommend that the researcher undertakes the study from the premise that they know “nothing” of the phenomenon being investigated, while Unluer (2012) states that it is “important to address and overcome the disadvantages” because the failure to do so will negatively affect the credibility of the research findings.

While my position at the organisation increases the potential for bias, it also has certain advantages.

Kita (2017), Unluer (2012) and Dwyer and Buckle (2009), argued that the advantages of doing research within your own organisation include deeper insight into the research problem and a greater sensitivity towards the established social orders within the organisation. In my research, prior established relationships with staff members contributed positively to the research due to the fact that I have daily interaction with learners with special educational needs and special schools.

Ultimately, the advantages outweigh the disadvantages (Unluer, 2012). Unluer (2012) argues that in such instances the data is readily available, participants/colleagues are supportive, and the school will likely benefit more from the research. Dwyer and Buckle (2009) argue that trust and openness from the participants will be almost automatically obtained, leading to greater rapport and cooperation. In the case of my study, gaining access to the participants could have been a challenge if I was not part of the “group”. I therefore made every effort to establish trust and respect with each of the participants which resulted in a very rich data set.

Kita (2017), Unluer (2012) and Dwyer and Buckle (2009) recommend that supervisors need to play a “critical role”, supporting researchers who conduct research within their own organisation. This was done through the audit trail processes.

## **1.10 ORGANISATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

This dissertation consists of seven chapters, bibliography and appendices.

Chapter one served as the introduction of the dissertations covering concepts pertinent to the study and contextualised the phenomenon investigated.

Chapter two presents the literature review which conceptualises discipline and the terminology. The sub-sections of the literature align the management of discipline in special schools with that of Charles' (1989) definition of discipline under the sub-headings: preventative-, supportive- and corrective discipline. The chapter concludes with the exploration of the management of discipline through both the medical and social model of disability, these being the two most prominent models of the disability discourse. Because of the dearth of information available on special schools, most of the literature includes national and international research on the behaviours of LSEN in ordinary schools.

Chapter three provides the theoretical framework for this study. In this chapter, the two prominent models in the disability discourse, namely medical and social (Haegele & Hodge, 2016), are discussed and a clear distinction is made between them. The advantages and disadvantages of the social model were unpacked and explored and demonstrated why, as a theoretic framework to interpret the findings, the advantages of this model outweigh the disadvantages.

Chapter four explores the research design and methodology. In it, I discuss the data collection process, document analysis, sampling and research participants. The reasoning behind my use of an interpretative case study, as well as the reliability and credibility of the findings will be highlighted. In addition, the chapter explores the credibility and trustworthiness of the study as well as the ethical considerations.

Chapter five focuses on data analysis and interpretation. Themes and codes were assigned to the responses of the participants, while the policies used are also reported on. Topics addressed are the disciplinary issues of learners with special educational needs, including the frequency and intensity of such occurrences; as well as the impact that these disciplinary issues have on staff, other learners and on the learner themselves. The preventative disciplinary measures established through the school code of conduct is discussed along with the classroom management

strategies utilised by the teachers. Additionally, the establishment of a multi-disciplinary team and parental involvement therein, will be explored as interlinked supportive and corrective disciplinary measures. A conclusion will be reached at the end of each explored theme.

Chapter six will focus on the application of the social model of disability to the management of learners in special schools. The impact of the teachers' and therapeutic staff's attitude, the multi-disciplinary team's functionality, and environmental accommodations as indicators of the applicability of the model in the management of learners is also explored – along with the conclusion that its application yielded positive outcomes for most of the learners.

Chapter seven will centre on the summary, recommendations and conclusion of the study.

## CHAPTER 2:

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

As a starting point, this literature review will clarify certain key concepts and terminology that deal with the management of discipline. From there, I discuss the disciplinary issues of learners with special needs in mainstream and special schools. The sections that follow explore the existing literature on the management of discipline of learners with special needs. Because of the limited information available on discipline management in special schools (both locally and elsewhere), I will review the literature on discipline management in ordinary public schools to highlight the gap in the existing literature, which justifies the need for this study.

#### 2.2 CONCEPTUALISING DISCIPLINE

The word *discipline* is derived from the Latin word “disciplina” which refers to being taught (Joubert&Prinsloo, 2013). After scrutinising a variety of definitions from literature, Joubert and Serakwane (2009) concluded that there was no standardised definition for school discipline, and that educators defined “discipline” in various ways.

*“It became evident that to some educators discipline is synonymous to control through punitive measure, to others, it is synonymous with the development of moral character and it is thus perceived as the ability to behave responsibly. To some educators, discipline remains synonymous with corporal punishment, whereas to some educators it implies self-discipline.”*  
(Joubert&Serakwane, 2009, p.128)

Thus, providing a universal definition of school discipline is not a simple endeavour. Charles' (1989) earlier definition of discipline includes terms and processes such as prevention, control, correction and inner control that are particularly relevant in the context of this study. According to him, the goal of discipline is to "suppress, control, and redirect misbehaviour- behaviour that is aggressive, immoral, or disruptive to learning" (Charles, 1989, p.3). This study will use Charles' definition concept as a working definition for the management of discipline in schools focusing on preventive, supportive and corrective discipline. The literature review will focus on these concepts in relation to the management of discipline of learners with special educational needs.

### **2.3 DISRUPTIVE OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Disruptive behaviour within the educational sphere is usually described or defined as behaviour that prevents quality teaching and learning from taking place (Rossouw, 2003). This often results in learners making themselves guilty of misconduct that compromises the health and safety conditions of staff members and fellow learners (Kelly, Carey, McCarthy & Coyle, 2007; Broomhead, 2013). In attempting to address this, one must bear in mind that learners with special needs find it challenging to adhere to classroom rules, even if they know and understand what those rules demand from them. Though schools generally enunciate behaviour management policies where all learners are treated equally with no differentiation in the management of learner behaviour, the reality is that there are learners who experience unique behavioural challenges as a result of their impairments. They should therefore be accommodated in the policies governing the school code of conduct (Emerson, 2016) to prevent social exclusion and school dropout (Schnitzer, Andries&Lebeer, 2007).

Numerous studies have found that behavioural problems are more likely to occur in children with intellectual disabilities, both at school and in the home (Molteno, Molteno, Finchilescu& Dawes, 2001; Schnitzer, et al., 2007). In a recent study, Nye et al., (2015, p.47) indicated that if disruptive behaviours were present in LSEN, it is likely that these behaviours "could be more severe in both frequency and intensity

than among other children". This finding is further underscored by Campbell, Robertson and Jahoda's (2014) study which showed that the intensity of the disruptive behaviour correlates with the severity of the disability. Disruptive behaviour is therefore construed as the result of al, emotional and social adaptability difficulties; hence, it is a characteristic of a learner's special educational needs (Broomhead, 2013).

The behavioural, emotional and social adaptability difficulties observed in special schools as a segregated school for learners with disabilities include: "physical aggression, disruptive or antisocial behaviour, stereotyped and repetitive behaviour and self-injurious behaviour (SIB)"; this according to Campbell et al., (2014, p.173). (cf. Hastings, 2005). These children are often uncooperative, disinclined to change or to control their behaviour and do not accept authority (Grossman, 2006), which in essence infringes on the rights of the other children to learn, and teachers to teach (Joubert et al., 2004). It is also important to note that challenging behaviour does not happen in isolation but within a social context (Hastings, 2005) which, per implication, impacts the entire school community, both directly and indirectly.

Kelly et al., (2007) explored the impact of the behaviours displayed by learners on the staff in special schools in Ireland. Their findings concluded that all school stakeholders (the broader school community, management, teachers and learners with and without challenging behaviour) experience stress because these behaviours disrupt school activities and negatively impacts the personal development of other children in the school. The most prominent effect on other learners centred on their safety and security, particularly the increased risk of injury during incidents of challenging behaviour. Principals indicated that the stress experienced is amplified by a lack of appropriate support services in the community, the school, as well as at departmental level. Their main concerns included (Kelly, 2007, p.175):

*"the difficulties in handling the incident itself, time pressures involved in dealing with the incidences of challenging behaviour, additional workload generated by incidences and the welfare of staff in receipt of this behaviour*



*and in attempting to resolve incidences... principals showed concern for teachers exhibiting symptoms of emotional exhaustion, reduced personal accomplishment, negative attitude towards pupils, feelings of being disrespected and loss of confidence.”*

According to Hastings (2005), occurrences of these behaviours significantly affect the staff’s psychological wellbeing causing them to feel stressed, burnt out, or experience mental health problems which may contribute to “staff attrition”(Kelly et al., 2007). This could be indicative of the negative emotional responses that occur as a result of staff and learners being exposed to incidences of challenging behaviour (Hastings, 2005).

In addressing the current dearth of information on the subject of discipline management in special schools within the South-African context, I will begin by categorising the concept into three distinct but interlinked components, namely: preventative, supportive and corrective discipline as recommended by Charles (1989).

## **2.4 PREVENTATIVE DISCIPLINE**

Preventative discipline refers to “the basic rights and clear rules and consequences in the school environment” (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2013, p.110). In essence, preventative discipline is focused on preventing disruptive behaviour in the school setting from occurring in the first place (Charles, 1989). To this end, emphasis is placed on the acquisition of expected behaviour from individual learners. Preventative disciplinary structures can therefore be viewed as a holistic and integrated approach to create and maintain learning environments which are conducive for teaching and learning (Joubert & Prinsloo, 2013).

Preventative discipline within the school context can be established by the SMT, educator and by the learner code of conduct. Each of the aforementioned will be discussed separately to unpack their respective roles in establishing preventative disciplinary support structures.

### **2.4.1 Preventative discipline and school management**

School management teams play a vital role in the daily management of learner behaviour, as unaddressed behavioural problems “leads to a poor environment for the school community and a sense of fear and frustration in the school culture” (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014, p.3). They strive to effectively manage learner behaviour through the development of “policies, procedures, rules and regulations” (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014, p.3).

In South Africa, the school management team (SMT) is responsible for the day to day functioning of a school (Joubert&Prinsloo, 2013) and have the responsibility of ensuring that the school environment is safe (Netshitangani, 2018). Various studies (Van Wyk&Pelser, 2014; Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; Joubert, De Wall &Rossouw, 2003) explore the roles of the school management team and educators in establishing sound disciplinary structures in public ordinary schools. Nooruddin and Baig’s (2014) study suggests that the school management team can positively influence learner discipline by directly linking schools’ vision and mission statements to their behavioural policies in order to give effect to the communities’ behavioural expectations. In this way, occurrences of disruptive behaviour are likely to be reduced through prevention and focused intervention (cf. Netshitangani, 2018; Benoliel, 2015). Netshitangani (2018) recommends that management teams need to focus on the development of strategies that support learners in acquiring skills which enable them to self-regulate their behaviour (cf. Kourkoutas&Wolhuter, 2013). These studies were however carried out in public ordinary schools, and as such, further investigation is required in special schools. It is important to determine whether (and to what extent) the school management teams in special schools have infused their schools’ vision and mission statements with their respective behavioural policies. It must also be established which strategies they have in place to regulate learner behaviour as recommended (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014).

## **2.4.2 Preventative discipline by the educator**

Given the fact that teachers have extensive interactions with learners, they play a central role in addressing learners' behaviour, including barriers to learning. They can and do, therefore, exert a positive influence on classroom discipline (Martinez, McMahon, Coker & Keys, 2016). Establishing a caring relationship with each learner right from the onset will, according to Lumpkin (2009), enable the teacher to meet the individual needs of each learner in the class. This will help lower the occurrences of ADHD-associated behaviours and have a positive effect by increasing learner achievement (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Hence, the management of learner discipline inevitably starts with the teacher (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

According to Emmer and Stough (2001), discipline management begins with the teacher establishing order in the classroom. This requires teachers to design the classroom environment in such a way that it becomes conducive to quality teaching and learning (Van Wyk & Pelsler, 2014) – regardless of the disabilities or individual barriers to learning displayed by learners. Examples of establishing order include starting class on time, modelling appropriate behaviour (Marzano & Marzano, 2003; Marais & Meier, 2010) and communicating expected lesson outcomes to the learners (Charles, 1989). Mokhele (2006, p.157) further recommends preventative disciplinary measures that focus on positive discipline. The author's recommendations include "not blaming, pushing, shouting and using sarcasm" and organising the class in such a manner that the teacher is able to easily observe every learner in the class. Some researchers (Marzano & Marzano, 2003; Marais & Meier, 2010) have suggested that teachers should firstly have insight and understanding into the behavioural challenges presented by individual learners, and secondly model acceptable and appropriate behaviour within the context of their classroom practice. This is supported by Mokhele (2006), who recommends that the teacher establish a relationship based on dignity and mutual respect between themselves and their learners. This can be affected by the following means (2006, p.156):

- "Involving learners in establishing classroom policy

- Allowing learners to take leadership roles
- Role modelling the expected behaviour
- Involving parents, peers and other teachers close to the learner
- Respecting the learner”

Order in that sense is a preventative disciplinary measure in each learning environment. Failure to establish and maintain order in the class will negatively impact on the fundamental rights of others to have a safe learning environment as a baseline for quality teaching and learning (Joubert et al., 2004). Nye et al., (2015, p.56) suggest that “supporting children identified with SEN who also have behaviour needs requires the use of positive, proactive and clear behaviour management strategies delivered consistently within the context of a nurturing relationship.” This statement supports the need for order to be established within the classroom context as a prerequisite of preventative disciplinary structures. It is therefore advisable that teachers in special schools develop individualised strategies for their respective students, as a way to reduce disruptive behaviour through the identification of possible “triggers” of disruptive behaviour (Marais & Meier, 2010; Marzano&Marzano, 2003). A “trigger” according to Grossman (2005, p.24), is a “... situation that arouses the student’s overly intense or unwarranted emotional response ...”

The identification of possible “triggers” can be done by observing learners closely and intervening timeously in order to prevent incidences from either escalating or occurring in the first place. By standing in-between the learner with challenging behaviour and the other learners in the class a teacher is able to step in and remove the learner out of the situation or class. If needed, physical control should be used (Grossman, 2005). Additionally, one can call for assistance from other members of staff. The ultimate goal of preventative disciplinary measures is to ensure that learners with challenging behaviour do not harm or injure others (Grossman, 2005).

It is therefore clear that adjusting the classroom environment forms a critical part of preventing challenging/disruptive behaviour. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) argue that it is the teacher’s responsibility to create a classroom environment that will both

enable academic learning and help learners acquire social and behavioural competence. Special attention should therefore be paid to the: “arrangement of furniture, supplies, and materials; where they [teachers] locate themselves; the control of the flow of traffic via scheduling and supervision; and making the classroom generally more attractive, yet not distracting” (Hunley, 2008 in Bear, 2015). As such, adjusting the classroom environment can be viewed as indicative of the practical application of the social model of disability within the classroom as it is reflective of the teacher’s attitude towards those learners struggling with behavioural and social competence. The social model of disability will be further unpacked in Chapter 3.

### **2.4.3 Learner code conduct as preventative discipline**

One way of managing the discipline of learners is the learner code of conduct and/or behaviour policies (Nye et al., 2015, Van Wyk&Pelser, 2014; Wolhuter&Russo, 2013; Mestry&Khumalo, 2012; Nooruddin&Baig, 2014). The goal of the compilation of a school code of conduct is to ensure that quality teaching and learning takes place in a safe and secure environment that promotes the rights and safety of all internal stakeholders, namely the learners, educators and parents (Mestry&Khumalo, 2012). In a recent study, Netshitangani (2018) indicated that it is important to develop the code of conduct from a positive disciplinary angle as a preventative disciplinary measure since its purpose is to outline the accepted and expected behaviour of all learners.

In the South-African context, the learner code of conduct development is informed by various legislative frameworks, namely The Constitution of South-Africa and The Bill of Rights, The South African Schools Act, and The National Education Policy Act and Regulations. In addition, The Government Gazette, notice 776/1998 (The guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in adopting a code of conduct for learners) is to be used in conjunction with the legislative framework to compile a code of conduct for learners (Van Wyk&Pelser, 2014; Wolhuter&Russo, 2013; Mestry&Khumalo, 2012). As per legislative prescriptions, it is the school governing body’s (SGB) responsibility to act within the legal framework in the best interest of

the school and all learners by establishing policies, procedures, rules and regulations pertinent to the management of learner behaviour subject to any applicable provincial laws (SASA 1996, Section 8(1) and (2) and Section 20). The responsibility for the implementation of the school code of conduct falls within the jurisdiction of the SMT and educators (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; Mestry&Khumalo, 2012).

It is imperative that teachers are aware of their respective learners' primary and secondary disabilities before they decide on a reasonable sanction to remediate the misconduct of that learner (Emerson, 2016). According to Emerson (2016), this leads to a conundrum: should one set of rules and sanctions be developed and stringently applied, or should sanctions and rules be amended to accommodate individual learners in accordance to their individual needs? Grossman (2005, p.18) states: "No single approach will work with all of these students...A second reason why a one-method-fits-all-students behaviour management approach is ineffective is that students with the same problem may behave very differently and evoke very different reactions from their teachers."According to the Emerson (2016, p.106), applying the criteria of "least dangerous assumption" (as developed by Donnellan in 1984) when dealing with LSEN demonstrating disciplinary problems, teachers should assume from a "humanistic and child-centred stance" (Emerson, 2016, p. 106) that they did the best they could do in the given situation. Grossman (2005, p.25) states: "They do not mean to be wilful, disobedient, mean, or nasty. They misbehave because their emotions are inappropriate." In my opinion, the statement of Grossman (2005) could also fall within the criteria of "least dangerous assumption" as discussed in the article of Emerson (2016).

All these articles promulgate the necessity for the development of supportive disciplinary measures to assist individual learners to acquire behavioural and social competence.

## **2.5 SUPPORTIVE DISCIPLINE**

Supportive discipline, as defined in this study, refers to strategies that support individual learners with disruptive behaviour to regain self-control (Charles, 1989). In

this regard, Emerson (2016) has specifically recommended that the learner needs to be part of the development of strategies to assist them to acquire self-regulation (cf. Van der Merwe, 2016). For supportive discipline to be effective, a multi-disciplinary team needs to be established (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014). The multi-disciplinary team should ideally comprise of representatives from the school management team, the school-based support team co-ordinator, specialised teachers, therapists, a school nurse, psychologist and/or counsellor, parents/guardians and representatives from the local department of education (SIAS, 2014). The role and function of the multi-disciplinary team is to help form a multi-perspective understanding of the disruptive behavioural patterns of individual learners. It can therefore be viewed as a collaborative approach by internal and external stakeholders from a supportive premise (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; SIAS, 2014). A key function of this team is to establish open communication channels and productive working relationships among all stakeholders.

Parents are known to play a crucial role in the development of effective intervention and support strategies (Pienaar, 2003) and their involvement is therefore critical to effectively support the learner in acquiring much needed behavioural competence. In the earlier study of Ngcobo (1988, p.24), the author clearly states that "... if parents did not involve themselves in disciplining their children, any programme related to behaviour change that the school may start will not be effective." Hence, it is imperative to obtain the parents' co-operation and acknowledge their expertise in dealing with their child's behaviour at home. This collaboration will have a positive impact on the development of successful strategies employed at home which could be replicated in the support plan to be utilised at school (Pienaar, 2003). Ngcobo (1988, p.25) indicated that "discipline at home forms part of school discipline". This proposed supportive disciplinary structure by Pienaar (2003) is in line with the Policy on Screening Identification Assessment and Support (SIAS, 2014). He further stated that by involving the school counsellor (applicable to a special school) in the multi-disciplinary team, the occurrences of challenging behaviour will by implication be handled in a more positive and supportive manner. His empirical study also clearly showed that with increased parental involvement after the completion of the parental

involvement programme (outline available in Pienaar, 2003, p.271), an 80% drop in “misbehaviour incidents” was observed in 20 of the 22 participants in the study. This could be indicative of the crucial role parents play in the behaviour of their children at home and at school. Not only was this sharp drop in “misbehaviour incidents” observed, but the nature of the incidents went from serious (“fighting or swearing”) to mostly minor (“talking in class or not paying attention”) incidences (Pienaar, 2003, p.272). It is important to note that the study was conducted in a public ordinary school, not in a special school.

The development of an individualised support programme within the school setting is underscored by various authors (Bradley & Korossy, 2016; Benoliel, 2015; Nye et al., 2015; SIAS, 2014; Marais & Meier, 2010; Sugai & Horner, 2008). In addition, Hasting (2005, p.215), stated that: “Firstly, the informal working culture or everyday systems working developed by staff team members are viewed as more influential on the approaches adopted for dealing with problem behaviour than formal organizational policy.” From this statement, it is evident that individualised support programmes are needed to support and assist learners in acquiring behavioural and social competence.

Bradley and Korossy (2016, p.101) explore four key identifiers or causes of challenging behaviour that must be addressed as part of a supportive approach by a multi-disciplinary team: “Health, Environment & Supports, Lived Experience, Psychiatric Disorder”, otherwise referred to by the acronym HELP. The authors (2016, p.101), believe that the challenging behaviour could be indicative of the individual’s inability to “communicate their distress in more conventional ways”. Derived from the article, the following table was developed to indicate the possible indicative factors for the respective key identifiers/causes for challenging behaviour. It also includes a suggested way forward to support and assist the individual. The authors (2016) believe that the HELP approach can be successfully utilised by all stakeholders to effect appropriate support.



**Table 2.1: Four key identifies of challenging – “HELP”**

Identifiers	Possible causes for challenging behaviour	Way forward/ Intervention required
Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying medical condition</li> </ul>	Full medical examination to identify possible causes for the challenging behaviour
Environment & Supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical environment: “e.g., over-stimulating surroundings giving rise to hyperarousal and meltdowns” (2016, p.101-102)</li> <li>• “Family and social network” (2016, p.104)</li> </ul>	Behavioural assessment to determine possible triggers for challenging behaviour observed by a behaviour therapist which will assist with targeted interventions and possible physical environmental changes required by the individual
Lived Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty to express their emotional experiences which resulted into the individual to move from cognitive and communication strategies when solving problems into triggering a primal biological survival system...Fight (aggression), Flight (fleeing), Freeze (cessation of movement)” (2016, p.105)</li> <li>• Stress experienced by the individual due to internal and external contributing factors</li> </ul>	Psychological and behaviour interventions to improve tolerance to “negative emotions”
Psychiatric Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underlying psychiatric disorder/illness</li> </ul>	Medication and/or psychotherapy

It seems that the understanding of the causes of challenging behaviour and the suggested interventions are linked to the way disability is understood. This then informs the corrective disciplinary measures suggested and implemented. Both the understanding of and approach to the prevention of behavioural problems are therefore linked to the two primary models for understanding disability – the traditional medical model of disability, and the social model. The former focuses on the biological classification of disabilities by focussing on the individual (deficit model). The latter makes the biological condition secondary and thus primarily focuses on the social conditions (acceptance or rejection) of the individual in terms of their disabilities and the characteristics associated with them (Meltz, Herman & Pillay, 2014; Meltz, 2014).

Within the school context, the “biopsychosocial multi-perspective understanding” (Bradley & Korossy, 2016, p.101) of learners demonstrating challenging behaviour can be viewed as a model derived from a theoretical framework based on the collaboration of both the medical- and social model of disability. Within the medical model of disability, the medical diagnoses (Haegele & Hodge, 2016) of the learners are explored – including overall health and possible underlying psychiatric disorders as potential causes for their behavioural patterns (Bradley & Korossy, 2016). As this falls outside of the scope of practice of educational support staff, the focus of educational support staff will be to accommodate these learners by adapting the (school) environment and giving them support to deal with their respective lived experiences (Haegele & Hodge, 2016) as a way to effect supportive disciplinary structures. This support provisioning echoes Reindal’s (2008) rational model of disability, which views disability as something that is imposed on top of the restrictions (deficit) caused by the impairment.

## **2.6 CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

According to Charles (1989), corrective discipline refers to what can be done to redirect disruptive behavioural patterns, once they occur, into positive behaviour. It is therefore not a punitive disciplinary measure, but a positive intervention. In essence,

corrective discipline will only happen after preventative and supportive disciplinary measures have been implemented, but the disruptive behaviour still persists (Charles, 1989). Nooruddin and Baig (2014) describe the goal of corrective discipline as the correction of current behavioural challenges, while also preventing new behavioural challenges from developing (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014).It is important to note that there is no “one size fits all” strategy for all learners as far as corrective discipline is concerned (Algozzine&Algozzine, 2008).

Disciplinary problems experienced by learners have many teachers at a loss with regards to how effectively manage it (Kourkoutas&Wolhuter, 2013). Various authors (Algozzine&Algozzine, 2008; Marzano&Marzano, 2003) agree that once disruptive behaviour occurs, the teacher needs to verbally identify the disruptive behaviour. The learners need to understand what they have done wrong in order to correct the undesired behaviour. This action will have to be consistently repeated because learners with behavioural challenges find it challenging to adhere to classroom rules, even if they know and understand them (Emerson, 2016). Charles (1989, p.174) recommended that teachers:

*“Redirect misbehaviour in positive directions. This is a strategy on which authorities agree. Ask students who have misbehaved to state what they should do instead. Provide choices if they have difficulty expressing themselves.”*

This strategy, if consistently applied, will support disruptive learners to make better choices. In addition to the above authors, Emerson (2016) strongly believes that appropriate behaviour needs to be recognised because that will encourage the learner to make better behavioural choices.

From a British point of view, the development of strategies to support learners as part of corrective discipline is approached from a preventative premise. That is, by preventing disruptive behaviour from reoccurring (Broomhead, 2013) and in doing so, supporting learners to acquire the skills of self-regulation. The author recommends the use of reward stickers for appropriate behaviour, “time-out”

sessions for the disruptive learner and allowing the disruptive learner to walk in front of the rest of the class (Broomhead, 2013). These strategies could be perceived as preferential treatment, but they may well have a positive impact on the broader school community because acceptable behavioural patterns are promulgated (Broomhead, 2013). Additionally, the learner could be given responsibilities within the class to redirect their negative behaviour as a corrective intervention (Marzano&Marzano, 2003). These strategies are indicative of the fact that the learners' challenges are recognised and supported (Emerson, 2016). The author believes these are the baseline requirement for the learners to effectively learn and acquire social skills (Emerson, 2016).

To assist the verbal reinforcement of classroom rules and improve the effectiveness of the strategies employed by the teacher, Charles (1989) recommends that the teacher reconstruct the classroom context/environment to affect increased learning. The author (1989) espouses the belief that teachers need to employ individualised teaching methodologies to cater for the individual needs of the learners and to see disruptive behaviour as an opportunity to guide them to self-regulate their disruptive behavioural patterns. Increased teacher attention and positive feedback, as well as individualised rewards for appropriate behaviour, can be used to increase the effectiveness of corrective discipline (Charles, 1989).

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

The literature review clarified the concepts and terminology that deal with the management of discipline and discussed the disciplinary issues of learners with special needs in mainstream and in special schools. The latter sections explored the available literature on the management of discipline of learners with special educational needs.

At the end of this literature review it is important to emphasise that, according to existing knowledge and personal experience, behavioural problems are more likely to occur in children with an intellectual disability (Molteno, Molteno, Finchilescu& Dawes, 2001; Schnitzer, et al., 2007).The study of Kourkoutas and Wolhuter (2013)

highlights the fact that teachers are at a loss to effectively deal with the disciplinary problems experienced by individual learners in ordinary schools. It can be assumed to be even more so at special schools because of the behavioural, emotional and social adaptability difficulties observed in these segregated schools. These include physical aggression, disruptive or antisocial behaviour, stereotyped and repetitive behaviour and self-injurious behaviour (SIB) (Campbell et al., 2014, p.173).

As a baseline for this study, I used Charles' (1989) earlier definition of discipline and focused on preventative, supportive and corrective discipline structures to support learners with behavioural challenges to acquire behavioural and social competence. Throughout the literature review, it was evident that each of the disciplinary structures plays a vital role in discipline management within special schools. The synergy between preventative, supportive and corrective disciplinary structures, although discussed separately, can be viewed as a prerequisite for effectively managing learners with special educational needs. The respective stakeholders in preventative (school management, educators and the learner code of conduct), supportive (multi-disciplinary team and parents) and corrective discipline (school management, educators, multi-disciplinary team and parents) should develop individualised strategies to support the individual learners presenting with challenging behaviour.

Importantly, a clear distinction must be made between the management of disruptive behaviour in individuals (one-on-one) and individuals within a classroom context amongst peers. For one, the strategies employed to manage individual learner discipline in the studies of Foxx and Garito (2007) and Foxx and Meindl (2007) focus on interventions where individuals' behavioural challenges are addressed by placing the learners alone in a classroom. In the South-African special school context, learners do not receive individual instruction. Instead, they are placed in classrooms consisting of 12-20 learners. Teachers at special schools acknowledge the fact that they are ill-equipped to effectively address instances of disruptive behaviours within the classroom context (Regan & Michaud, 2011). A clear gap has been identified in the literature addressing challenging/disruptive behaviours within the classroom; particularly address the management of such behaviours in South African special

schools and in the provision of strategies which can be employed by the teachers, especially when taking classroom sizes into consideration.

The manner in which learners with special educational needs within special schools are accommodated is primarily informed by the social model of disability. This model plays a vital role in addressing their respective impairments because it informs the individualised provisions made within the school environment to support these learners. That is why this model will be employed as the theoretical framework for this study.

## **CHAPTER 3:**

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

This study aims to explore the extent to which the social model of disability influences the practice of the stakeholders at the special school, especially the way that they manage the behavioural problems of learners who struggle with a vast array of disabilities/impairments. This chapter will discuss this model of understanding disability and compare it to the medical model of disability. The difference between the two models was discussed in chapter 2.

In order to explain the differences in conceptualising disability using the medical model of disability versus the social model of disability, I used the articles of Algraigray and Boyle (2017), Owens (2015), Gallagher, Connor and Ferri, (2014), Anastasiou and Kauffman (2012), Thomas (2010) and Reindal (2008). The commonalities identified in the respective articles have been tabulated below based on the tabulation used by Haegele and Hodge (2016).

**Table 3.1: Conceptualising disability using the medical model versus the social model**

Topic	Medical Model	Social Model
What is disability?	<p>Classification according to the ICDH (1993, p.143):</p> <p>“In the context of health experience, a disability is any restriction or lack (resulting from an impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being.”</p>	<p>From the perspective of the social model, the impairment is not the problem, but rather; social access and acceptance of the impairment.</p>
Access to treatment or services	<p>Medical treatment as per diagnoses.</p>	<p>According to Haegele and Hodge (2016, p.194); “Self-referral, experience driven.”</p>
Targets and outcomes of intervention	<p>To eliminate the deviation (disability) in order to obtain “normality” through medical interventions. Obtaining normality in order to adjust to societal expectancies.</p>	<p>Alter the understanding of the nature of disability and increase social access and acceptance of the impairment. Gaining social inclusion.</p>
Effects on individuals who are typically functioning	<p>According to Haegele and Hodge (2016, p.194); Society remains the same.</p>	<p>Society becomes more inclusive, effects change.</p>
Perceptions towards individuals with disabilities	<p>Individual is “broken/abnormal/faulty.”</p>	<p>Individual is unique in their own way.</p>



Within the South-African context, the medical model of disability plays an integral role in the placement of learners with special educational needs into specific special schools (SIAS, 2014) as it determines their placement in an appropriate school that will meet the learner's specific educational needs (Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017), as informed by their respective disabilities classifications. SIAS (2014, p.8) outline the "category for disability" organisers which are used to collect data in schools pertaining to disabilities, including:

*"multiply disabled, deaf, hard of hearing, blind, partially sighted, deaf/blind, cerebral palsy, specific learning disability, behavioural disorder, mild or moderate intellectual disability, severe intellectual disability, profound intellectual disability, physical disability, autistic spectrum disorders, epilepsy, attention deficit disorder, with/without hyperactivity."*

The medical model of disability has led to the stigmatising of people with disabilities by labelling them as "somehow sub- or inhuman; and in the context of education, as 'uneducable'" (Khumalo&Hodgeson, 2017, p.107).

Contrary to the perceptions informed by the medical model, the social model of disability promulgates the view that individuals with disabilities can claim their rightful place within society (Owens, 2015). When looking at the accomplishments of someone like Stephan Hawking, the assumptions made from perceptions informed by the medical model of disability appear flawed and unfounded. One can certainly argue that individuals are very capable of contributing constructively to society despite their disabilities – provided they receive the appropriate support.

The goal of the social model of disability within the educational sphere is to promulgate child-centred teaching, without solely focusing on learners' impairments (classification and labelling) (Reindal, 2008) and to alter the understanding of the nature of disability, including those classified as intellectual-, learning-, or emotional difficulties, thereby challenging the preconceived ideas surrounding disabilities by society (Gallagher, Connor & Ferri, 2014; Reindal, 2008; Thomas, 2010). The model clearly distinguishes between impairment (natural variation) and disability (socially constructed responses to somebody who is "different"). From this perspective, the

impairment is not the problem, but rather the social access and acceptance of the impairment. Gallagher et al., (2014) state that the focus of this model is to obtain a more balanced approach between the disability and impairment. It also focuses on the impact of society's responses to the individual's particular disabilities or special educational needs and the change in perceptions which are required to integrate the individuals with impairments successfully into the social context. As disabilities are socially defined by an individual's weaknesses, it is interlinked within the social, cultural and physical environment that gives an individual self-worth. The central idea of the model is therefore based on the interactive relationship between normalcy and abnormality, and the way they define each other. The understanding of the nature of an individual learner's disabilities will inform both internal and external practises with the focus of human diversity within the context of special education, particularly in special schools. It refocuses the attention on the way's societies (e.g. the school community) include or exclude people with disabilities from educational programmes. Gallagher et al., (2014) opine that it will strengthen communities' (internal and external stakeholders) understanding of the nature of disability. Anastasiou and Kauffman (2012) further state that special education should endeavour to "reduce disabilities and its effects", as well as "positively value of people with disabilities". This summarises the essence of the social model of disability, though its applicability to educational research needs to be explored.

The study undertaken by Meltz (2014) utilised the social model of disability to explore the understanding and practise of inclusive education in a Jewish community school in South Africa and stated that the social model of disability promotes the principle of social justice and inclusiveness within the educational sphere. As the educational needs of the learners are diverse, even within a special school, the accommodation of the learners needs to be inclusive regardless of being placed in a "segregated" school. Inclusive practises rely on the social model of disability as premises of inclusion and focuses on removing the barriers to learning (Khumalo & Hodgson, 2017). Reindal (2008, p.135), suggests that the model can be viewed as a "platform for the enterprise of special needs education." Similarly, Gallagher et al.,

(2014) state that it could be a platform for meaningful interaction and to gain insight into how educators understand the nature of disabilities.

Although Reindal (2008) and Gallagher et al., (2014) promulgate the utilisation of the social model of disability as a platform to gain insight into how educators understand the nature of disabilities, there are critiques to be considered. Haegele and Hodge (2016) state that the model strives to separate the impairment from the disability, and therefore does not consider the lived experiences and the presentation of various disabilities within the individual. As a result, the impact their biology may well have on the daily existence and activity of an individual is minimised (Anastasiou& Kauffman, 2013). Essentially, the social model of disability ignores the other forms of discrimination (e.g. racism and sexism) which imposes other forms of oppression on the individual presenting with impairments according to Fitzgerald (2006 in Haegele& Hodge, 2016).

Grenier (2011, p.98) believes that if the social model of disability is used as a theoretical framework, “discrimination, teacher attitudes, and practice [needs to] be viewed as social barriers”. Haegele and Hodge (2016, p.186) maintain that if teachers are required to “view students with disabilities in ways that transcend their identified characteristics (medical model), they can gain insight about students’ abilities beyond a medical profile and offer students more positive, engaging experiences”.

Therefore, the different strategies employed by teachers to manage behaviour will be informed by the two most prominent to the models of disability. Behaviour management oriented around the medical model will centre on the perception that minor accommodations should be made within the classroom context. With this accommodation, the learner is expected to “fit in”. When managing discipline in line with the social model orientation, the teacher addresses social and behavioural competence by employing various strategies, including the adaptation/altering of the learning environment (classroom). These strategies focus on the individual needs of the respective learners and are developed from supportive premises by the multi-

disciplinary team. These strategies must also be continuously revised to effectively support learners to acquire social and behavioural competence. Naraian and Schlessinger (2017) echoed this view, suggesting that by adapting the social model of disability within the educational sphere, schools will be more capable of supporting individual learners to address their respective barriers to learning. According to Coles (2001), this will affect a focus shift to changing the social environment rather than focusing only on the individual's weaknesses or behavioural and social competence.

In the chapters that follow, this study explores what has been removed from the environment that could constitute as a barrier for learners with special needs. It also examines the attitudes of the teachers towards learners with special needs, and investigates social arrangements were made that is reflective of support provision and intervention to assist with the acquisition of appropriate and socially acceptable behaviour. I will answer the research question by using a case study methodology and the data will be collected through various data collection techniques.

# CHAPTER 4:

## METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the research methodology and unpacks the data collection instruments in order to answer the following questions:

How do special schools manage discipline?

- What are the disciplinary issues of learners with special educational needs?
- How do the disciplinary issues impact on the teachers, the other learners and the learners themselves?
- What are the strategies the staff utilise to maintain discipline?
- Which structures have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN?

(cf. Annexure B: Interview questions)

### 4.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To best answer the main research question, I chose to use a qualitative method and an interpretive approach in conjunction with the theoretical framework of the social model of disability.

Qualitative research is essentially an “umbrella term used for a wide range of research approaches and research methodologies” (Maree 2013, p.47). Carter and Little (2007) elaborate by saying that qualitative research implies social research where the researcher focuses on “words” and the goal of this research method is to “understand the meaning of human action.”

Interpretive researchers believe that the social world is constructed by human beings, and therefore investigate how the participants perceive and make sense of their world (Phothongsunan, 2010). Through the interpretive paradigm, the critical purpose of the researcher should be to gain “insight” and “in-depth” information on the “reality” of the participants (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). The purpose of this study is not to generalise the findings but explore the meanings the participants attach to the phenomenon investigated. This study uncovers what is known about the management of discipline in special schools through the theoretical lens of the social model of disability. Therefore, my research took place within a bounded system, namely a special school in the province of Gauteng.

### **4.3 CASE STUDY RESEARCH**

The research design for this study is an interpretive case study analysed through qualitative methods. Creswell (2007) suggests that it is best suited to describe a context/phenomenon to help others to understand it. It allows for a specific group or organisation to be selected and studied, as the events investigated occur naturally within the organisation (Phothongsunan, 2010).

The research questions are specifically developed to “explore, interpret, or understand the social context”, hence the participants are selected on the basis that they have information pertaining to the main research question. When designed effectively, the data collection techniques will “bring the researcher in close contact with the participants” (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006).

#### **4.3.1 Advantages of case study research**

One of the advantages of a case study is its focus on a particular community or sample population (Creswell, 2007). The data collected is therefore pertinent to the specific context/phenomenon and as such communicates the experiences of marginalised groups holistically. Essentially, it is an in-depth inquiry to uncover new knowledge through the utilisation of multiple sources. The selection of this particular special school is an example of purposeful sampling. The value thereof is central

because the data obtained will communicate the experiences of a marginalised group whilst dealing with the management of discipline in special schools.

### **4.3.2 Disadvantages of case study research**

As deduced from the literature (Maree, 2013; Creswell, 2007; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Hays, 2004; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001; Creswell & Miller, 2000), I identified certain disadvantages of case study research. For one, the sheer amount of data gathered makes data analysis a complex undertaking to identify commonalities and deviations in the obtained data. Another disadvantage is that the findings can't be represented numerically; only through "words". As such, they can be easily dismissed by readers who disagree with them. Case study findings are also not generalisable to the greater population, though they can lead to greater insight into the phenomenon being investigated (Maree, 2013). Another important consideration, as pointed out by Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2001), is that the researcher could lose objectivity when utilising this research method – in fact, a case study is an inherently subjective method. The potential for bias, as well as errors of memory and judgement, is something a researcher should always be aware of. When considering all the above, a case study can certainly be a challenging undertaking for novice researchers. The sheer amount of data collected makes it difficult to stay focused on the research problem, the main research question and sub-questions, and per implication, could lead to an overall loss of focus, according to Stake (1995 in Hays, 2004).

## **4.4 THE CASE STUDY**

### **4.4.1 The special school as research site**

#### **4.4.1.1 Background of the school**

Each special school in South-Africa is established with the purpose of enrolling learners with particular disabilities/barriers to learning in line with the domains of support of special schools as stipulated in SIAS (2014). As such, it is imperative that the special school chosen as the research site is contextualised to add to the

credibility, trustworthiness of the findings of this study (cf. AnnexureC: Academic offering).

This urban, public special school was established in the early 1980's for learners with specific learning disabilities by the then Minister of National Education, Gerrit van NiekerkViljoen in the Government Gazette.

The school is currently a dual-medium (Afrikaans-English) institution equipped with human resources to cater primarily for those learners whose mother tongue or chosen language of tuition is the medium of tuition at the school. This special school follows the "mainstream" curriculum, and at the end of Grade 12, the learners write the National Senior Certificate exams. The core business of the school is to provide remedial orientated tuition and serve to its community by educating learners with specific barriers to learning from Grade 1 to Grade 12.

As a point of departure, it is crucial to explore the disabilities learners these learners present with before answering the research questions. As derived from the participant responses the school accommodates learners who are classified by the medical model of disability as learners with Specific Learning Disabilities with or without secondary diagnoses.

The criteria for admission in the school are stipulated in the school's admission policy (2013, p.17):

*"The Learner (pupil)*

- 1. The pupils must show one or more significant developmental lag(s) with regard to language, reading, writing, spelling and maths. (Significant is defined as a relatively large difference between actual academic achievement level and the expected achievement level according to potential and ability).*
- 2. The inability/learning deficiency that the pupils displace could be attributed to one/more of the following:*



- *Soft and/or hard neurological signs;*
- *Attention deficit syndrome;*
- *Cortical maturation defect;*
- *Environmentally deprived;*
- *Typical behavioural deviations, e.g. hyperactivity, labile emotion, impulsiveness, poor socialization and adjustment, lack of perseverance, low self-image, lack of self-confidence, lack of planning and abstract ability, memory etc.”*

#### 4.4.1.2 Sample

The staff of a special school catering for learners with specific learning disabilities has both educator- and therapeutic staff as part of their official post provisioning in order to meet both the therapeutic and academic demands the enrolled learners.

**Table 4.1: The current post establishment of the school for the academic year 2019 is:**

<b>Post</b>	<b>Total</b>
Principal	1
Deputy Principal	2
Heads of Department	8
Post Level 1 Educators	40
Therapists	12
Senior Therapists	3

In addition to the above staff, 9 additional Post Level 1 educators are employed by the School Governing Body to further ensure that the school has the internal capacity to address the learner’s respective educational needs. This is because the post allocation from the Gauteng Department of Education does not make provisioning in the post establishment for the high level of support some of the learners require within their medical classifications (cf. Annexure D: Post establishment).

When doing the participant selection for this study, the focus was to obtain a representation of special school staff who are directly involved with the management of learner discipline. The goal was to obtain rich data from the participants to effectively answer the research questions. The staff contingent included 51 educators and 15 therapeutic staff. From this, 18 members of staff volunteered to participate in this study and no sampling was needed. These volunteers formed a well-balanced representation of the multi-disciplinary staff currently employed at the school, and between them had varied qualifications, years of experience, as well as varying responsibilities within the school context. As such, they brought a wealth of pertinent knowledge to this study.

**Table 4.2: Biographical information of the research participants and pseudonyms**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Current Post</b>	<b>Qualifications</b>	<b>Years of experience</b>
Manager A	Principal	H.E.D; F.D.E; B.A; B.A (Hons) Psychology; M.B.A (Certificate)	40
Manager B	Deputy Principal: High School	H.E.D (Senior Primary) V.D.O- Remedial Diploma	28
Manager C	Deputy Principal: Primary School	Degree; HED; B.A Honours Diploma: Mental Resilience	33
Manager D	HOD: Technical	H.E.D Technical	16
Manager E	HOD: Services	H.E.D (Senior Primary)	25
Manager F	HOD: Foundation Phase	H.E.D; Diploma: Remedial Teaching; Diploma: School Readiness; B.Ed (Inclusive Education)	28
Manager G	HOD: Languages	B.A; H.E.D; B.Ed (Honours) Inclusive Education	18
Manager H	HOD: Intermediate Phase	B.Prim Ed; F.D.E : Special Education	35

Teacher I	Remedial Teacher	H.E.D (Senior Primary) F.D.E : Remedial Teaching	25
Teacher J	Teacher	H.E.D (Junior Primary)	22
Teacher K	Teacher	H.E.D; F.D.E : Remedial Teaching	36
Teacher L	Teacher	H.E.D	43
Therapist M	Chief: Occupational Therapist	B. Arb	22
Therapist N	Occupational Therapist	B. Arb; PGCHE	28
Psychologist O	Senior Psychologist	B.A; H.E.D; B.Ed; B.EdPsig Endorsement; M.Ed	41
Counsellor P	School Counsellor	B.A Psychology; Hon Psychology Post-graduate degree in Psychological Assessment; Post-graduate Certificate in Education	10
Psychologist Q	Educational Psychologist	Degree: H.E.D; Honours (Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling);Masters (Specialisation in School Guidance and Counselling)	5
Social Worker R	Social Worker	Bachelor's Degree in Social work	8

#### 4.4.2 Types of disabilities accommodated within the school

Although the school was initially established for only learners with specific learning disabilities, it has since expanded, through up scaling of skills, to accommodate learners with a vast array of disabilities.

**Table 4.3: Summary of enrolled learners in the 2018 Academic Year**

Description	Learners	Weight	Weighted learners
Autism	3	6	18
Partially sighted	6	5	30
Hard of Hearing	2	5	10
Deaf	2	5	10
Physically Challenged	12	4	48
Specific Learning Disorder	417	3	1251
Epileptic	17	3	21
Total	459	31	1418

The disability classification and weighting of the respective learners is pre-determined by the Department of Education. In the 2018 academic year, the classifications for the aforementioned disabilities did not make provision for learners with multiple disabilities or learners with severe behavioural challenges. (cf. Annexure D: Post establishment). At the time of the study, 10 enrolled learners displayed what can be described as severe behavioural challenges. The most “severe” disability is used to determine the “weighting” of the other disabilities in line with the “pre-determined” disability classifications. In 2018, the school had a total of 459 full-time learners with special educational needs enrolled on a full-time basis, but due to the assigned “weighting” the respective disabilities receive, the enrolled learners equated to 1418 learners in a mainstream school. This is indicative of how

many learners are presenting with disabilities within the community, as the selected school is one of five special schools within a 10-kilometer radius of one another.

The selected special school is an urban school catering for learners classified with neurological and neurodevelopmental impairments such as epilepsy, cerebral palsy, attention deficit disorder, specific learning disabilities and traumatic brain injuries. Some of the learners also present with serious behavioural problems in addition to these neurological and neurodevelopmental impairments. Each learner receives individualised support from both the educator and therapeutic staff of the school to address their respective barriers to learning.

#### 4.5 DATA COLLECTION PLAN

The data were collected in sequential steps. Some of the phases of data collection were completed concurrently.

**Table 4.4: Data collection plan**

Planned timeframe	Planned activity/Technique
January 2017- Decemeber 2017	<p><b>Pre-research phase</b></p> <p>Completion of the defence proposal:</p> <p>During this phase, I explored the literature currently available on the management of discipline of learners with special educational needs and explored the theoretical framework which would best suit and support data interpretation. Because limited information is available on the management of discipline in South-African special schools, I had to look at studies conducted internationally, which were also very limited. Therefore, I explored studies focusing on learner discipline in ordinary schools locally and internationally and applied their findings to the South-African special school context. Hence, I came to the conclusion that my study was justified.</p>

December 2017	<p><b>Pre-research phase</b></p> <p>Defence proposal</p>
January 2018 – June 2018	<p><b>Pre-research phase</b></p> <p>The application of ethical clearance compiled and submitted to the University of Pretoria's Research Ethics Committee.</p>
January 2018 – June 2018	<p><b>Pre-research phase</b></p> <p>Concurrently, I worked on pre-selected chapters (Chapter 2 and 3) of the dissertation and prepared the application for research within the Gauteng Province (Annexure E: GDE Research Approval Letter).</p>
July 2018	<p><b>Pre-research phase</b></p> <p>After the completion of the above, I obtained the voluntary participation of participants in the study at the research site. This included introducing the study to the potential participants and requesting them to sign the informed consent required for participating in the study.</p>
July 2018-September 2018	<p><b>Research phase</b></p> <p>Due to the school holiday, I could only commence with the data collection and interviews at the beginning of the third school term. All interviews were concluded at the beginning of September 2018.</p> <p>Data collected to answer the research question included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Semi-structured interviews with the participants using a recorder for quality transcriptions</li> <li>➤ Policies established, pertinent to the study</li> </ul>
September 2018-December	<p>The transcriptions of participant interviews and document analysis utilising <i>Atlas.ti</i> was completed by the end of December 2018.</p> <p>Verification of data obtained during the individual interviews, where</p>

2018	inconsistencies in the answers of individual participants might have transpired. After the completion of the transcriptions of the interviews, it was availed to the participants as part of member checking.
January 2019- September 2019	Analysing and writing.

#### 4.6 DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

The benefit of case study research is that it allows for the use of multiple sources of information (Rosenberg & Yates, 2007). During the research, several data collection methods were utilised to collect data to answer the main research question. The methods were semi-structured individual interviews using a recorder for quality transcriptions; document analysis (policies) and the researcher’s field notes (containing the impressions and perceptions of the respective activities observed).

Semi-structured interview questions were compiled in advance and quality checked by my supervisor, which allowed for questions pertaining to developing and emerging ideas as identified in participant responses (Phothongsunan, 2010). Refer to Annexure A for the interview questions. The semi-structured interviews were conducted on the school premises or at the homes of the participants. Within these familiar surroundings, they were able to relax and “be themselves”, which helped set the tone for positive and open dialogue. I observed that all of the participants made good eye contact during the interviews and I had the sense that trust and respect was freely established between researcher and participant. All the participants seemed to answer the questions with great ease, and in my opinion, embraced the opportunity to speak about the vast array of disciplinary problems they are confronted with on a daily basis. Because the intensity, frequency and impact of the disciplinary problems and strategies, as well as the support structures developed to manage them were all unknown to me at the onset of the study, the participants, who

were guided by the semi-structured interview questions, freely discussed their individual views of the disciplinary problems and the management thereof within the school. Most of the participants displayed heightened emotional responses during their interviews. This varied from being stern whilst speaking, to a participant who spontaneously started crying whilst recalling incidences of challenging/disruptive behaviour. Member checking was done by availing the transcriptions of the interviews to the respective participants. This formed part of the verification process to determine if the participants wanted to amend their initial answers or elaborate on them. It is also important to note that none of the participants' exited the study. All these factors contributed to a very rich data set from the respective participant interviews. From there, document analysis was utilised to verify internal policies, processes and protocols utilised to manage learner discipline as referenced by the participants.

The documents used for analysis purposes included: the school code of conduct, school rules, school website and the school's admissions policy. The goal was to identify information relevant to the study, which could have transpired outside the data collection period of the study. These documents assisted me as the researcher to contextualise the answers of the participants.

#### **4.7 DATA ANALYSIS**

Data analysis, as a process through which raw data is ordered (De Vos et al., 2011), can be viewed as an attempt by the researcher to determine how the participants in the study view the phenomenon investigated from their personal perspective (Maree, 2013). This analysis includes components of coding that comprises of a series of sequential steps where the findings should be verifiable; uncover new knowledge and be open to alternative explanations in order to obtain insight into the phenomenon throughout the process of feedback. Essentially, it is seen as a process of differentiation (Morgan & Krueger, 1998).

The process of data analysis applied to this study is informed by Maree (2013), who recommends noticing, collecting and reflecting on the data collected. The author



(2013) pointed out that these elements are interlinked, as it is a cyclical process and systematic in nature. As recommended by Hays (2004) and Rosenberg and Yates (2007), the research question was used to uncover emerging relationships or trends by triangulating all the data obtained from various data resources.

The analysis of the interviews was done through thematic analysis and the predetermined themes (Prior coding) within the context of the study are: behavioural challenges of LSEN; focusing on the disciplinary issues of these learners; how the staff of special schools deal with these disciplinary issues; the impact of the disciplinary issues on the staff, other learners and the learners themselves; and the structures that have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN.

Codes were assigned to emerging trends and patterns (commonalities in the responses from the participant interviews), as well as deviations to the trends and patterns in order to answer the research question as informed by the predetermined themes as recommended by Maree (2013). This method assists researchers to summarise and organise the data obtained in order to effectively answer the research question.

I utilised *Atlas.ti* to store and analyse my data through Prior coding. Initially, due the vast amount of data obtained from the 18 participant interviews, I had to ensure I used my research questions to assign the codes to the participant responses. I identified 29 codes from the participant responses where I observed commonalities and deviations that helped answer the research questions.

The table below briefly illustrates how the theme, *the behavioural challenges of Learners with Special Educational needs*, was analysed. This code was used 99 times during the data analysis, 5 responses will be used to demonstrate how I did the analysis of the theme.

**Table 4.5: The behavioural challenges of learners with special educational needs**

Interview	Code
Interview 2: Verbal abuse towards teachers and other children.	2: 8 –Verbal abuse
Interview 3: He just doesn't listen to me as he wants to show me, he has the power, and he will start throwing his books, his pencil case or whatever.	3:15 –Resisting discipline
Interview 4: I think one of the greatest challenges is impulsiveness.	4: 6 - Impulsiveness.
Interview 5: They are trying to test the boundaries; how far can I push you?	5: 20 - Resisting discipline
Interview 7: The biggest thing that we had is mainly bullying between the kids because we have learners with a lot of emotional issues of their own, the bullying between the kids is the biggest thing that affects them.	7:6 –Bullying

#### 4.8 CREDIBILITY AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Several validity checks were done to ensure that the study is credible and trustworthy.

Regarding credibility, data triangulation facilitates the validation of data by testing the consistency of the findings. Janesick (2000) and Hays (2004) describe data triangulation as an integral part of qualitative research, the goal of which is to obtain “corroboration”, between the various data sets and identify major and minor themes within the data (Johnson, 1997). As per the recommendations of Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Maree 2013, p.40), who advise researchers to consider “multiple and

conflicting voices, differing and interacting interpretations to facilitate triangulation and crystallisation”, I paid particular attention when the participants’ perceptions differed from my own.

In order to improve the “interpretive validity” of the research, it is recommended that the researcher uses “thick” description (Cho & Trent, 2006). This refers to the way those being studied interpret certain phenomena (Cho & Trent, 2006). Given that the participants’ environment and situation are unique, the authors are of the view that all factors pertinent to the phenomenon investigated should be considered. To obtain a thick description, I approached my research from a holistic perspective, gathering a detailed description of the field (school and learners) through prolonged interaction with the participants. This enabled me to gain an understanding of their “worldview” through the triangulation of data resources and member checking.

Member checking was done by availing the transcriptions of the interviews to the respective participants. This formed part of the verification process to determine if the participants wanted to amend their initial answers or elaborate on them. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985 in Cho & Trent, 2006), member checking is seen as crucial to establish the credibility of the research findings. In line with Creswell and Miller’s (2000) recommendations, I have included the participants’ comments in the research report (Chapter 5) to support the credibility of my findings.

Ensuring the trustworthiness of my research involved verifying the results with my supervisor –a process that aligns itself to the audit trail processes.

In line with best practice, I kept a research journal to reflect on my personal experiences during the research period as I spend an extended period at the school. From the onset, I realised that I needed to be very conscious of the time constraints and competing priorities of the participants. As such, I allowed them to choose time slots that best suited them for the interviews and rescheduled when unforeseen circumstances required them to be elsewhere. The decision to accommodate contributed positively to the data set, as none of the participants exited the study as a result of undue pressure to adhere to their chosen timeslot. I also allowed the participants to complete the interview in more than one session due to time

constraints. I initially estimated that the interviews would be concluded in less than 30 minutes, but most ended up lasting between 45-120 minutes.

After completing the first interview, I noted that the participant experienced emotional responses when discussing their struggles and challenges with students. Thereafter, I allowed time after the completion of each interview to spend some time with the participant if they chose to do so and referred them to the Employee Wellness Programme if needed. Reflecting on the participant responses, it is evident that all of them embraced the opportunity to talk about their daily experiences in managing learner discipline although it took an emotional toll on them.

During the research period, I also opted to make notes of my observations of the emotional state of teachers and support staff after they dealt with learners who display challenging/disruptive behaviour. My observations indicated strong similarities between all of their responses as to how these behaviours impacted on them as teachers. I also observed the staff expressing a high level of frustration when dealing with challenging/disruptive behaviour. This frustration was largely a result of the following factors: loss of teaching time, parents not picking up their phones, and the vast amount of paperwork required to effectively report on the incident. All these observations and interaction with the staff wouldn't have been possible without a prior relationship, based on respect and trust, already being in place.

My research journal assisted me to reflect on my personal experiences in dealing with challenging and disruptive behaviour of individual learners. I have personally experienced being kicked, bitten, hit and sworn at by learners presenting with challenging/disruptive behaviour. Myself and all of the participants have also, at one point or another, had to endure serve verbal abuse from learners' parents during parental interviews, and as such, I needed to reflect on the participants' answers as well as on my personal experiences to ensure that my own opinions would not affect my reporting of the findings.

## 4.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I had to consider several ethical issues when conducting the research. This includes taking care to avoid harming the participants; ensuring voluntary participation and acquiring informed consent; avoiding deception; guarding privacy; and ensuring reciprocity.

Voluntary participation and informed consent were obtained from each of the participants after ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the Gauteng Department of Education and the school principal, where after I did a verbal presentation to all the stakeholders of the selected special school to ensure that potential participants fully understood the intended research. This included clarifying the procedures that would be followed over the course of the research, thereby eliminating any chance of deception transpiring. De Vos et al., (2001) suggest that the possible advantages and disadvantages of a research project should be disclosed to the participants. In addition, voluntary participation should be requested, and the importance of the research be explained. Refusal to partake should be accepted by the researcher. All of this was reemphasised with the participants before commencing with their interviews.

Throughout the process, the goal was to minimise participation informed by social desirability, and therefore no remuneration was offered to the participants. Doing so would have been considered unethical and would have compromised the research findings. The participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time, as recommended by Babbie and Mouton (2001). It is important to note that none chose to withdraw, though they wanted the assurance that their identity would be protected in the research report and dissertation.

In terms of ethical considerations, confidentiality pertains to any private data which will allow the identification of the participants (Brinkman & Kvale, 2008). Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2007) stated that confidentiality and anonymity are interlinked, and anonymity is one way through which confidentiality is maintained. These authors

(2007) go on state that in the research context, the researcher must ensure confidentiality by undertaking not to discuss participant responses with other participants and presenting the findings in such a way that the respective participants can identify themselves, but cannot be identified by the various readers of the report. In this study, the anonymity of the respective participants was protected by using pseudonyms for the purpose of reporting on the research findings. According to Grinyer (2009), anonymity will benefit the security of the data being processed and as such suggests consulting with the participants when pseudonyms are allocated to find ones that they are comfortable with. Despite this suggestion, the participants chose pseudonyms which could well have made them identifiable to the other readers of the study – I say this because of the apparent similarity of these pseudonyms to their real names. I therefore chose to allocate them neutral pseudonyms, namely: manager, teacher, therapist, psychologist, and social worker A-R. The special school's anonymity is also protected and just referred to as "the special school".

#### **4.10 CONCLUSION**

This qualitative case study explores the management of discipline in special schools. The research site chosen is a single special school in Gauteng with 459 enrolled learners (as of 2018) with the intellectual ability to complete the National Senior Certificate. Its selection was based on its suitability to answer the research questions.

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, document analysis (policies) and researcher field notes (containing the impressions and perceptions of the activities observed). Thereafter, the data set was analysed through thematic analysis to answer the research questions. The credibility and the trustworthiness of the research findings were established through data triangulation and member checking.

The ethical considerations of the study were explored focusing on the voluntary participation, the confidentiality and the anonymity of the participants.

During the research, the participants recollected incidents where they dealt with disciplinary issues experienced by LSEN. As the frequency and severity of the disciplinary infringements had to be established, some of the participants experienced heightened emotional responses when recollection these occurrences. Debriefing and counselling were made available for the participants via the Employee Wellness Programme. The heightened emotional responses of some of the participants will be highlighted in Chapter 5, as it forms an interregnal part of the reporting of findings of the research.

## **CHAPTER 5:**

### **ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter will focus on data analysis and interpretation of the data obtained at this research site.

#### **5.2 SUMMARY OF THE THEMES AND CODES**

Informed by the main research question and the research sub-questions, four interlinked themes were identified.

As a starting point, theme one centres around the disciplinary issues of learners with special educational needs – particularly their intensity and frequency. As disruptive and challenging behaviour does not occur in isolation, theme two looks at how the members of staff, other learners and the learner themselves are influenced by these occurrences. Following on from this, theme three asks what strategies are being utilised to maintain discipline. Throughout the participant responses, it was evident that the school code of conduct and classroom discipline were primarily utilised as baseline strategies to maintain learner discipline. This is very much informed by the respondents' respective attitudes and teaching practises. Theme four therefore asks: In cases where these baseline strategies do not prevent disruptive and challenging behaviour from occurring, which structures have been developed to accommodate these behaviours when they do occur? In terms of supportive measures, multi-disciplinary teams and parental support and involvement plays a crucial role in developing an individualised support programme that assists individual learners to acquire social and behavioural competence.

The aforementioned themes and codes will be discussed below.



## 5.2.1 The disciplinary issues of LSEN learners in special schools

The behaviours that impact on the quality of teaching and learning, as mentioned by the participants, shows a clear correlation with the expected behaviours or psychological manifestations of disabilities/barriers to learning as mentioned in Chapter 1. It is important to note that each of the behaviours/psychological manifestations have the potential to escalate into severe behavioural challenges which will have an extensive impact not only on teaching and learning but also on the safety and security of all learners and members of staff. In line with the study of Nye et al. (2015, p.47), who indicated that if disruptive behaviours were present in LSEN, it is likely that these behaviours “could be more severe in both frequency and intensity than among other children”. I was therefore interested in exploring the behavioural challenges the staff of this special school have to deal with, as well as the intensity and the frequency of these incidents.

The research findings show that the most basic disciplinary issues that influence teaching and learning include impulsiveness, frustration, and the related ADHD behaviours of the learners. One participant maintained that impulsive learners focus on their immediate needs without considering their fellow learners. It also distracts them from completing their tasks:

*“I think one of our greatest challenges are impulsiveness [sic]...Speaking their minds irrespective of how it might let another person feel. Whatever they say think or feel at that moment. No compassion for the person sitting next to them. No priorities, no focus, so you have to remind them constantly of the task at hand and what they need to do.” (Manager G)*

Impulsivity is one of the manifestations of ADHD. One participant describes her difficulties settling a restless class in order to start or continue teaching:

*“ADHD, so just keeping them occupied is the teachers’ worst problem, because the moment that one gets restless, then it affects the whole group and it takes quite a while to settle them down.” (Manager D)*

These behaviours however were considered “normal” within this special school, and Manager D created the impression that the staff are equipped to deal with such behaviours although it takes an emotional toll on them.

*“So, emotionally I would say the beginning was very hard, but as a teacher, at this stage I realise that I am in a very satisfying position because you reach the kid and every day and in every challenge, you learn how to handle the situation.”*

However, the staff in its entirety seems to struggle with the more severe disciplinary issues. The behaviours highlighted by the participants during the interviews are behaviours that have a direct impact on teaching and learning and compromise the safety and security of learners and staff members. These severe behavioural challenges include extreme aggressiveness, temper tantrums, verbal abuse towards teachers and other learners, threatening or hitting teachers, throwing of books and pencil cases towards the teacher, bringing weapons and knives to school, severe defiance, biting and scratching teachers, severe bullying of other learners, screaming and shouting in the classroom and outside on the playground and massive meltdowns. These behaviours have a negative emotional impact on the members of staff who often feel helpless and frustrated. This was evident as one participant couldn't contain her emotions and burst into tears when she described her personal experiences in dealing with the severe behavioural challenges in the classroom. In addition to feelings of helplessness and frustration as basic emotional responses when confronted with disruptive and challenging behaviour, Therapist M added an additional component – that of fear:

*“I was scared of him.”*

Other educators described a serious disciplinary problem which they referred to as a “meltdown”, a condition whereby they witness:

*“Aggravated activity, emotional reactivity ... it is emotional where they've reached the point they are in a fighting response or even a flight response...”*

*Physically they are aroused; mentally they are aroused, emotionally aroused, the measure is also that with the intensity of the disruption you would say they're having a meltdown. Maybe a lot of things could fall into that definition of the meltdown - quite a bit.* "(Counsellor P)

*"First of all, you can see the child is very agitated, irritated and he will start kicking, complaining he can't do this or that, verbalising anything that is disrupting him, throwing things around. Some will start swearing so then you just have to be calm and focus on that child"* (Manager H)

*"An outburst is where the child loses control of his emotions or he is also physical [sic]. In his way of thinking, it will be either a verbal outburst of repetitive things swearing, hitting, kicking ...biting"* (Manager C)

Educators maintain that they encounter these "meltdowns" regularly:

*"Quite often, well, daily. I have said daily but more serious will be about once a week."* (Manager F)

## **Conclusion:**

The findings of this study with regard to the disciplinary issues of learners with special educational needs are aligned with the findings of Cooper and Jacobs (2011), who in their study focus on disciplinary issues of learners in Irish special schools. During the interviews I conducted, it became evident that learners with special educational needs experience behavioural challenges on a daily basis, much to the detriment of quality teaching and learning. However, incidents which have a direct impact on both teaching and learning, as well as on the safety and security of the school community, occurs roughly once a week. Although the intensity of challenging behaviour varies, once it occurs it has a clear negative emotional impact on the staff of this special school as well as the other learners who are exposed to this behaviour. It clearly effects the offending learners as well.

### **5.2.2 The impact of disciplinary issues on the teachers, the other learners and the learners themselves**

The disciplinary issues discussed in the previous section are indicative of the type of disciplinary issues the school community (staff and peers) deal with on an ongoing basis. Given the complexity of individuals' emotional responses to stressful situations, it can be assumed that every member of the school community experiences varying degrees of emotional response when exposed to disruptive behaviour.

The participants showed strong emotional responses toward the disciplinary problems (cf. Section 5.2) of learners and the impact this has on them as the staff of this special school. Some explained feeling emotionally drained and stressed, experiencing feelings of disempowerment or some degree of depression, loss of objectivity, and feelings of worthlessness.

*"Some days it catches me - especially when it is all severe cases. But I am quite disturbed about it. I would really feel upset and that is why I say emotionally it tires one. You feel, you feel so tired, of, you feel you battle but you are not gaining anything..."* (Counsellor H)

*"When a child starts to swear at you it makes you feel dirty. And you feel worthless. When you think about it afterwards you think that it's not, it wasn't your fault. But sometimes you feel, I don't think it is the right place for me here. You know, one wants to take your stuff and want to just leave [sic]..."*  
(Teacher J)

These comments are reflective of the negative emotional impact of the disciplinary problems experienced within the classroom and can be seen as an indication of the heightened emotional responses experienced by teachers within this special school. As a result, some of the teachers question their self-worth. However, teachers seem to remain hopeful that despite such issues, they still have a positive impact on the learners:

*“I just hope and pray that I have an effect on some of the children.”* (Manager H)

*“...but then after you thought about it, you think the children still need me. There is a lot more that needs you [sic] ...”* (Teacher J)

This indicates that, even if they experience negative heightened emotional responses, these participants are able to work through the initial emotional trauma and still see the value they add to the lives of the other learners they teach and, per implication, have a positive attitude towards learners with special educational needs.

Some of the participants feel isolated and struggle to move past the trauma of the episodes of challenging/disruptive behaviour they had to endure. In some cases, a teacher struggles to move past the trauma, like in the case of Teacher J, who made the following comment:

*“... it will be wonderful if you have somebody that you can talk to, that you can trust at the school. But it will also be nice to talk to somebody that you don't actually know, or that person doesn't know the children, the children or the teachers or the whole situation at the school as well.”*

Interestingly, the participants tend not to discuss the impact of challenging and disruptive behaviour on themselves but instead refer to the physical and emotional impact thereof on their colleagues:

*“They get depressed ...”* (Therapist M)

*“I remember she went to the GP, if I had to recall now, I think 2 or 3 days after school re-opened for the new term, she had to take sick leave due to such incidents that she had to go to the doctor. She had a runny tummy, she was really, really stressed out then. It is very tough to come back to school and nothing has changed.”* (Manager F)

To summarise, teachers experience both physical and emotional responses to the behaviour of learners who are struggling with behaviour and social competence due to their respective disabilities/barriers to learning. The behavioural problems of individual learners also negatively impact their peers. Some of the possible effects identified are physical trauma, the triggering of epileptic seizures and anxiety, learners being scared and afraid, and peers of the offending learner who start to misbehave as a result of the disruptive behaviour.

Manager A stated:

*"... it affects the progress of the whole class, academically and emotionally..."*

The comments made by Manager F emphasised the "quantity" of learners impacted by the disciplinary problems experienced by an individual learner:

*"You cannot really imagine how one child with outbursts, incidents or meltdowns have that effect on the other children, and it is huge, it is very huge. .... I want to add, it is not only the class learners, and it is also the learners next to them, in the neighbouring classes. "(Manager F)*

In addition to these possible impacts, Counsellor P elaborated by pointing out that learners having an episode of disruptive behaviour in a sense "take the whole class hostage" by preventing teaching and learning from taking place while simultaneously compromising the safety and security of everyone in the class.

*"I think tantrums. Because, those outbursts and anger is a show to the degree where it is public display of angering dominance over a teacher, or vice versa, that's when you cannot learn in that environment. You are forced to watch this display, and that's what I mean by hostage. Those kids are at the mercy of the [individual child's] outburst and how it's going to unfold, so outburst definitely falls in there ...It is unpleasing to be in that environment, and to learn ...then you've got the other kids, preventatively sitting on egg shells, not asking the teacher questions, just doing everything they can to not provoke the other*

*child, because this person's outbursts is unpleasant for everyone, it is abusive..."*

These types of outbursts lead me to ask how having these challenges impact on the learners who display them?

The various participants mentioned a number of negative derivatives that could either be the end result and/or the cause of their disruptive behavioural patterns. These include unhealthy social interactions with peers, becoming loners because they are not accepted by their peers, as well as strained relationships with adults. All these potentially contribute to their already low self-esteem, heightened frustration levels and lower academic achievement.

If this behaviour can be explained by the impairment, it can be that, due to the lack of impulse control, the learners do not consider the consequences of the actions:

*"They realise that they are doing something wrong, but they react even before they can think that they are doing it wrong." (Manager H)*

The teachers attempt to counteract these behaviours through preventative disciplinary structures. These preventative disciplinary structures will be further unpacked in the next section.

## **Conclusion:**

In the section above, the impact of the disciplinary problems experienced by learners on the respective stakeholders was discussed separately. After scrutinising the participants' responses regarding the impact thereof on teachers, peers and learners themselves, these could be viewed as interlinked because of the commonalities identified in the emotional and physical components (cf. Kelly et al., 2007 & Hastings, 2005). None of the school stakeholders function independently within the classroom context. They should in fact be seen as a "community" wherein each member impacts either positively or negatively on each other. That's precisely why it is imperative that strategies are devised to ensure that quality teaching and learning

takes place while concurrently establishing safety and security within the micro (classroom) and macro (school) community.

### **5.3 MANAGING DISCIPLINE**

#### **5.3.1 Preventative discipline**

As established in the literature review, preventative discipline within the school setting is focused on preventing disruptive behaviour from occurring in the first place (Charles, 1989). As such, the school code of conduct, disciplinary strategies, classroom rules and environmental accommodations will be discussed as “preventative disciplinary structures” that are developed and utilised to support learners to adhere to the school rules.

##### **5.3.1.1 School code of conduct**

In this study, the school’s code of conduct serves as the baseline for managing discipline. This special school honoured their mandated legislative responsibility by developing a very comprehensive code of conduct based on extensive research. Subsections within the code of conduct will be discussed to substantiate my view that it is a very forward-thinking document. Firstly, the school infused their mission and vision into the school code of conduct as recommended in the study of (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014). Secondly, the inclusion of the rights and responsibility of learners could be indicative of the SMT viewing the learners as valuable members of the school community. The rights of learners stipulated in Section 4 of the school code of conduct (p.3-4) include the right to: a) feel safe; b) be treated with respect; c) learn and receive instruction; d) air his/her views; e) possess property; and f) enjoy a clean and tidy environment. Thirdly, the policy discusses the stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities in line with the relevant legislative framework that is applicable to them. Fourthly, in section 7 the sub-heading: *Discipline* is discussed extensively.



**Table 5.1: Sub-heading discipline**

<b>Section 7</b>	<b>Heading</b>
7.1	Defining discipline, school rules and the code of conduct
7.2	Characteristics of discipline
7.3	Nature of discipline
7.4	Types of discipline
7.5	Essential of discipline
7.6	Forms of discipline
7.7	The educator and discipline
7.8	Teacher-learner relationships

The school also has clearly defined disciplinary procedures which are communicated to the parents at information sharing sessions, as well as to the learners during assembly and at line-up in the mornings.

*“...in the morning I tell them, remember, this is the producers [sic], this is how we handle things...”* (Manager B)

Values are also discussed during assemblies and reinforced through the use of posters in the hall:

*“We also work on the values, trustworthiness, integrity and respect. We’ve got them up in the hall, on the doors ...in Afrikaans and English.”* (Manager B)

As a school community, they utilise the “yellow slip system” to inform the parents of disciplinary challenges and instances of homework not being completed. Yellow refers to the colour on which the letters are printed. In this regard, the school’s website explains that:

- “After 3 yellow slips, parents will receive a letter to inform them of the problem.

- After another 3 yellow slips, the parents will receive another letter as well as a telephonic call to notify them.
- After the third group of yellow slips, the parents will be called in for a discussion with the relevant teachers and psychologist.” (Obtained from the school’s website).

Clear evidence of the implementation of the discipline procedures was observed in the participants’ responses and the value of the “yellow slip” approach was substantiated.

*“The written warnings in the form of, we call it a yellow letter, they receive a letter... the date on which it happened and then the parents must sign it. Three yellow letters and they get a white letter, the white letter then also stipulates the [nature of the previous] three offences that happened. Again, the parents must sign it. After the white letter, then it becomes more formal, then there is a disciplinary hearing for the child by the SGB...”* (Social Worker R)

*“I guess the protocol that is already in place in the disciplinary policy of the school guides me in my intervention and interventions at the school and I think one can see that as support from the school’s point of view.”* (Social Worker R)

The participants were of the view that the utilisation of the “slip systems” is showing positive results in the management of learner discipline. The staff also uses incident reports to strengthen the effectiveness of disciplinary procedures.

*“Every class has a daily report where you indicate what the incident has been and what interventions you as the subject teacher have done.”* (Manager E)

The incident reports are then submitted daily to the allocated head of department.

*“... so, at the end of the day I take all the daily reports and I put them onto each child’s incident report, so every learner has their own incident report...”*  
(Manager D)

Because these incident reports have to be completed daily for every transgression of the school’s code of conduct, compiling said reports has a massive impact on the administrative workload of the teachers – especially in light of the frequency of learner misdemeanours. In the event that a teacher fails to complete the daily reports in a timely manner, the effectiveness of the disciplinary protocol is compromised and delays the provision of support to learners.

*“... with every disciplinary action, there is a process that needs to be followed, with that there is a lot of paperwork accompanied to have a history trail [sic] of every case you are dealing with and maybe some hesitance not to complete the applicable paperwork ... and that prolongs the process to get the solution as quick as possible.”* (Manager A)

Within the supportive disciplinary paradigm, the respective academic phases each have an Occupational Therapist allocated as a mentor. They are tasked to provide support to learners who are failing to adhere to the school code of conduct.

*“I am the mentor of the of the Gr. 7-9’s, so I [deal with] the discipline, I do all the emotional stuff, I do all the tests, I liaise with the teachers, I support the teachers and the children ...so I am the person in between the teachers and the learners, and the communication with the parents, so I am the one that communicate firstly to the parents.”* (Therapist M)

Innovative measures have been developed by the occupational therapists and heads of department to render immediate disciplinary support to learners and teachers in cases where individual learners display challenging and disruptive behavioural patterns. This is aligned to recommendations made by Grossman (2005). These interventions can be viewed as an integrated preventive, supportive and corrective

disciplinary approach to prevent challenging behaviour from escalating. This support is provided in accordance with the “just-in-time” method –when it is needed.

*“We also [have a] WhatsApp group here because it is for a specific class issue and then [the teachers] normally WhatsApp and then either me or the HOD would step in, or they would announce for me to go and see what is happening in the class.” (Therapist M)*

*“We use an old-fashioned WhatsApp group in our phase ...so I am very alert to those SMS’s or WhatsApp’s coming through but if I have a class with me, I’ll first deal with my class. I cannot leave them unsupervised.” (Manager F)*

This statement by Manager F is indicative of the fact that challenging and disruptive behaviour have an impact not only on their own classes but on the support staff’s classes too. In such cases, the learner will usually be removed from the class and be allowed a “calm down” period outside of the classroom context:

*“...sit outside with him and talk to him and after a while, he will calm down and he will be okay...” (Manager F)*

The impact of these support actions by respectively the mentor (occupational therapist) and/or the head of department could be viewed and unpacked from two different angles of perception. The first perception centres on the effective support to individual learners through immediate intervention, which has multiple positive benefits because it protects both the mental and physical wellbeing of the other learners and the teacher from being exposed to the disruptive behaviour. The second perception centres around the learners “left behind” in the therapist’s room and in the HOD’s class because of incidents that occur in other classes. Ultimately, their therapy/class is disrupted and as established earlier; learners with special educational needs thrive in a predictable and structured environment. Which leaves the following conundrum: is the advantage of this support action outweighing its disadvantages?

Although the value of allocating occupational therapists as the mentors for the respective phases has been validated, the critique thereof needs to be noted:

*"... [teachers refer] a child to be monitored by the OT in charge. And then the OT will, and that's a difficult scenario because in terms of counselling, teachers are to be pastorally trained, they should be. OT's aren't. But what qualifies that OT's to all of a sudden have better insight into what teachers do?" (Counsellor P)*

Counsellor P's critique can be viewed as indicative of the vital role teachers play in the establishment of discipline within their respective classrooms and highlight the fact that teachers should be careful not to abdicate their pastoral duties towards their learners, as it could lead to compromised disciplinary structures within their classrooms.

Manager A (the principal) believes that the establishment of the abovementioned interventions are effective because:

*"...issues are dealt with immediately; parents are informed immediately, and meetings are arranged with the parents as soon as possible." (Manager A)*

The school caters for learners from Grade 1 to 12 with a vast array of disabilities/impairments, and it is important to note that accommodations are made according to the learners' individual needs, maturity level (age) and/or cultural background although not formalised in the schools code of conduct:

*"The child's maturity also determines the way of approach to discuss or deal with that, so it is not a straightforward action..." (Manager A)*

*"The other thing regarding discipline is the cultural background, because being a multi-cultural school, the culture of the Afrikaner, the culture of the English, the culture of the African varies from each other. You need to*

*understand the differences, understand your child and know how to deal with various situations.” (Manager A)*

Manager A concluded by stating:

*“I need to make exceptions sometimes, which can be regarded as unfair ...”*

The Principal (Manager A) made the following reference to the accommodations needed for individual learners when taking their individual needs, as informed by their impairments, into account:

*“...if the child went through the initiation process, in their culture they are regarded as ‘grown-up’ ...now I need to address the problem as a ‘grown-up’ and not as a scholar of a pupil. But, still being in the system, the learner needs to adhere to the code of conduct.” (Manager A)*

I therefore conclude that although the school code of conduct was developed to formalise the behaviour expected from all the enrolled learners, the school will make individual accommodations for learners to accommodate respectively their individual needs and/or culture, while also taking into account their age.

#### 5.3.1.2 Establishing classroom discipline through classroom rules and order

This schools’ code of conduct gives recommendations for the establishment of order within the classroom. Because the management of learner discipline starts with the teacher, it is their implied responsibility to establish order in the class (Emmer & Stough, 2003), by developing classroom rules derived from the school rules. The school code of conduct recommends that the teacher involves the learners in the process of establishing classroom rules, while also limiting the number of set rules (cf. Mokhele, 2006). The goal of these rules is to enable the teacher to manage the following four classroom behaviours: attention to the teacher, acceptable noise levels, learner movement and learner interaction (cf. Annexure F: Code of Conduct).

This is imperative, as these behaviours could have a negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning and compromise the safety and security within the classroom.

One of the participants recommended the following preventative strategies or basic rules to establish order within classrooms:

*“But the main thing that works is to have structure, if you don’t have structure in your class you are going to lose it, for sure. If you don’t start immediately, if you leave them for a few minutes, you’ve lost it ... Well, as I’ve said, we must carry on with work, from the moment they line up to entering your class you have to be there. They have to stand behind their desks, we have to greet each other, we have to sit down, we have to open the books, and we have to start immediately”* (Teacher J)

*“... my rules [are]for instance, you’ve got to fold your hands when you listen and speak, you are not allowed to shout out, [say] please and thank you ...all those basic rules...”* (Teacher K)

These basic strategies or rules for classroom management have been derived from the school rules as published in the school dairy, as well as in-service training of the staff by the school management and the therapeutic staff of the school. They have been successfully applied within the classroom context by Teacher J and K. However, these individualised strategies developed and adapted by the respective participants are not formalised within an official school policy or guideline. Essentially, these strategies are indicative of Teacher J and K’s attempts to address the social barriers of teacher attitudes and ridged teaching practises. They are therefore promulgating the accommodation of the individual needs of their respective learners through the development of structures focused on predictability and routine as strategies to affect preventative disciplinary structures, which are a prerequisite for quality teaching and learning at a special school.

Additionally, according to Manager H, it is crucial to recognise the uniqueness of every learner and acknowledge their need for predictability within the school context.

*“They want to feel secure in your class, they must know that they are special, they are wanted there and don’t change and swap your class often ...they like their space and, yes, there are times that you have to do that. That is not a regular thing ... they like routine, they like to do the same thing, coming to school, going to the playground, doing this, they like routine, they like those things. That is how they function and that is how they flourish. If you change routine, you are going to pick up problems.”* (Manager H)

One of the participants mentioned some of the basic rules in her classroom. She also elaborated on the utilisation of the homework diary to establish order (homework to be done) and establishing open communication channels between her and the respective parents of the learners.

*“Homework is written down, I must sign and then parents are supposed to sign, and they are not allowed to not write down their homework in pencil, at all.”* (Teacher K)

## **Conclusion:**

The school’s code of conduct and classroom rules can be seen as preventative disciplinary measures. Through the process of data analysis and interpretation of the data it was observed that the implementation of the code of conduct and classroom rules by the SMT and educators, as mentioned by various authors (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; Mestry&Khumalo, 2012), forms a good baseline in dealing with most of the disciplinary problems encountered by school staff on a daily basis. Although the code of conduct encapsulates all aspects of discipline within this school (cf. Table 5.1) the policy adheres to its goal by giving guidance to all stakeholders to ensure that quality teaching and learning takes place in a safe and secure environment that promotes the rights of all members of the school community, as recommended by



Mestry&Khumalo (2012).Unfortunately, it does not totallyprevent or address challenging behaviours as mentioned in Section 5.1. Although not formally promulgated in the school code of conduct, individualised accommodations are made for learners based on their level of maturity, the degree of impairment, as well as their cultural background. It is therefore evident that no standardisation of support actions can be done in advance precisely because learners must be individually accommodated. The limit of the code of conduct as a preventative tool has been minimised through the “just-in-time” innovative measures and other strategies developed to prevent incidents of ill-discipline from escalating.

Because it is understood that the management of classroom discipline is ultimately the teachers’ responsibility, the participants in this study have developed innovative ways to effect preventative discipline. Physical accommodations (the structuring of the physical space) within the classroom and the allocation of mentors to the respective phases to enable immediate support in cases of disruptive behaviour are two examples of this. Contextually, it is clear the school has developed an effective disciplinary support structure.

In summary, the school’s strategies for maintaining discipline centred around the code of conduct and classroom rules, incident reports, allocation of mentors, as well as the policy of accommodating learners based on their impairment, level of maturity and cultural background within a multi-cultural school community.

### **5.3.2 Supportive discipline**

Supportive discipline, as defined in this study, is about strategies focused on individual support to learners with disruptive behaviour in order to assist them to regain self-control (Charles, 1989).When looking at it from the angle of the social model of disability, one must determine how, in this case, barriers have been removed from the environment and which structures are used to accommodate the behaviours of LSEN. Establishing a multi-disciplinary team and obtaining parental support and involvement are crucial prerequisites in the development of effective supportive discipline.

### 5.3.2.1 Establishment of a multi-disciplinary team

The importance of establishing a multi-disciplinary team has been highlighted in previous studies (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; SIAS, 2014). A key function of this team is to establish productive working relationships among all stakeholders. This team, whose key task is to establish productive working relationships among stakeholders, usually comprises representatives from the school management team, the school-based support team co-ordinator, specialised teachers, therapists, the school nurse, psychologist and/or counsellor, as well as the parents/guardians. In extreme cases, a representative from the local district office is also included. During the interviews, the participants referred to their team's meetings as parental-, intervention- or a multi-disciplinary team meetings.

*"We have a parent meeting where the therapists, the class teacher, me, and if necessary, the deputy principal, is also involved ... and the social worker. That is what is so nice about our type of school, because we have all these types of support."*(Psychologist O)

*"... we've got a multi-disciplinary team, where if you combine the input from all the stakeholders, you can to some extent determine what areas you need to be focused on. How to go about it, and see what progress is made, which adoptions needs to be made. This needs to be done, as far as I am concerned, twice a year."* (Manager A)

By scrutinising the responses of the participants, I was able to establish what adaptations were being made to accommodate individual learners and assist them in acquiring behavioural and social competence. These included addressing visual interruptions (changed the lighting in the room), addressing auditory interruptions (e.g. allowing the learner to wear earphones), moving the learner to the front or the back of the class, replacing chairs with balancing balls and creating a "safe" desk area where teachers could address untoward behaviour in private. All of these physical provisions are informed by the individual needs of the learners and are supportive measures which are informed by their individualised support

programmes, addressing their respective impairments' and educational needs. Accommodations focused on behavioural and social competence included, but were not limited to, allowing for "time-out" away from stressful situations, i.e. being removed from the class to regain control of their emotions and immediately receiving therapeutic support. Additionally, if the learner request to go home, their parents would be contacted and requested to come pick them up.

The value of working as a multi-disciplinary team was also highlighted in the participants' responses. This can be viewed as collaboration by internal and external stakeholders from a supportive premise, as recommended by Nooruddin and Baig (2014).

*"So, it makes teaching a lot better with our system as well as with the therapists' involvement in these cases; you work holistically and together as a team with each learner."* (Manager F)

*"...it is a collaborative effort and every person can give their input on what they found worked..."* (Manager G)

*"... together we will decide and figure out how we are going to address it."* (Teacher L)

The focus of these meetings is outlined in the following responses and can be viewed as indicative of the supportive nature of these meetings.

*"All we want to do is [to have] the best for your child..."* (Manager F)

*"...render support to the learner, to see how we can change their behaviour, to render that intervention ..."* (Social Worker R)

As a general rule, the multi-disciplinary team is focused on the development of supportive disciplinary structures and this was substantiated by the participants' responses. The participants mentioned various therapeutic interventions that are used to support learners, including rational emotive therapy, cognitive behaviour

therapy, meta-cognitive behaviour therapy counselling and therapies aligned to the respective therapists' scope of practise. Recommendations are made according to the individual needs of learners, but it is important to note that not all recommendations will fully address the needs of every learner. Some room should therefore be left within which educators can manoeuvre and tweak these recommendations to ensure the best possible outcome (cf. Emerson, 2016 & Grossman, 2005).

Although the goal of the multi-disciplinary team and the function of their meetings is well established, it is important to note the criticism mentioned by Manager C and Social Worker R. Issues of overloading and time constraints have been mentioned by these participants.

*“Some of the meetings don't fit the timetable so that we can fit into the meeting ... so due to the fact that we have so many intervention meetings with the parents, it is very difficult to attend all of them.”* (Manager C)

This was reiterated by Social Worker R when discussing the amount of cases that require his intervention and active involvement:

*“In general, I have a couple, I have about 50 cases that [are] still open, if I can say it like that. So, there is still intervention for about 50 learners.”*

This statement by Social Worker R indicates that the support staff (therapists, counsellors and psychologists) within the school are overloaded by the number of learners referred to them for additional therapeutic intervention.

Some responses suggested that certain teachers use these mechanisms as a way of punishing a learner rather than providing collaborative support:

*“...the counselling and discipline are separate; this is how we practise. But the reality is that it gets confused...they believe that to punish the child, you send*

*them for counselling ... and it is not, counselling is far more open than that and it is construed as that..." (Counsellor P)*

Counsellor P further elaborated on this:

*"We don't know that they believed that to punish the child [sic], you send them for counselling, but I am saying there is an indirect assumption about it if we have to correct the situation... It is a corrective measure..."*

This is in direct contradiction to the corrective and supportive measures outlined in the school's code of conduct and is an indication that some members of the multi-disciplinary team have lost sight of the true role and function of counselling within the supportive paradigm. Essentially their reception of the role and function of counselling as a supportive action is likely determined by their understanding of disability. When looking at the two main discourses of understanding disability, namely medical and social, the assumption that sending a child to counselling is "punishment" could be an indication that the referring teachers' understanding of disability/impairments are grounded in the framework of the medical model. This implies a belief that counselling is a way of "fixing" or "punishing" a learner. Counsellor P believes that most teachers only apply the social model of disability to address the pre-identified social barriers to a certain extent but fail with regard to their understanding of the respective impairments and the support required by the individual learners. As such, there is a need to equip teachers with the skills to handle these situations and gain more insight into the role of therapeutic intervention as part of discipline management.

The feedback received in the interviews clearly highlights the challenges that the staff of this special school face in regard to workload. According to Manager C, a vast number of learners need additional support but due to time constraints and competing priorities most members of the multi-disciplinary team are unable to attend all of the meetings. This matter raised by Counsellor P is of some concern,

because a therapeutic intervention can't be viewed as a punitive measure – rather, it is a supportive and corrective measure to assist the learner to correct the problematic behaviour.

In closing, Manager A made mention of the following, which is in line with the article by Bradley and Korossy (2016, p.101), who explored a “biopsychosocial multi-perspective understanding” of learners presenting with challenging behaviours as discussed in Chapter 2, section 2.5.

*“There is a vast array of contextual factors and we need to be aware of that so that we can understand the circumstances of the child. We can adapt support, but if we don't understand the child and the circumstances, don't know the history of the child, are not aware of the emotional aspects, don't know about the medical history we will not be able to accommodate/place the child or determine the education learning programme.”*

This statement emphasises the importance of having pertinent background information on the individual learner to effectively support them. This information is obtained through the admissions questionnaire, the therapist-and medical reports, referral documents, as well as through parental interviews. The full co-operation of the parents and the disclosure of relevant background information are, therefore, prerequisites for effectively supporting and accommodating individual learners.

#### 5.3.2.2 Parental support and involvement

The importance of parental involvement in providing appropriate support was well established in the Chapter 2. The school's code of conduct also outlines the expected role of the parent as educational partner in the school, referring in particular to their role when their child makes themselves guilty of misconduct. In essence, the school expects the parents to support and co-operate with the school at all times by taking an active interest in the child's educational development.

It became evident from the interviews that there are both co-operative and non-cooperative parents. It needs to be acknowledged that dealing with the disciplinary challenges of their children is often very difficult for parents as it impacts every aspect of their lives:

*“... they don’t understand the problem, or they don’t want to. We’ve got good parents that really interact well with us because they just want what is best for their child. Some parents don’t understand what is best for their child.”*  
(Manager B)

*“Mostly the parents are the problem. They don’t want to understand that there is a problem with their child, and that is difficult to work with a child if the parents [don’t] understand and cooperate.”* (Manager B)

Some participants also had very strong opinions of where some of the learners’ problems originate from:

*“So, I feel that a lot of these problems start with the homes ...”* (Manager H)

*“All the kids that have [been sent] here from the disciplinary committee for emotional support, when I dig, I find that it all began from the home situation.”*  
(Psychologist Q)

Contextually, there are various reasons for parents being unable to support the school. Manager C felt this could be attributed to a lack of knowledge on the part of the parents as to how they should support their child:

*“...we don’t get the support from the parents and a lot of time the parents do not know what to do, although they try to be supportive. They don’t know how to deal and support their children and sometimes there is not a good [support] system at home”* (Manager C)

Teacher L felt that although some parents may lack the skills to support their children, the school should then support and assist the parents to acquire the necessary skills:

*“I think the problem is that our parents normally do not know how to handle their own kids. I think there are a lot of parents that need a little bit of coaching with that as well”* (Teacher L)

It should be noted that at this particular school, coaching is done at information evenings as well as during parental interviews. A high level of support is also given to parents at multi-disciplinary meetings. In some cases, however, the support is not enough. Some participants attributed this to parental denial:

*“The other thing is that we also normally get is that the parents are always looking for the problem at the school or [with]the teachers themselves. Instead of taking hands with the teachers and the principal and everybody, they are trying to rectify the problem that we have ...”* (Teacher L)

The participants’ responses point to the lack of parental involvement, at least in some cases, as a compounding problem in addressing the behavioural and social competence of individual learners. In essence, it seems that although their support is crucial, it is not always forthcoming. This is despite the fact that open communication between the school and the parents is promulgated in the school’s code of conduct (2014, p.7), which states that: “A high degree of communication between home and school leads to more effective education programmes being offered”.

This led me to scrutinise the participants’ responses to establish whether any additional support structures had been put into place except for the on-site therapeutic interventions. From the interviews it became evident that the social worker will do home visits to determine if in-home support is required by the family. As an additional measure, the assistance of external service providers will be obtained if required:



*“If it is a problem beyond our scope, within the school setup, I will mostly refer the learner or the parents for that matter to an external psychologist, whoever is appropriate to deal with the problem of that learner...”* (Social Worker R)

Social Worker R mentions something important – the fact that even if the school has therapeutic staff, they will refer to external service providers should the need arise. This additional supportive gesture is an acknowledgement that all cases don't necessarily fall within their scope of practice and that additional support from other professionals is sometimes required to best support learners.

### **Conclusion:**

The special school where this study was conducted has a functional multi-disciplinary team focussed on support provision. The team includes members from the educational as well as the therapeutic staff to develop individualised support structures for the learners in need of support. In Psychologist Q's interview, it was mentioned that the multi-disciplinary team's recommendations could include referrals to external service providers, which is indicative of the individualised approach that has been adopted by the multi-disciplinary team. The team therefore honours its key function through the establishment of open communication channels and productive working relationships among all stakeholders.

The participant responses were aligned to the findings Pienaar's (2003) study, which highlighted the crucial role parents play in providing effective support to learners. The participants are of the opinion that parental support is vital, and should this not be forthcoming, effective support strategies cannot be developed. As a consequence, learners in need are placed at a major disadvantage.

### **5.3.3 Corrective disciplinary structures**

Corrective discipline will only happen after preventative and supportive disciplinary measures have been implemented but the disruptive behaviour still occurs (Charles,

1989). Corrective discipline is therefore not a punitive disciplinary measure, but a positive intervention to redirect behaviour (Charles, 1989). The goal of corrective discipline is to correct current behavioural challenges, and to prevent new behavioural challenges from developing (Nooruddin&Baig, 2014). That's why it is important to note that there is no "one size fits all" strategy for all learners when it comes to corrective discipline (Algozzine&Algozzine, 2008).

According to one of the respondents, the multi-disciplinary team will firstly develop supportive disciplinary measures as a collaborative effort. Should the supportive disciplinary measures fail, corrective disciplinary measures need to be developed:

*"If something is not working, you go back and have a meeting"* (Manager F)

This indicates that the multi-disciplinary team review their recommendations and affect amendments, where needed, as part of corrective disciplinary measures. The participants' comments also suggest that the social model of disability has been practically implemented within the school and is helping guide and effectively address the individual needs of the learners through the development of individualised accommodations and intervention plans.

#### **5.4 SUMMARY:**

In this chapter, the disciplinary issues of learners with special educational needs were explored. Regardless of the intensity and frequency of the challenging/disruptive behaviour displayed by individual learners, the impact thereof on the broader school community is extensive. This study gives a unique insight into the disciplinary issues of the learners with special educational needs within the context of this special school, including a first-hand account of the disciplinary challenges faced by the staff of this special school daily.

The severe behavioural challenges – including extreme aggressiveness, throwing of tantrums, verbal abuse and threats towards teachers and other learners, hitting the

teachers, throwing of books and pencil cases, bringing weapons and knives to school, severe defiance, biting and scratching, severe bullying towards other learners, screaming and shouting both in the classroom and on the playground, as well as complete “meltdowns” – are the behaviours that the teachers and support staff of this school find very difficult to manage. Because these incidents don’t happen in isolation, the staff, other learners and the offending learner themselves are affected by these occurrences. They not only disrupt teaching and learning whilst compromising safety and security; but also take an emotional and physical toll. One of the participants compared it to a “hostage situation” where everybody must wait for the situation to be brought under control. It was even pointed out that these learners are at risk of being isolated from their peers because of strained relationships. In analysing the data set, it’s clear that the impact of challenging and disruptive behaviour is extensive. To maintain learner discipline and prevent disciplinary challenges from impacting on the quality of teaching and learning or the safety and security of the school community, this special school has devised forward-thinking strategies to manage learner discipline. This is in addition to the “baseline” preventative measures informed by the school code of conduct and classroom rules.

Firstly, the staff complete and submit daily incident reports on learner misdemeanours to the departmental head (HOD), ensuring that all transgressions of the school code of conduct and classroom rules are recorded and reported. Secondly, a mentor is appointed for each of the respective phases to render immediate support when a learner presents with challenging and disruptive behaviour. WhatsApp is used as a communication tool as it enables “calling for immediate support”. Most of the participants regarded this strategy as being very effective. However, none of these strategies prevent disruptive/challenging behaviour from occurring in the first place, and as such, support structures were developed to help those learners struggling with social and behavioural competence.

In terms of supportive disciplinary structures, a multi-disciplinary team comprised of various internal stakeholders was established. The goal of this support structure is to

develop effective individualised support interventions to assist learners who present with challenging/disruptive behaviour. Parental support and involvement also play an integral part in the development of an individualised support programme and the importance of their cooperation in this process can't be overstated. The participants reported that parental support is not always forthcoming, and that parental denial or ignorance is to the detriment of the learner.

Corrective disciplinary measures such as "just-in-time" interventions and "time-out" sessions were devised for when supportive disciplinary measures fail. These disciplinary measures fall within the functions of the multi-disciplinary team and continued amendments are affected as part of individualised support.

In the next chapter, I will review the findings through the theoretical lens of the social model of disability to establish the extent to which the model is used as part of discipline management at this special school.

## CHAPTER 6:

### THE APPLICATION OF THE SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY TO THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Chapter 5 focussed on the findings derived from the data gathered in the interviews and the interpretation thereof to answer the research questions. In Chapter 6, I will explore the application of the social model of disability to the behaviour management of learners with special educational needs.

#### 6.1 MEDICAL MODEL OF DISABILITY

As discussed in Chapter 3, the traditional medical model of disability is a deficit model which primarily focuses on the individual and the medical (biological) classification of disabilities. Aligned to domains of support (SIAS, 2014), the medical model plays an integral role in the placement of learners in a special school, and this view of disability was also observed in the responses of Manager G and Counsellor P when referring to learners of the school:

*“Behavioural disabilities, ADHD, ODD, severe dyslexia, I have Asperger’s ... it’s a mixture of everything you can possibly think of.” (Manager G)*

*“So, it is a very large spectrum of guys that you see with very different problems, but the unified factor is that they have either SLD or MID...the only thing typical is that they have a learning disability.” (Counsellor P)*

In the view of the Principal, Manager A, the school focuses on the following areas when considering admission to the school:

*“Neurological, cognitive, medical and then social ...”*

The staff's understanding of learners' impairments is evidently rooted in this model, as many of the participants referred to the learners in terms of their medical diagnoses. This referencing method was observed in all of the participants' interviews, when referring to learners. It is therefore important to note that their understanding of disability as well as disability associated behaviours are solidly grounded in the medical model.

## **6.2 SOCIAL MODEL OF DISABILITY**

From the perspective of the social model of disability, it is of vital importance that the staff shift their focus away from the biological condition (diagnosis), essentially making the medical diagnoses secondary to the social conditions (acceptance or rejection) of the individual in terms of their respective disabilities and the associated characteristics (cf. Meltz, Herman & Pillay, 2014). This recommended focus shift was observed in the way the staff made accommodations for learners to improve their discipline based on the social model of disability, although their understanding of disabilities and disability-associated behaviours are grounded within the medical model. The social model of disability seeks to promulgate child-centred learning, which can only be affected through a positive attitude from teachers and therapeutic staff towards learners presenting with challenging/disruptive behaviours.

### **6.2.1 The impact of the attitude of teachers and therapeutic staff on discipline management**

The attitudes of teachers and therapeutic staff have a direct impact on the management of discipline in a special school. As discussed in Chapter 2, teachers, and to a lesser extent the therapeutic staff, have extensive daily interactions with the learners, and therefore directly influence discipline within their respective classrooms and/or therapy rooms (cf. Martinez, et al., 2016). It can be deduced that the behaviours of the teachers, therapeutic staff and learners are interlinked, and directly influence each other (cf. Conroy, Sutherland, Haydon, Stormont & Harmon, 2009). Per implication, the attitude of the teacher or therapist towards learners with challenging/disruptive behaviour can either escalate the occurrences of disruptive

behaviour (negative attitude) or alternatively reduce the occurrences (positive attitude). Essentially, the teachers' attitudes towards these learners can be viewed as either enabling learners to acquire social and behavioural competence or denying the learners the opportunity to do so because of their personal views and attitudes.

According to Manager G, enabling learners to acquire social and behavioural competence can be affected in the following ways:

*"If you speak in a calm, respectful way, after a while, not always straight away, but after a while they seem to respond to that."*

*"...I will address them in a nice manner; I always try to be respectful."*

Conversely, teachers' negative attitudes towards learners could inadvertently be preventing learners from acquiring social and behavioural competence. In the opinion of Teacher K, teachers lacking empathy towards learners presenting with disciplinary challenges "*worsens the disciplinary issue...*"

Teacher L referred to the impact of a particular teacher's attitude, including negative talk towards learners presenting with challenging behaviours, on the rest of the staff:

*"If I sit and have listened to negative talk about a child during break, I promise you when you get into the class you are so worked up, that you don't see the potential of the child, you don't see that anymore, and then you become child orientated and not challenge orientated and that is bad for the child..."*

(Teacher L)

The participant responses indicate that teacher attitudes towards learners with challenging/disruptive behaviours be another critical component in the application of the social model of disability as a basis for managing learner discipline.

Because challenging and disruptive behaviour patterns (as discussed in Chapter 5) have both a physical and emotional impact on the teachers, their peers and the learners themselves, it can be assumed that teacher attitudes will be negatively

affected by their personal experiences in dealing with learners who have severe behavioural challenges. When referring to a particularly aggressive learner, Therapist M's response highlighted "fear" as one of the components that influences teacher attitudes:

*"I was scared of him."*

This statement can be interpreted in a few different ways. It can be a form of discrimination, as human beings naturally tend to avoid what they fear. It could also be viewed as a failure by members of staff to apply the social model of disability to manage severe behaviours of individual learners. On another level, this statement is perhaps indicative of the far-reaching emotional and physical impact that these severe behaviours have on the school community, and to what extent the attitudes towards these individuals are affected. Alternatively, this statement can be viewed as indicative that the environmental accommodations made in line with the social model only partially address the needs of individual learners presenting with severe challenging and disruptive behaviours.

The respondents acknowledged that it was imperative for teachers and therapeutic staff to establish a relationship of care and trust with their learners (cf. Lumpkin, 2009):

*"They want to feel secure in your class, they must know that they are special"*  
(Manager H)

*"...the intervention, the assistance, the extra mile you need to walk with a child, the earning of trust..."* (Manager A)

These statements are indicative of the importance of a positive attitude towards learners presenting with behavioural challenges to ultimately earn their trust and gain their co-operation in following the class- and therapy room rules and adhering to the code of conduct.



It is essential to also consider the respective disabilities of the learners as well as the characteristics associated with the disabilities/impairments (cf. Meltz, Herman & Pillay, 2014), as this could have a direct impact on their behavioural challenges as it could be viewed as disability associated behaviours.

It is important to note that the participants didn't refer to the social model of disability or their attitudes directly, but the implementation thereof was clearly identified by their utilisation of accommodations whilst also applying the school code of conduct and classroom rules within the classroom context:

*“Contextual factors determine the different conducts and the different behaviour. You need to adjust, but also stick to the framework; in other words, if a conduct or a transgression happens, they still need to be exposed to the yellow letter, white letters, the parent interviews, informing the parents, but the way of approaching, the way of dealing with the child differs...”*(Manager A)

*“But within a specific framework you cannot expose learners with special educational needs, all the children, to the same norms and standards.”*  
(Manager A)

He concluded with the following question:

*“The case is [this]: What is the need of the individual?”* (Manager A)

It is evident that the staff instinctively made accommodations for learners, supporting them in adhering to the school code of conduct and classroom rules. This indicates that some staff members' approach towards learners with behavioural challenges are positively informed:

*“I will do the adaptation according to the need of the children. Some children need very formal and strict discipline and others don't. Others you can just look at and they will immediately say: “Sorry Ma'am”, others will say it's not my problem.”* (Teacher L)

The application of the social model of disability in managing discipline is reflected in the response of Manager G:

*“So before taking any serious steps or punishment, we try and find out what caused the sudden disruption or change in behaviour.”*

Appropriate behaviour was promulgated by the staff by involving the learners when compiling therapy/classroom rules aligned to socially expected behaviours:

*“Number one, you are not going to interrupt another whilst speaking ...no disrespect of each other because when you are nasty towards each other, [bullying], calling names, you are angry and that is not solving the situation. So, we make rules like that, they follow the rules on their own... respect starts here, no matter what you have done the respect for human dignity stays the same. You cannot disrespect a person because they have misbehaved... I am going to... give a little push in the right direction.”* (Psychologist Q)

This statement is an indication of the social support given to learners in acquiring appropriate and socially acceptable behaviour. These sessions are followed up on an individual or group basis with learners in need of more support:

*“So, children will see you individually...”* (Psychologist Q)

*“...group therapy where learners are having the same problem. So, whenever I am dealing with relationships or peer clashes...”* (Psychologist Q)

Manager G expressed the view that learners in the school want to be treated as “normal” children, but highlighted a peculiar phenomenon:

*“... it has to be to their advantage or whenever it can get them out of trouble, then they expect special treatment. So, they can disrupt a class if they feel*

*like it, but you cannot reprimand them, they can enact [sic], because they are special.” (Manager G)*

This statement by Manager G is indicative of the learners’ awareness and understanding of their impairments. Even when they are accommodated from the premise of the social model of disability in an effort to minimise the impact of their impairments, they are wilfully “disabling” themselves by using their respective impairments as a justification for not adhering to the school’s code of conduct. The learners’ attitudes towards their respective disabilities must be acknowledged and noted as a possible “self-limiting” factor or rationalisation of their inappropriate behaviour.

In summary, the impact of teachers’ and therapeutic staff’s attitudes on the management of discipline of learners presenting with challenging and disruptive behavioural was discussed in this section.

Manager D felt that negative attitudes towards learners could have an extensive impact of the learners’ schooling career and self-esteem:

*“You are going to have learners that will drop out of school, you will have learners that will not have a future at all and at the end of the day our main goal and our main purpose as teachers is to encourage those learners who are prepared to still make a success even though [they] feel that the society has pushed them aside, decided they just don’t belong.”*

The findings of this study showed a high degree of correlation with the literature reviewed (cf. Martinez, et al., 2016; Conroy, Sutherland, Haydon, Stormont & Harmon, 2009). It can therefore be deduced that the successful implementation of the social model of disability will be directly influenced by the respective attitudes of the staff of a special school. Essentially, their attitudes will either help enable or disempower those learners that are in their care and will determine whether their behaviour will improve or not. In some cases, individualised accommodative measures taken within the disciplinary framework will be needed in order to assist

the learners to acquire social and behavioural competence. It is essential to note that the cooperation of the learners is imperative for the staff to effectively support them through preventive, supportive and corrective disciplinary measures as devised by the multi-disciplinary team.

### **6.2.2 Multi-disciplinary team**

Applying the social model of disability to the management of learner discipline requires a well-functioning multi-disciplinary team. The role and function of the multi-disciplinary team is to obtain a multi-perspective understanding of the disruptive behavioural patterns of individual learners (cf. Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; SIAS, 2014). Its key function is to establish open communication channels and productive working relationships among all stakeholders to the benefit of all the learners:

*“All we want to do is [to have]the best for your child...”* Manager F

As discussed in Chapter 2, the goal of the multi-disciplinary team (educators, therapists and parents) is to develop an individualised support programme to assist learners who are presenting with behavioural challenges. It was established that not all of the recommendations made by the team will always be successful, and as such, needs to be revised on a continuous basis, as and when needed.

Teacher L added that the revisions of the individualised learning support programmes will be done based on:

*“...the findings, and together we will decide and figure out how we are going to address it.”*

In order to develop effective individualised support programmes for learners with behavioural challenges, the full cooperation of parents is vital (cf. Pienaar, 2003).

The importance of parental involvement was also highlighted by Manager B:

*“... it is difficult to work with a child if the parent doesn’t understand and cooperate.”*

It was established that, when parents fail to give their full cooperation as a member of the multi-disciplinary team supporting and assisting with the implementation of the individualised support plan, the impact thereof will be minimised. The learner will actually be placed at a disadvantage and will not benefit from the individualised support offered by the multi-disciplinary team to address barriers to learning, which may include disability-associated behaviours.

According to Manager A, the implementation and revision of individualised support programmes for all the school’s enrolled learners happens twice a year with the assistance of the multi-disciplinary teams. In this regard, the inputs of the allocated therapists are crucial in developing the individualised programmes. During these meetings, the efficacy of the programmes is evaluated and reviewed, but in the cases of learners presenting with challenging and disruptive behaviour, it is continuously revised. The revision of the individualised support programmes will be spearheaded by the teachers and therapist allocated to the individual learners. It is important to note that, in addition to their therapeutic interventions, the referral of learners with challenging and disruptive behaviours have a massive impact on their workload which could lead to a situation where the therapeutic staff become overloaded or “abused” by their colleagues (educator staff) if they abdicate their pastoral duties. Within the context of a special school, the role of the multi-disciplinary team cannot be overstated as they assist the whole school community in honouring their educational mandate – which is to provide quality teaching and learning to all the enrolled learners whilst supporting them to address their respective barriers to learning and/or impairments by making accommodations within the social model of disability.

There’s no denying that the team plays a huge part in the behaviour management of learners and in developing support programmes that help learners acquire behavioural and social competence through environmental accommodations. These

accommodations are instrumental in ensuring that most of the learners can function within the school context.

### 6.2.3 Environmental accommodations

Challenging and disruptive behaviour is more likely to occur in educational institutions that are overcrowded, “plain-looking” and uncomfortable (to hot or too cold) (Berkowitz, 1989). Teachers should therefore strive to adapt the learning environment to prevent behavioural challenges (Bear, 2015). Special attention should be paid to the “arrangement of furniture, supplies, and materials; where [the teachers] position themselves; the control of the flow of traffic via scheduling and supervision; and making the classroom generally more attractive, yet not distracting” (Hunley, 2008 in Bear, 2015). Therefore, the focus of teachers’ classroom accommodations should include environmental arrangements to reflect the implementation of the social model of disability. The participants mentioned a number of physical accommodations made within the classrooms, including addressing visual interruptions (changed the lighting), addressing auditory interruptions (learner allowed to wear earphones), moving the learner to the front or the back of the class, replacing chairs with balancing balls and creating a “safe” desk area for learners.

Manager F and G elaborated on individualised accommodations which were needed for individual learners presenting with problematic behaviours:

*“From the new term, it was suggested that we send him to class for class work first ... when the teacher has a new concept or a new theme, he has to be in class and afterwards he comes to my class [and does]his written work in my class. So that is how, at this stage, we try to accommodate him and to see if the rest of the class can carry on with their work.”* Manager F

*“You have to remove the problem, or solve the problem, remove the person, get that person settled and get the others to concentrate and focus again ...”*  
Manager G

In line with the literature (Berkowitz, 1989; Bear, 2015), the staff made environmental accommodations within the school environment to assist the learners. All of these environmental adaptations are informed by the individual needs of the learners and are supportive measures which are informed by their individualised support programmes. The goal of making these accommodations is to support the individual learners and the school community as a whole. It has been shown that these individualised accommodations have resulted in reduced occurrences of challenging and disruptive behaviours in learners.

### **6.3 CONCLUSION**

The application of the social model of disability to the behaviour management of learners with special educational needs was explored in this chapter. It was pointed out that the staff of this special school have an understanding of disabilities/impairments that is rooted in the medical model of disability. The staff do however apply the social model of disability to affect the necessary environmental accommodations needed for their enrolled learners to reduce the effects of their impairments. This approach resulted in a school-specific approach to the management of discipline, one that is based on sound scientific principles and grounded in both the medical-and social models of disability.

As discussed in chapter 3, applying the social model of disability within the educational sphere helps to promulgate child-centred teaching without focusing solely on the learner's impairment (medical classification and labelling) (Reindal, 2008).It also alters the understanding of the nature of disability, including those classified as intellectual-, learning-, or emotional difficulties, thereby challenging society's preconceived ideas surrounding disabilities (Gallagher, Connor & Ferri, 2014; Reindal, 2008; Thomas, 2010). Clear evidence of child-centred learning and accommodations made for individual learners was established in the interviews when participants elaborated on their personal experiences with and strategies for the management of learner discipline. As discussed in chapter 5, this was done

using innovative measures while simultaneously applying classroom rules and the code of conduct as the basis for preventative discipline.

In critically reflecting on the application of the social model to the behaviour management of learners with special educational needs, the following conclusions were reached. As the theoretical framework for this case study, the social model assisted in uncovering new information regarding the disciplinary issues of learners with special educational needs, including the intensity and frequency of these behaviours; the impacts thereof on the members of staff, other learners and the learner themselves; the strategies the staff utilise to maintain discipline; as well as the role and impact of the multi-disciplinary team and parental support and involvement (cf. Chapter 5). It gave insight into the phenomenon investigated, namely the management of discipline in special schools. As clearly reflected in their responses, the participants believed that the individual accommodations made for learners were effective in assisting the learners to adhere to classroom/therapy room rules, and ultimately, to the school code of conduct. Most of the learners benefited immensely from these environmental accommodations, which is in line with the literature reviewed (cf. Berkowitz, 1989; Bear, 2015).

Although environmental accommodations were made in the respective classrooms, it did not altogether prevent individual learners from displaying extreme behaviours. This includes, but is not limited to: extreme aggressiveness; throwing of tantrums; verbal abuse towards teachers and other learners; threatening, biting, scratching, scratching and hitting teachers; throwing of books and pencil cases towards the teacher; the carrying of weapons such as knives; total defiance; bullying towards other learners; screaming and shouting both in the classroom and outside on the playground; and massive “meltdowns”. After critically reviewing the environmental accommodations made for these behaviours, I came to several conclusions. Firstly, the environmental accommodations made for these individual learners had a positive impact, as it reduced the occurrences of extreme behaviours even if it did not prevent them from occurring. Secondly, this reduction in extreme behaviour suggests that environmental accommodations made in line with the social model of disability will yield positive results. One has to consider that the failure of the environmental



accommodations made for individual learners could be as a result of other contextual factors relating to the individual, possibly of a medical nature (e.g. an undiagnosed psychiatric disorder). Such unknown factors could negatively impact on the individual's ability to benefit from the accommodations made.

I therefore conclude that individual accommodations, which are informed by the social model of disability, help to remove environmental barriers and assist the staff of special schools in the behaviour management of their enrolled learners. In addition to using the social model as an integral part of the behaviour management strategy in special schools, learners with extreme behavioural challenges should be accommodated by devising an integrated approach that helps them acquire social and behavioural competence, allowing them to be effectively integrated with the school community.

Recommendations for future research will be discussed in Chapter 7.

## CHAPTER 7:

### SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

#### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study was to answer the main research question: How do special schools manage learner discipline? To effectively answer this, the intensity and frequency of the disciplinary issues of learners in special school had to be explored. In gauging the participants' responses during the interviews, the most prevalent disciplinary issues centred around impulsiveness, frustration and ADHD-related behaviours which directly impact teaching and learning on a daily basis. These behaviours were considered "normal" within the special school context and the participants felt equipped to deal with them, although it was emotionally draining. However, the more extreme behaviours of individual learners, including physical and verbal abuse towards teachers and other learners (as mentioned in chapter 6) were far more difficult to deal with. The prevalence of these extreme behaviours in a South African special school was confirmed by the feedback received from participants in this study, and very much collates with the findings of Cooper and Jacobs (2011), who explored the behavioural challenges found in Irish special schools. This is indicative of the fact that learners with special educational needs present with behaviours that negatively impact both the quality of teaching and learning as well as the safety and security of others.

The impact of these learners' behaviour was extensively explored, and it became evident from the participant responses that challenging and disruptive behaviour has a physical and emotional impact on the entire school community, as these incidents do not occur in isolation. Being exposed to these behaviours was compared to

“being in a hostage situation”, which points to the severe emotional impact thereof – essentially, being exposed to these occurrences can be viewed as a traumatic event.

The staff reported feeling emotionally drained and stressed, experiencing a feeling of disempowerment, suffering from varying degrees of depression, lost objectivity and feelings of worthlessness. Some of the participants even experienced a sense of isolation from their peers. The participants acknowledged feeling ill-equipped to deal with these challenging and disruptive behaviours, and as such, the preventative, supportive and corrective disciplinary measures utilised by the school were explored to understand how special schools manage learner discipline.

As described by Charles (1989), the goal of preventative discipline is to prevent disruptive behaviour from occurring in the first place. As preventative disciplinary measures, the school has a well-developed school code of conduct and set of classroom rules which serve as the baseline for managing behaviour. They also developed the “yellow slips” system as a means of informing parents or guardians of any transgressions of the school code of conduct and allocated mentors to the respective teachers to support them with the implementation of preventative disciplinary measures. When any transgression of the school code of conduct occurs, an incident report is completed by the teachers, which can be seen as an effective way of tracking transgressions and strengthening the effectivity of the school code of conduct as a measure to prevent and/or manage disciplinary challenges. The completion of these incidents reports has a massive impact of the administrative responsibilities of the teachers, and should a teacher fail to complete them timeously, it compromises the effectivity of the disciplinary protocol and negatively impacts the provision of support to the learners.

As derived from the participant responses, the respective roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders must be clarified in advance, as each member of staff plays a vital role in the management of learner discipline (cf. Van Wyk&Pelsler, 2014; Nooruddin&Baig, 2014; Joubert, De Wall & Rossouw, 2003). Through the analysis of the data set, it became clear that the availability of the therapeutic staff resulted in

some members of staff not honouring their pastoral roles as educators. When teachers shift these pastoral responsibilities onto support staff, the application of the social model of disability as a framework for managing learner discipline fails. Essentially, learners with special educational needs flourish in a very structured and predictable environment. These needs must be honoured by the respective educators and therapists within their classrooms and therapy rooms.

Ultimately, the entire staff of a special school is jointly responsible for affecting the necessary individual accommodations and supportive structures as promulgated by the social model of disability to remove the social barriers experienced by learners as a result of their respective impairments.

As described in the existing literature, supportive discipline refers to complementary strategies that are developed to assist an individual in acquiring social and behavioural competence. Supportive disciplinary measures in this school focus on individualised accommodative strategies developed by the multi-disciplinary team through parental support. The individualised support programmes developed for these learners are revised as and when needed. During the course of my research, a number of physical accommodations for individual learners were identified, including addressing visual and auditory interruptions (lighting and noise), moving learners to either the front or back of the class (or away from other disruptive learners), replacing learners' chairs with balancing balls and creating a "safe" desk area for learners. These accommodative measures are aimed at supporting and assisting learners to effectively function within the classroom, and to curb occurrences of challenging and disruptive behaviour.

Parental involvement and support are another crucial aspect of supportive discipline (cf. Pienaar, 2003). Because any support program must be consistently applied in all social contexts, their cooperation is a determining factor in the success of such a program. As derived from the participants' responses, there are various "types of parents". Broadly classified, they can be either cooperative or non-cooperative, and will either have or lack the necessary skills to implement recommendations made by

the multi-disciplinary team. In this regard, the development of a parental orientation programme is also recommended when any new learner is enrolled in the school. This will serve as baseline interventions to lay out the parents' and the school's expectations and will dually serve as a preventative disciplinary support structure.

The inclusion of learners in multi-disciplinary meetings was not mentioned or discussed in any of the interviews. This is perhaps an unexplored possibility that multi-disciplinary teams at this, as well as other special schools, should investigate. As part of learner support, the inclusion of learners in the finalisation phase of the individualised support plan can be quite beneficial because learners will feel "included" and perhaps more obliged to cooperate (cf. Emerson, 2016). If managed correctly, this could drastically improve the success rate of the planned interventions.

Corrective discipline seeks to redirect inappropriate behaviour as soon as it occurs, which is aligned with Charles' (1989) definition of discipline. As discussed in the literary review, corrective discipline is not a punitive measure, but instead focuses on correcting current behavioural patterns and preventing other bad behaviours from developing. The corrective disciplinary measures that are in place at this special school have been developed through innovative measures. When disruptive situations occur, the mentor allocated to that class will remove the learner from the class and work with them from a therapeutic premise. The learner will be given a "time out" from the situation, allowing them the space to cool off, gather themselves, and explain what happened. This is an example of individual support aimed at redirecting their behaviour.

## **7.2 ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study highlights the negative impact that the behaviour of learners in special schools has on teachers. It is argued that teachers need a great deal of emotional and educational support to deal with these issues. As such, it is recommended that staff have access to therapeutic support to assist them in dealing with any emotional turmoil they may be experiencing.

It would also be beneficial to appoint a member of staff with an extensive educational background in special schools to focus solely on disciplinary support. The appointment of a retired educator in this position would be recommendable. Within the current system employed at the research site, staff members call on their head of department or phase mentor for immediate intervention should a learner present with challenging or disruptive behaviour. This system has been successfully implemented and the efficiency thereof proven, but it does mean that the other learners will be left alone during this time. As such, this strategy negatively impacts service delivery (quality teaching and learning; therapeutic interventions) to those learners who are not presenting with challenging/disruptive behaviour.

### **7.2.2 Recommendations for the Department of Basic Education**

The Department of Education plays a vital role in addressing legislative shortcomings that impact learners presenting with challenges and disruptive behaviours, as these adversely affect the fundamental rights of teachers to feel safe in their working environment.

After the completion of this study, I believe the following interventions would add great value:

- The revision of General Notice 776 of 1998, as it is outdated and does not make provisioning for learners with special educational needs.
- The development of guidelines for special schools to prevent and deal with occurrences of challenging/disruptive behaviour.
- The development of guidelines for special schools to effect restraint of learners presenting with “meltdowns” in order to minimise the impact thereof on the safety and security of the school community.
- The establishment of a provincial task team to support schools with learners presenting with challenging/disruptive behaviour.

### **7.2.3 Recommendations for the Department of Higher Education**

- Including the subject of discipline management for learners with special educational needs in the core curriculum of teachers' qualifications as this could be equipping them to meet the educational demands of a vast array of learners.

### **7.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Reflecting on the lack of literature available on the management of learner discipline in special schools, I believe that further research is required in the following areas to add to the body of academic knowledge within the South African special school context:

- The effectiveness of parental programmes in curbing challenging/disruptive behaviour.
- Parents' perceptions regarding the provision of support to their children presenting with challenging/disruptive.
- The emotional impact of severe disciplinary problems of individual learners in special- and/or inclusive schools on staff members.
- The management of disability-associated behaviours in special schools.

### **7.4. CONCLUSION**

Learner discipline is a universal concern in regular public schools as well as schools that cater for LSEN. Within the special school context, there are frequent occurrences of challenging and disruptive behaviour that staff feel ill-equipped to deal with. The literature review established that learners presenting with behavioural challenges affect both the quality of teaching and learning and the safety and security of all school stakeholders. This was substantiated by the findings of this study.

While using the medical model of disability as a base, teachers and other staff at the research site currently apply the principles of the social model of disability to accommodate learners with behavioural problems in spite of the limitations of this model. The environmental accommodative measure, made from the premise of the social model, has also proven successful in removing environmental barriers and assisting the staff in managing learner behaviour. Having completed my research, I believe that an integrated approach must be developed to support and accommodate learners presenting with extreme behaviours within the South African special school context. This will also give greater direction and support to educators and other staff who are responsible for creating effective interventions for these learners. Further research is however needed to address this clear gap in the available literature.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Algozzine, K., & Algozzine, B. (2008). Classroom Instructional Ecology and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support. *Journal of Applied School Psychology, 24*(1), 29-47.
- Algraigay, H., & Boyle, C. (2017). The SEN Label and its Effect on Special Education. Accepted for publication in Special Issue (Labelling and diagnosis) of *The Educational and Child Psychologist, 34*(4), December 2017.
- Anastasiou, D., & Kauffman, J.M. (2012). Disability as Cultural Difference: Implications for Special Education. *Remedial and Special Education, 33*(3), 139-149.
- Anastasiou, D., & Kauffman, J.M. (2013). The Social Model of Disability: Dichotomy between Impairment and Disability. *Journal of Medicine and Philosophy, 38*, 441-459.
- Babbie, E., & Mouton, J. (2001). *The Practice of Social Research*. Cape Town, South-Africa: Oxford University Press.
- Bear, G.G. (2015). Preventative and classroom-based strategies. In T. Emmer, Edmund., & J. Sabornie, Edward, (Eds.). *Handbook of classroom management* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 143-445). Routledge, New York.
- Benoliel, P. (2015). Managing senior management team boundaries and school improvement: an investigation of the school leader role. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 20*(1), 57-86.
- Bergin, C., & Bergin, D. (2009). Attachment in the Classroom. *EducPsychol Rev. 21*, 141-170.
- Berkowitz, L. (1989). Situational influences on aggression. In J. Groebel & R. A. Hinde (Eds.), *Aggression and war: Their biological and social bases*. (pp. 91–100). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Bradley, E., & Korossy, M. (2016). HELP with Behaviours That Challenge. *Journal on Developmental Disabilities*, 22(2), 101-120.
- Bray, E. (2005). Codes of Conduct in Public Schools: A Legal Perspective. *South African Journal of Education*, 25(3), 133–138.
- Brinkman, S., & Kvale, S. (2008). Ethics in Qualitative Psychological Research. C. Willig., & Stainton-Rogers (Eds). *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 263-279. London, UK: Sage.
- Broomhead, K.E. (2013). Preferential Treatment or Unwanted in Mainstream Schools? The Perceptions of Parents and Teachers with Regards to Pupils with Special Educational Needs and Challenging Behaviour. *Support for Learning*, 28(1), 4–10.
- Campbell, M., Robertson, A., & Jahoda, A. (2014). Psychological therapies for people with intellectual disabilities: comments on a Matrix of evidence for interventions in challenging behaviour. *Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 58(2), 172-188.
- Carter, S.M., & Little, M. (2007). Justifying knowledge, justifying method, taking action: Epistemologies, methodologies, and methods in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*. 17(10), 1316-1328.
- Charles, C.M. (1989). *Building classroom discipline*. (7<sup>th</sup>ed). Boston, USA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Cho, J., & Trent, A. (2006). *Qualitative Research*. 6(3), 319-340. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Coles, J. (2001). The Social Model of Disability: What does it mean for practice in services for people with learning difficulties? *Disability & Society*. 16(4), 501-510.
- Conroy, M., Sutherland, K., Haydon, T., Stormont, M., & Harmon, J. (2009). Preventing and ameliorating young children's chronic problem behaviors: An ecological classroom-based approach. *Psychology in the Schools*. 46(1), 3–17.
- Cooper, J.W., & Jacobs, B. (2011). Evidence of best practise models and outcomes in education of children with emotional disturbance/behavioural difficulties. *An International review*.

- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry & research design. Choosing among five approaches*. (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp.53-84). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W., & Miller, D.L. (2000). Determining Validity in Qualitative Inquiry. *Theory into practise*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Demarrias, K., & Lapan, S.D. (2004). Foundations for research: Methods of Inquiry in *Education and the Social Sciences*. (Hays, P.A. pp.217-234). London, Lawrence Erlbaum.
- De Vos, A.S., Strydom, H., Fouche, C.B., & Delpont, C.S.L. (2011). *Research at Grass Roots: For the social sciences and human service professions*. (4<sup>th</sup> ed). Pretoria, South-Africa: Van Schaik.
- De Waal, E., & Grosser, M.M. (2009). Safety and security at school: a pedagogical perspective. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 25(2009), 697-706.
- De Waal, E., Theron, T., & Robinson, R. (2001). An education law analysis of “the learner’s best interests”. *Perspectives in Education*, 19(4), 151-161.
- Dieronitou, I. (2014). The ontological and epistemological foundations of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research. *International Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management*. 2(11), 1-17.
- Donohue, D., & Bornman, J. (2014). The challenges of realising inclusive education in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 34(2), 1-14.
- Dwyer, S.C., & Buckle, J.L. (2009). The Space Between: On being an Insider-Outsider in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 8(1), 54-63.
- Emerson, A. (2016). Applying the ‘least dangerous assumption’ in regard to behaviour policies and children with special needs. *Pastoral Care in Education*, 34(2), 104-109.
- Emmer, E.T., & Stough, L.M. (2001). Classroom management: A critical part of educational psychology, with implications for teacher education. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(2), 103-112.

- Evertson, C.M., & Weinstein, C.S. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. Mahwah, N.J.: Erlbaum.
- Foxx, R.M., & Meindl, J. (2007). The long term successful treatment of the aggressive/destructive behaviors of a preadolescent with autism. *Behavioral Interventions*, 22, 83–97.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2006). Five Misunderstandings About Case-Study Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*. 12(2), 219-245.
- Gallagher, D.J., Conner, J., & Ferri, B.A. (2014). Beyond the far too incessant schism: special education and the social model of disability. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 18(11), 1120-1141.
- Grenier, M.A. (2011). Co-teaching in Physical Education: A Strategy for Inclusive Practice. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, (28), 95-112.
- Grinyer, A. (2009). The anonymity of research participants: Assumptions, ethics, and practicalities. *Pan-Pacific Management Review*, 12(1), 49-58.
- Grossman, H. (2005). The case for individualizing behaviour management approaches in inclusive classrooms. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 10(1), 17-32.
- Haegele, J.A., & Hodge, S. (2016). Disability discourse: Overview and critiques of the medical and social models. *Quest*. 68(2), 193-206.
- Hart, R. (2010). Classroom behaviour management: educational psychologists' views on effective practice. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*. 15(4), 353-371.
- Hastings, R.P. (2005). Staff in Special Educational Settings and Behaviour Problems: Towards a framework for research and practice. *Educational Psychology*. 25(2-3), 207-221.
- Hodkinson, P., & Hodkinson, H. (2001). The Strengths and Limitations of Case Study Research. Paper presented to the Learning and Skills Development Agency conference: Making an Impact on Policy and Practise.
- Hunley, S. (2008). Best practices for preparing learning space to increase engagement. In A. Thomas & J. Grimes (Eds.), *Best practices in school*

- psychology V* (pp. 813–826). Bethesda, MD:National Association of School Psychologists.
- Janesick, V.J. (2000). The choreography of qualitative research design. In N.K. Denzin, &Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 379-399. London, UK: Sage.
- Johnson, R.B. (1997). Examining the validity structure of qualitative research. *Education*, 118(2), 282-292.
- Joubert, R., De Waal, E.,&Rossouw, J.P. (2004). Discipline: Impact on access to equal educational opportunities. *Perspectives in Education*, 22(3), 77-87.
- Joubert, R., &Prinsloo, S. (2013). *The law of Education in South Africa*. (7<sup>th</sup>ed). Pretoria, South-Africa: Van Schaik.
- Joubert, R.,&Serakwane, J. (2009). Establishing discipline in the contemporary classroom. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 8(1), 125-137.
- Kelly, A., Carey,S., McCarthy,S., &Coyle,C. (2007). Challenging Behaviour: Principals' Experience of Stress and Perception of the Effects of Challenging Behaviour on Staff in Special Schools in Ireland. *European Journal of Special Needs Education*,22(2), 161–181.
- Khumalo. S., & Hodgson, T.F. (2017). Chapter 5: The right to basic education for children with disabilities (Section 27). *Basic education rights handbook – Education rights in South-Africa*, 105-127.
- Kita, S.M. (2017). Researching Peers and Disaster Vulnerable Communities: An Insider Perspective. *The Qualitative Report*, 22(10), 2600-2611.
- Kokot, S.J. (2006). The nature and incidence of barriers to learning among Grade Three learners in Tshwane. *Africa Education Review*, 3(1-2), 134-147.
- Kourkoutas, E.E., &Wolhuter, C.C. (2013). Handling Learner Discipline Problems: A Psycho-Social Whole School Approach. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship = Koers: Bulletin vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 78(3), 1–8.
- Lodico, M.G., Spaulding, D.T.,&Voegtler, K.H. (2006). *Methods in Educational*

*Research: From Theory to Practice*: Volume 8 of research methods for the social sciences. John Wiley & Sons.

- Lumpkin, A. (2008). Teachers as Role Models Teaching Character and Moral Virtues. *Journal of Physical Education, Recreation & Dance*, 79(2), 45-49.
- Marais, P., & Meier, C. (2010). Disruptive behaviour in the Foundation Phase schooling. *South African Journal of Education*, 30, 41-57.
- Maree, K. (2013). *First steps in Research*. (12<sup>th</sup>ed). Pretoria, South-Africa: Van Schaik.
- Martinez, A., McMahon, S.D., Coker, C., & Keys, C. (2016). Teacher behavioural practices: relations to student risk behaviours, learning barriers, and school climate. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(8), 817-830.
- Marzano, R.J., & Marzano, J.S. (2003). The key to classroom management. *Educational Leadership*. 61(1), 6-13.
- Meltz, A. (2013). The understanding and practise of inclusive education in a Jewish community school in South Africa (Doctoral thesis). University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa.
- Meltz, A., Herman, C., & Pillay, V. (2014). "Inclusive Education: A Case of Beliefs Competing for Implementation." *South African Journal of Education* 34 (3), 1–8.
- Mestry, R., & Khumalo, J. (2012). Governing Bodies and Learner Discipline: Managing Rural Schools in South Africa through a Code of Conduct. *South African Journal of Education*, 32(1), 97–110.
- Mestry, R., Moloi, K.C., & Mohamed, A.N. (2008). Perspectives on a zero-tolerance approach to discipline: towards maintaining a nurturing and secure school environment. *Africa's Education Review*, 4(2), 94-133.
- Molteno, G., Molteno, C., Finchilescu, G., & Dawes, A.R.L. (2001). Behavioural and Emotional Problems in Children with Intellectual Disability Attending Special Schools in Cape Town, *South African Journal of Intellectual Disability Research*, 45 (6), 515–520.

- Mokhele, P.R. (2006). The teacher-learner relationship in the management of discipline in public high schools. *Africa Education Review*, 3(1-2), 148-159.
- Morgan, D.L., & Krueger, R.A. (1998). *The focus group kit*. (1-6). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Morgan, S.J., Pullon, S.R.H., MacDonald, L.H., McKinley, E.M., & Gray, B.V. (2016). Case Study Observation Research: A Framework for Conducting Case Study Research Where Observation Data are the Focus. *Qualitative Health Research*, 1-9.
- Mathgukrishna, N., & Schoeman, M. (2000). From 'Special Needs' to 'Quality Education for All': A participatory, problem-centred approach to policy development in South Africa. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 4(4), 315-335.
- Naraian, S., & Schlessinger, S. (2017). When Theory Meets the "Reality of Reality": Reviewing the Sufficiency of the Social Model of Disability as a Foundation for Teacher Preparation for Inclusive Education. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Winter, 81-100.
- Nash, P., Schlosser, A., & Scarr, T. (2016). Teachers' perceptions of disruptive behaviour in schools: a psychological perspective. *Emotional and behavioural Difficulties*, 21(2), 167-180.
- Netshitangani, T. (2018). Management style and school violence: South African perspectives. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 32(1), 96-106.
- Ngcobo, B.W. (1988). Discipline in black schools: A pedagogic didactic perspective. *Paidonamia*, 16(1), 18-25
- Nooruddin, S., & Baig, S. (2014). Student Behavior Management: School Leader's Role in the Eyes of the Teachers and Students. *International Journal of Whole Schooling*, 11(1), 19-38.
- Nye, E., Gardner, F., Hansford, L., Edwards, V., Hayes, R., & Ford, T. (2015). Classroom behaviour management strategies in response to problematic behaviours of primary school children with special educational needs: views of

- special educational needs coordinators. *Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties*, 21(1), 43-60.
- Ong-Dean, D. (2005). Reconsidering the Social Location of the Medical Model: An Examination of Disability in Parenting Literature. *Journal of Medical Humanities*, 26 (2/3), 141-158.
- Owens, J. (2015). Exploring the critiques of the social model of disability: the transformative possibility of Arendt's notion of power. *Sociology of Health & Illness*. 37(3), 385-403.
- Pather, S. (2011). Evidence on inclusion and support for all learners in mainstream schools in South Africa: Off the policy radar? *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 15(10),1103-1117.
- Phothongsunan, S. (2010). Interpretive paradigm in educational research. *Galaxy*. 1-4.
- Pienaar, G. (2003). A different approach to classroom discipline problems. *Educare*. 32(1-2), 261-274.
- Regan, K.S., & Michaud, K.M. (2011). Best practices to support student behavior. *Beyond Behavior*, 20 (2), 40–47.
- Reindal, S.M. (2008). A social relational model of disability: a theoretical framework for special needs education? *European Journal of Special Needs Education*, 23(2), 135-146.
- Rosenberg, J.P., & Yates, P.M. (2007). Schematic representation of case study research designs. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 60(4), 447-452.
- Rossouw, J.P. (2003). Learner Discipline in South African Public Schools - a Qualitative Study. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship = Koers: Bulletin vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 68(4), 413–435.
- Rubin, A., & Babbie, E. (2005). *Research methods for social work*. (6<sup>th</sup> ed.) California: Thomson Brooks/Cole.



- Schnitzer, G., Andries, C., & Lebeer, J. (2007). Usefulness of cognitive intervention programmes for socio-emotional and behavioural problems in children with learning disabilities. *Journal of Research in Special Needs*, 7(3), 161-171.
- South Africa (Republic). (2014). *Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support 2014*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa (Republic). (1998). General Notice 776 of 1998. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- South Africa (Republic). (1996b). *South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996)*. Pretoria: Government Printer.
- Sugai, G., & Horner, R.H. (2008). What we know and need to know about preventing problem behaviour in schools. *Exceptionality*, 16(2), 67-77.
- Thanh, N.C., & Thanh, T.T.L. (2015). The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative research methods in education. *American Journal of Educational Science*. 1(2), 24-27.
- Thomas, C. (2010). How is disability understood? An examination of sociological approaches. *Disability & Society*, 19(6), 569-583.
- Unluer, S. (2012). Being an insider researcher while conducting case study research. *The qualitative report*. 17(58), 1-14.
- Van der Merwe, P. (2016). An Exploratory Study on How Democratic School Management Practices Affect the Dynamics of Violence in Schools. *International Journal of Criminology and Sociology*, 5, 86-98.
- Van Wyk, C., & Pelsier, A. (2014). Leadership's Role in Effective Implementation of School Discipline Policies. *International Business & Economics Research Journal (IBER)*, 13(4), 833-840.
- Wiles, R., Crow, G., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2007). The Management of Confidentiality and Anonymity in Social Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(5), 417-428.

- Wolhuter, C.C., & Russo, C. (2013). Dealing with Incidents of Serious Disciplinary Problems amongst Learners: A Comparative Study between South Africa and Selected Countries. *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship = Koers: Bulletin vir Christelike Wetenskap*, 78(3), 1-11
- Wood, P. (1980). International classification of impairments, disabilities and handicaps (Geneva, World Health Organisation).
- Unluer, S. (2012). Being an Insider Researcher While Conducting Case Study Research. *The Qualitative Report*, 17(58), 1-14.
- Yell, L.Y., Rozalski., & Miller, J. (2015). Classroom management and the law. In Emmer, T. Edmund., & E. J. Sabornie, (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 143-445). Routledge, New York.
- Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European journal of education*. 48(2), 311-325.
- Yin, R.K. (1994). *Case study research: Design and methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Yin, R.K. (2013). *Case study research: Design and Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

## **Annexure A: Support Services**

# **Support Services**

### ***Psychology***

The psychologists are available to provide individual, small group as well as class therapy. Parental guidance is also offered.

Assessments are conducted at the request of parents or teachers to determine the intellectual and/or emotional progress of the learners. Career guidance and counselling is also available to learners from the secondary phase.

Therapy is focused on:

- Processing of traumatic events
- Positive expression of emotions
- Development of a more adequate self-concept
- Family and peer relationships
- Socially unacceptable behaviour
- Personal safety
- Recreational therapy

### ***Remedial Teaching***

Computer-supported training takes place once a week with the emphasis on reading, spelling and mathematics.

### ***Speech Therapy***

This forms an integral part of every learner's school curriculum in Gr. 1 to 6. The learners receive therapy in groups as well as in the class situation. Therapy is aimed at the improvement of their auditory perceptual skills, receptive- and expressive language abilities. Homework is given on a regular basis and we need your co-operation in this regard.

### ***Occupational Therapy***

Learners from Gr. 1 to 3 who are candidates for Occupational Therapy will receive therapy in group and class context. Therapy is aimed at the improvement of their visual perceptual abilities as well as motor abilities. As parents your full support is absolutely necessary to always give your co-operation regarding the homework to ensure optimum progress for your child.

Source: Schools' Website

## **Annexure B: Interview questions**

### **Interview questions: Teachers**

#### **Background information**

- 1) How long have you been working in the LSEN sector?
- 2) Tell me about your career trajectory?
- 3) What is your personal understanding of learning disabilities?
- 4) What is your current position?
- 5) Which Grade/s do you teach?
- 6) How many learners are in your class?
- 7) What kinds of special needs do the children in your class have?

#### **1. What are the disciplinary issues of LSEN?**

- a) What types of disciplinary issues do you have to deal with in your class?
- b) Please tell me about incidents that happen in your class which you view as serious disciplinary issues.
- c) How often do these serious incidences occur?
- d) How do these disciplinary issues impact you as a teacher?
- e) How do these disciplinary issues impact other learners?
- f) How do these disciplinary issues impact the learner themselves?
- g) How do these disciplinary issues impact your ability to teach and the learners' ability to learn?

#### **2. What are the challenges faced by staff in maintaining discipline in special schools?**

- a) What do you do to maintain discipline in your class?
- b) What are the main challenges you face in maintaining discipline in your class?
- c) How do you deal with these challenges?
- d) Is there a protocol you have to follow when dealing with disciplinary issues, and if so, is it informed by the school code of conduct? Explain the protocol.

3. How do school stakeholders deal with these disciplinary issues?

a) What support do you receive from the school in regard to dealing with disciplinary issues?

4. Which structures have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN?

a) Which structures have been developed by the school to assist learners with disciplinary issues?

b) What role do you play in these structures?

c) Can these structures be improved? Please elaborate on your answer.

## **Interview questions: HOD's and Deputy Principals**

### **Background information**

- 1) How long have you been working in the LSEN sector?
- 2) Tell me about your career trajectory?
- 3) What is your personal understanding of learning disabilities?
- 4) What is your current position?
- 5) Which Grade/s do you teach?
- 6) How many learners are in your class?
- 7) What kinds of LSEN do you have in your class?

### **1. What are the disciplinary issues of LSEN?**

- a) What types of disciplinary issues do you have to deal with in the class?
- b) What types of disciplinary issues do you have to deal within your capacity as manager?
- c) Please tell me about incidents that you have encountered which you viewed as serious.
- d) How often do these serious incidences occur?
- e) How do these disciplinary issues impact you as a teacher?
- f) How do these disciplinary issues impact you as a manager?
- g) How do these disciplinary issues impact other learners?
- h) How do these disciplinary issues impact the learner themselves?
- i) How do these disciplinary issues impact your ability to teach and other learners' ability to learn?
- j) How do you support teachers experiencing disciplinary problems in their classes?
- k) Which types of disciplinary issues do teachers refer to you?
- l) How do you deal with these matters?

2. What are the challenges faced by staff in maintaining discipline in special schools?

- a) What do you do to maintain discipline in your class/school?
- b) What are the main challenges you face in maintaining discipline in your class/school?
- c) How do you deal with these challenges?
- d) Is there a protocol you have to follow when dealing with disciplinary issues, and if so, is it informed by the school code of conduct? Explain the protocol.

3. How do school stakeholders deal with these disciplinary issues?

- a) What support do you receive from other stakeholders in the school/district in regard to dealing with disciplinary issues?

4. Which structures have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN?

- a) Which structures have been developed by the school to assist learners with disciplinary issues?
- b) What role do you play in these structures?
- c) Can these structures be improved? Please elaborate on your answer.

## **Interview questions: Principal**

### **Background information**

- 1) How long have you been working in the LSEN sector?
- 2) Tell me about your career trajectory?
- 3) What is your personal understanding of learning disabilities?
- 4) What is your current position?
- 5) How many learners are in your school?
- 6) For which types of LSEN does your school cater?
- 7) Which Grade/s do you teach?

### **1. What are the disciplinary issues of LSEN?**

- a) What types of classroom disciplinary issues do you have to deal with as Principal?
- b) Please tell me about incidents that happen in your school which you view as serious disciplinary issues.
- c) How often do these serious incidences occur?
- d) How do these disciplinary issues impact you as their principal?
- e) How do these disciplinary issues impact your deputy principals?
- f) How do these disciplinary issues impact your teachers?
- g) How do these disciplinary issues impact other learners?
- h) How do these disciplinary issues impact the learner themselves?
- i) How do these disciplinary issues impact on your teachers' ability to teach and the other learners' ability to learn?
- j) How do you support teachers facing disciplinary challenges in their classes?
- k) What types of disciplinary issues do teachers refer to you?
- l) How do you deal with these?



2. What are the challenges faced by staff in maintaining discipline in special schools?

- a) What do you do to maintain discipline in your school?
- b) What are the main challenges you face in maintaining discipline in your school?
- c) How do you deal with these challenges?
- d) Is there a protocol you have to follow when dealing with disciplinary issues, and if so, is it informed by the school code of conduct? Explain the protocol.

3. How do school stakeholders deal with these disciplinary issues?

- a) What support do you receive from other stakeholders in the school/district in regard to dealing with disciplinary issues?

4. Which structures have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN?

- a) Which structures have been developed by the school to assist learners with disciplinary issues?
- b) What role do you play in these structures?
- c) Can these structures be improved? Please elaborate on your answer.

## Interview questions: Therapeutic Staff

### Background information

- 1) How long have you been working in the LSEN sector?
- 2) Tell me about your career trajectory?
- 3) What is your personal understanding of learning disabilities?
- 4) What is your current position?
- 5) Which Grade/s do you give therapy to?
- 6) How many learners are in your therapy sessions?
- 7) What kinds of LSEN learners do you have in your class?

### 1. What are the disciplinary issues of LSEN?

- a) What types of disciplinary issues do you have to deal with in your therapy sessions?
- b) During your career, have there been children in your therapy sessions/classes that struggled with serious behavioural issues?
- c) Please tell me about incidents that happen in your sessions which you view as serious disciplinary issues.
- d) How often do these serious incidences occur?
- e) How do these disciplinary issues impact you as their therapist?
- f) How do these disciplinary issues impact other learners?
- g) How do these disciplinary issues impact the learner themselves?
- h) How do these disciplinary issues impact your ability to provide therapy, as well as the other learners' ability to benefit from these sessions?
- i) Have you and the other children ever felt unsafe during a therapy session because of a learner having disciplinary problems? Why did you feel unsafe?

### 2. What are the challenges faced by staff in maintaining discipline in special schools?

- a) What do you do to maintain discipline in your therapy session (class)?

- e) What are the main challenges you face in maintaining discipline in your therapy session (class)?
- f) How do you deal with these challenges?
- g) What is your therapy session (class) rules?
- h) Is there a protocol you have to follow when dealing with disciplinary issues, and if so, is it informed by the school code of conduct? Explain the protocol.

3. How do school stakeholders deal with these disciplinary issues?

- a) What support do you receive from the school in regard to dealing with disciplinary issues?

4. Which structures have been developed to accommodate the behaviour of LSEN?

- a) Which structures have been developed by the school to assist learners with disciplinary issues?
- b) What role do you play in these structures?
- c) Can these structures be improved? Please elaborate on your answer.

## **Annexure C: Academic Offering**

# **Academic Offering**

### ***Foundation Phase (Gr 1 to Gr 3)***

At Special school our approach to learning is different to mainstream schools. The learners receive a lot of individual attention and assistance. Their strengths and weaknesses are identified and our teaching methods and worksheets are adapted to assist each pupil according to his or her needs.

All the senses are involved in learning shapes, letters and numbers. New concepts are introduced in a concrete and multi-sensory way. The playground equipment is designed to promote and improve fine and gross motor skills

The teachers have a sympathetic and understanding approach with each child and are well conversed with their learners' special learning needs. Learners are continually praised, however small the improvement, and motivated to always persevere and give of their best.

The learners also receive multidisciplinary therapy like speech, labour and remedial therapy in class, small groups or individually.

### ***Intermediate Phase (Gr 4 tot Gr 6)***

The Intermediate Phase is focused on developing each child to his or her full potential.

We believe that each child has distinct strengths which we try to utilize across all learning areas.

Our small classes enable us to work at a pace that suits each learner's needs and ensures that personal attention is given to each child's development.

The children develop not only academically but also spend an hour a week doing outdoor activities.

### ***High School Phase (Gr 7 to Gr 12)***

The school follows the same curriculum offered in other schools, as prescribed by the Department of Education for Grade 7 – 9 (the Outcomes Based Education band).

In the Further Education and Training band (Grade 10-12), the subject packages are combined in such a way that learners will be able to walk into a job, as they will have the necessary skills.

It is compulsory for all learners of Grade 10 – 12 to take: Afrikaans, English, Mathematical Literacy (which is a business math, as it teaches them about bonds, interest rates, etc.) and Life Orientation, a subject that teaches morals and values.

We offer two bands of core subjects namely:

1. Engineering Graphics and Design (Technical Drawing on the computer) and Mechanical Technology (sheet metal work, welding, fitting and turning and motor mechanics) Tourism and
2. Hospitality Studies (these subjects teach learners about the tourism trade, running a restaurant or guest house).


Together with the core subjects we also offer elective subjects:

1. Business Studies.
2. Life Science (Biology).
3. Computer Applications Technology, which combines typing, different programs and the workings of a computer

We believe that our learners will then be fully equipped to become productive citizens of South Africa.

Source: Schools' Website

# Annexure D: Post Establishment for Institution



**GAUTENG PROVINCE**  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

**GAUTENG DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Postal address: Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2008  
Physical address: 111 Commissioner St, Johannesburg, 2008

Local District Office (LDS) Unit

**Final**

## Post Establishment for Institution

08 October 2010  
Thursday, 11 October 2010

GC [Redacted]

Handic is a complete personeelvoorsiening met ingang 1 Januarie 2019. Die Departement behou die reg voor om die personeelvoorsiening te heraanvaar indien enige van die inligting nie korrek is nie.  
This is your official staff establishment with effect 1 January 2019. The Department retains the right to recalculate the staff establishment if any information is found to be incorrect.

	GrR	Gr1	Gr2	Gr3	Gr4	Gr5	Gr6	Gr7	Gr8	Gr9	Gr10	Gr11	Gr12	LSan Comb
Leerlinge / Learners	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	439
Gewig / Weight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3,08
Weging / Weight	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1418,6

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Leerlinge / Learners (l)				439
Gewegde Leerlinge / Weighted Learners (wl)				1432,18
Konstante Gewig (n) / Constant Weight (n)				33
Skoolgewig / School Weight (w)				1965,13
Poste / Posts				35,39
Poste / Posts				42
Skoolgewig / School Weight (TotW)				142078,6
Pool / Pool				3451


Wl per Post =  $\frac{TotW}{Pool} = \frac{142078,585}{3451} = 41,17$

Posts =  $\frac{wl}{Wl \text{ per Post}} = \frac{1432,18}{41,17} = 35,58$

U kwalifiseer vir 1 hoof, 2 nejkunskof's, 8 departementshoofde, 31 posvlak, 1 poste (12 poste).  
Die poste sluit 6 addisionele poste in.  
You qualify for 1 principal, 2 deputy principals, 8 heads of department, 31 post level, 1 posts (12 posts).  
The posts include 6 additional posts.

Description	Learners	Weight	Weighted Learners
Autistic	3	6	18
Partially Sighted	6	5	30
Hard of Hearing	2	5	10
Deaf	2	5	10
Physical Disabled	12	4	48
Specific Learning Disabilities	47	3	141
Epileptic	17	3	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>418</b>

Some additional posts have been added to your establishment: 6 (3)



Head of Department

Posts:  
**42**

Ratio:  
**10,9**

Om die aantal poste te bereken, bepaal die gewegde leerlinge tel 33 daarby en deel deur 41,17. To calculate the number of posts, determine the weighted learners, add 33 and divide by 41,17

## Annexure E: Research approval letter to conduct research in Institutions and/or offices of the Gauteng Department of Education



### GAUTENG PROVINCE

Department: Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

### GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	13 July 2018
Validity of Research Approval:	05 February 2018 – 28 September 2018 2018/168
Name of Researcher:	Van der Linde ES
Address of Researcher:	Private Bag X7 Springs 1559
Telephone Number:	082 669 8654
Email address:	engelavanderlinde@yahoo.com
Research Topic:	The management of discipline of learners with special educational needs in special schools.
Type of qualification	Masters
Number and type of schools:	One LSEN School
District/s/HO	Gauteng East

#### **Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research**

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. The District/Head Office Senior Manager concerned must be presented with a copy of this

*Making education a societal priority*

#### **Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management**

7<sup>th</sup> Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0455

Email: Faith.Tshebeala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za