

## CHAPTER 2

### THEORIES OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Over the years, much has been written about school discipline and any to attempt to cover all these theories and ideas about how schools – and more specifically, educators – should deal with school discipline is an almost insurmountable task. For the purposes of this thesis nine diverging and competing views will be discussed and analysed. These are:

- William Glasser's (1998) theories of educational transformation;
- B.F. Skinner's (1992) behavioural modification model;
- Curwin and Mendler's (1999) discipline with dignity model;
- L. and M. Canter's (1997) assertive behavioural model;
- R Dreikurs's (1971) mistaken goal model;
- J.S. Kounin's (1971) behaviourist, stimulus-response model;
- H. Ginott's (1971) constructivist, congruent communication model;
- F.H. Jones's (1987) management model; and
- Gordon's (1974) effective educator training model.

The philosophical underpinnings, psychological assumptions and understanding of the role and function of education in these approaches vary greatly, as do their degree of comprehensiveness (Steere 1988, 12). Each of these theories sheds light on a particular aspect of discipline and often attempts to provide step-by-step procedures in managing school discipline. The theories often share certain overlapping elements, but their theoretical underpinning makes it possible to classify their orientation broadly-speaking into three areas: behaviourist; cognitivist and constructivist. This classification will be used in this chapter to critically analyse the nine theories. Note that none of these them will be refuted out of hand as educators' own orientation to discipline might well be

informed by an overt or covert allegiance to any (or a combination) of the nine theories. Analysing these theories will assist in making sense of how educators' life experiences might have influenced their own stance in relation to existing theoretical understandings of school discipline.

## **2.2 BEHAVIOURISTS**

Psychologists from a behaviourist orientation study human behaviour in an attempt to understand the processes that will induce change in behaviour (Tuckman 1992, 24). Two pioneers in this field are Pavlov and Thorndike. In Pavlov's classical conditioning model, dogs were conditioned to salivate at the sound of a tone (conditioned stimulus) when the tone was paired with food (unconditioned stimulus). Salivation was initially elicited as the unconditioned response to the food and came to be elicited as a conditioned response by the sound of the tone alone. This happened after repeated pairings of food with the tone. Repeated presentation of the tone on its own ultimately resulted in extinction, in other words the loss of conditioning. Pavlov also experimented with secondary conditioning, generalisation and discrimination.

Thorndike on the other hand demonstrated that in both humans and animals a connection can be made between specific behaviours (or responses) and the situations (or stimuli) if the result of such behaviour is experienced as satisfying. He called this phenomenon the "Law of Effect". These early researchers did the ground work for more modern behavioural approaches such as that expounded by Skinner (Van Wyk 2000, 76-78).

### **2.2.1 Skinnerian model**

#### **(a) Rationale**

The Skinnerian model is behavioural in nature. It takes its starting point from the fact that behaviour that is rewarded tends to be repeated, while behaviour that receives no rewards tends to be eliminated. In maintaining discipline one generally rewards good behaviour and punishes bad behaviour (Phillips 1998, 13). The Skinnerian model as a behaviour

modification paradigm derived from the work of behavioural psychologist, BF Skinner. Skinner has been a major influence behind the adaptation of clinical behaviour techniques to classroom settings (Duke and Meckel 1980, 15).

Skinner believes that consequences (in other words, what happens to the individual after performing an act) shape an individual's behaviour. He focused his approach on reinforcement and reward. Reinforcers are like rewards; if used in a systematic way, they influence an individual's behaviour in a desired direction (Charles 1989, 35). Skinner made use of terms such as operant behaviour, reinforcing stimuli, schedule of reinforcement, successive approximations, positive and negative reinforcements (Charles 1989, 36-37).

**(b) Principles on which the Skinnerian model is based**

Operant behaviour is a purposeful, voluntary action. Reinforcing stimuli are rewards that the individual receives directly after performing an appropriate behaviour. Receiving rewards pleases learners; this makes them more likely to repeat a good behaviour pattern in the hope of obtaining further rewards. Schedules of reinforcements occur when reinforcement is produced on an ongoing basis (Van Wyk 2000, 22). Positive reinforcement is the process of supplying a reward that the learners favour; all rewards can thus be seen as reinforcement. Negative reinforcement means taking away something that the learners like.

The Skinnerian model assumes that behaviour is learnt and that reinforcements contribute towards achieving good behaviour when reinforcement procedures are used to shape a learners behaviour in a desired direction. Educators reward desired behaviour with praise and enjoyable prizes; they punish undesirable behaviour by withholding all rewards. It is vital that educators who utilise behaviour modification consider their own behaviour and how it may be used to reinforce good behaviour in the classroom environment.

Skinner describes freedom as escape or avoidance. Escape is doing whatever it takes to remove contact with an aversive stimulus that is already present. This is done by

removing, stopping or reducing the intensity of the stimulus or by simply moving away from it. Similarly, avoidance is doing whatever it takes to prevent contact with the aversive stimulus not yet present (O'Donohue and Ferguson 2001, 207-208).

Most animals will make every effort to free themselves from aversive circumstances. For example a hare will struggle to get free when caught in a trap. Humans take similar action when they walk away from irritating friends. Skinner uses the terms “controller” and “controllee” to label people who control others and those who are controlled by other people (O'Donohue and Ferguson 2001, 208-209).

The situation described above of humans and animals striving for freedom can be applied to the classroom situation when the learner feels that his/her freedom is being taken away by the educator who expects work from the learner. The learner may wish to escape from the confinement of this situation by being absent from class or defying instructions; in this case the educator is the controller and the learner may be called the controllee.

Skinner sees all behaviour as being controlled all the time. By this Skinner implies that there are always external factors from the environment that constantly impinge on the individual; these consciously or unconsciously influence his/her behaviour. Skinner also points out that organised control, e.g. by the educator, is often arranged in such a way that it reinforces the behaviour of the controller at the controllers expense. This usually has immediate aversive consequences for controllers. Immediate aversive consequences might be in the form of a lash. The effect of employing aversives on the learners usually results in immediate compliance. Technically speaking, using aversive stimuli by negatively reinforcing the behaviour of the learner (avoid lashing), and the learner's behaviour (compliance) in turn positively reinforces the educator's use of the aversive technique (O'Donohue and Ferguson 2001, 211-213).

Behaviourists, and in particular Skinner, propounded a powerful behavioural approach, the reinforcement theory, for managing and controlling classroom outcomes. According to this theory, an educator who applies it controls the effect of a student's behaviour by

choosing whether or not to follow that behaviour with a positive experience named a reinforcer. Reinforcement depends on whether or not appropriate behaviour occurs. In the classroom, the educators can be the contingency manager by giving or withholding reinforcement selectively, guided by the student's behaviour.

Skinner (quoted in Tuckman 1992, 46) defines the basic type of learning described above as "operant conditioning". He explains operant conditioning as learning to perform a specific behaviour based on the occurrence that immediately follows it. Behaviours that are followed by positive consequences increase their frequency and probability of occurrence. People learn to operate in their environment to attain or achieve positive consequences. This principle of reinforcement is a refinement of Thorndile's "law of effect".

Skinner also introduced the concept of a discriminative stimulus. This is a stimulus that can serve as signal or cue in operant conditioning. Rather than having to wait for the operant response to be given on a random basis, the educator can cue the students to behave in a certain way if they want to receive reinforcement (Tuckman 1992, 47). An example is when an educator tells the class that to get called on they must wait until she requests that questions be asked before they raise their hands. This instruction serves as a discrimination stimulus. It should be noted that behaviour is controlled by the consequence and not the signal. However, the signal helps to cue or guide the learner to choose the appropriate response upon which the reinforcement is dependent.

Reinforcers may be primary or secondary. Primary reinforcers include such things as food and protection and learners do not necessarily have to like them. However, there are reinforcers that students have learned to like and these are called secondary reinforcers. They include praise, money and the opportunity to play. There are also positive and negative reinforcers. Positive reinforcers are those pleasant experiences or stimuli that people enjoy whereas negative reinforcers refer to those aversive experiences that people wish to terminate, escape from or avoid. Finally there are social, token and activity reinforcers. Social reinforcers refer to desirable interactive experiences with other people

for example learners. They include praising, smiling, patting on the back, hugging and kissing. Tokens are things that can be converted to a basic form of reinforcer, e.g. gold stars or smiling faces posted in a learner's book; money may also be used in the same manner. Finally, there are activity reinforcers that are enjoyable things to do; e.g. going out to play, having recess and going on a field trip.

Another important behaviourist concept is called behaviour modification. In this case target behaviour is selected and discriminative stimuli and differential reinforcement are used either to increase or decrease a particular behaviour. There are four steps that must be carried out, namely to identify a desired or target behaviour; to give clear signals of when to perform and when not to perform the target behaviour; to ignore disruptive or non target behaviour; and to reinforce the target behaviour when it occurs. Certain techniques can be used to achieve the required modification and they include prompting, chaining and shaping. Prompting entails adding discriminative stimuli that are likely to signal the desired response rather than waiting for the required response to occur on a chance basis. For example, an educator may inform the class what behaviour to perform and when to perform it. It is mainly used in reading.

Chaining on the other hand involves connecting simple responses in sequence to form more complete responses that would be difficult to learn all at one time. Simple behaviours are joined into a sequence of behaviour, which is then reinforced at its completion. Shaping is used when the desired response (target) is not one the student is already able to perform (i.e. the desired response not in the student's repertoire) or when there is no way to prompt the response. There are two types of shaping, namely, shaping only those behaviours that meet a given criterion; and shaping/reinforcing behaviour that approximates or is closely similar to the target behaviour (Tuckman 1992, 53-56).

### **(c) Discipline and reinforcement theory.**

According to behaviourist thinkers, the effective use of reinforcement should make the use of punishment unnecessary. They maintain that the most effective technique for weakening behaviour is to use non-reinforcement, i.e. to ignore it. Punishment is not a

preferred method of changing behaviour or maintaining discipline. According to Skinner (quoted in Tuckman 1992, 61), when bad behaviour is punished, it may merely be suppressed and may reappear later under different circumstances. Ironically the punisher may serve as a model for future aggressive behaviour on the part of the person being punished. This claim implies that educators who have been subjected to corporal punishment as a child may as an adult educator also prefer to use corporal punishment. Tuckman (1992, 61) states that there are two circumstances when punishment, as a last resort, may be used effectively. Firstly, when undesirable behaviour is so *frequent* that there is virtually no desirable behaviour to reinforce, extreme aggressiveness in a child may leave no room for reinforcement. Secondly, this may be necessary when the problem behaviour is so *intense* that someone, including the child himself may get hurt. Here again, aggressiveness is an example of such intense behaviour.

#### **(d) Critique of Skinner's contribution**

Although Skinner did not concern himself with classroom discipline per se, his contribution on the shaping of desired behaviour through reinforcement has led directly to the practices of behaviour modification – still used to shape academic and social learning. Many primary grade educators use behaviour modification as their only discipline system, rewarding students who behave properly and withholding rewards from those who misbehave. A major concern is that while this is effective in teaching students desirable behaviour, it is less successful in teaching them what *not* to do. Nor did it help students to understand why certain behaviour is rewarded while other is not.

Strategies such as ignoring misbehaving students may be counterproductive in persuading students to behave acceptably. Students may see misbehaviour as bringing enough in the way of rewards (albeit negative) from their educators, and may persist with negative behaviour. This is aggravated when their misbehaviour is positively rewarded through the attention that they receive from peers.

Furthermore, students can be taught or shown almost instantly how to behave desirably. They don't have to learn it through lengthy non-verbal and non-imitative reward

processes. While behaviour modification may seem to work well with young children, older ones may well be embarrassed to be singled out for praise in front of their classmates.

Another disadvantage of this model is that educators making use of it may sometimes overlook important elements in students' history and home environment. This is because a lack of awareness of the relationship between a learner's background and his/her present behaviour may result in ineffective communication between educator and the learner (Van Wyk 2000, 27).

Skinner's use of the term "control" has provoked several attacks from the protagonists of the autonomous man. They believe in self-determinism, i.e., humans are inherently free to do whatever they wish. Any attempt to control behaviour is seen as an infringement on personal liberty (O'Donohue and Ferguson 2000, 211).

### **2.2.2 Kounin's model**

#### **(a) Rationale**

Kounin (1971) is also a pioneer of a behavioural approach based on the typical behaviourist stimulus-response theory. Kounin, like Skinner, argues that learners will adopt good behaviour and eliminate bad behaviour in an attempt to gain the reward and avoid punishment. Wielikiewicz (1995, 3) indicates that behaviour followed by a desirable reward, such as praise, is likely to be repeated. If behaviour is followed by undesirable incident, such as pain or fear, the behaviour is less likely to be repeated. Whereas Skinner focused on how the behaviour of the learner could be controlled and behaviour modification could be achieved, Kounin (1976) focuses more on the behaviour of the educator and what the educator should be doing to achieve the desirable behaviour in learners.

The school discipline model developed by Kounin (1976) is based on a detailed scientific analysis of school discipline and describes lesson and movement management as a means



to control students' behaviour. The model could be termed a group dynamic model, within which educators work with a group of learners.

### **(b) Principles on which Kounin's model is based**

Kounin recommends two techniques that can be used to address learner misbehaviour. He terms these "withitness" and "overlapping". He describes withitness as the educators' attribute of having "eyes at the back of their heads" (Kounin 1976, 74). The concept in its simplest terms implies that an educator must be able to know and see what is happening in her/his class, even if she/he is busy writing something on the chalkboard. An educator who is "with-it" knows what is going on in the classroom at all times (Burden 1995, 47).

Overlapping is the ability to attend to two things at the same time (Kounin 1976, 85). For example, an educator may be helping a small group of learners and simultaneously also observes that two other learners are playing instead of doing their class work.

Kounin also outlines what he calls the technique of movement management to control discipline. Movement management is the ability to move smoothly from one activity to the next. Good movement in a lesson is achieved by effective momentum (Burden 1995, 48). Some educators make two movement management mistakes: jerkiness and slowdowns. Jerkiness refers to a change in the flow of activities; this creates confusion and results in misbehaviour. Educators who are not sure of what to offer in the classroom also confuse learners. Slowdowns are delays that waste time between activities; they occur when the educator is guilty of over-dwelling and fragmentation. Burden (1995, 48) describes over-dwelling as focusing exclusively on a single issue long after students have understood the point.

### **(c) Critique of Kounin's contribution**

Kounin (1976) identifies a number of educator strategies that engage students in lessons and thus reduce misbehaviour. His work places emphasis on how educators can manage students, lessons, and classrooms so as to reduce the incidence of misbehaviour. The interconnection he identifies between ways of teaching and control of behaviour has led

to a new line of thought – that teaching influences discipline to a greater degree than previously realised and that the best way to maintain good discipline is to keep students actively engaged in class activities, while simultaneously showing them individual attention.

Kounin’s commentary on his research is both interesting and illuminating. He concludes that the educator’s personality has very little to do with classroom control. Referring to educator traits such as friendliness, helpfulness, rapport, warmth, patience, and the like, he claims that contrary to popular opinion, such traits are of little value in managing a classroom.

He also explains that while conducting his research he hoped and expected to find a clear relationship between the actions of educators when students misbehaved and the subsequent misbehaviour of those same students – but that no such findings had emerged.

Although Kounin’s work did succeed in sensitising educators to the importance of lesson management educators have not found his approach satisfactory as a total system of discipline. They feel that what he suggests can cut down markedly on the incidence of class misbehaviour but that misbehaviour occurs even in the best of circumstances, and Kounin provides no help with regard to how educators should cope when a lesson is being spoiled.

### **2.2.3 Canter’s assertive behavioural model**

#### **(a) Rationale**

Canter and Canter (1992) developed an approach which he terms “assertive discipline” that cannot be described as purely behaviourist in nature, but does contain certain elements of a behaviourist approach. These researchers assert that an educator who uses assertive discipline has a clear sense of how students should behave in order for him/her to accomplish his/her teaching objectives. Assertive discipline is different from many other models in that it provides a system of dealing with behaviour at the time it occurs,

through a plan that makes the learners responsible for his or her behaviour and resulting consequences (Steere 1978, 46). The essence of assertive discipline is captured in the following quotation: “An assertive educator will actively respond to a child’s inappropriate behaviour by clearly communicating to the child her disapproval of the behaviour, followed by what she/he wants the child to do” (Duke and Meckel 1980, 11).

Key ideas that form the core of assertive discipline include the fact that students have rights and that they need a caring educator who will provide warmth attention and support. Educators also have rights; they must teach in an environment that is conducive to learning and enjoy support from both parents and learners. Educators must be assertive and communicate their needs freely; they should also provide a model of good behaviour. Learners have the right to an educator who will be firm, consistent, provide positive encouragement and motivate good behaviour (Canter and Canter 1998, 13). Learners have a right to learning that calmly and consistently enforce rules of conduct, to learning where an educator makes calm but firm declarations. Educators should also refrain from asking rhetorical questions about misbehaviour and should develop a system for rewarding good behaviour (Steere 1988, 48).

The educator should be able to communicate to the learner what is wrong and provide a model of good behaviour. Assertive discipline is premised on the notion that the educator’s attitude influences his/her behaviour that in turn influences learners’ behaviour. In illustrating the effectiveness of their model, the Canters distinguish three types of educators: non-assertive, hostile and assertive educators. Non-assertive educators are those who allow themselves to be pushed around and manipulated by learners; hostile educators err by imposing control in an arbitrary manner. Assertive educators, on the other hand, believe in their abilities and their right to use them to foster learning (Duke and Meckel 1980, 13).

Assertive educators also know when and how to instil good behaviour. Being assertive is different from being aggressive – the goal of assertive discipline is to foster in educators a feeling that they are in control in the classroom. An educator taking calm but firm

control shows assertiveness by calmly enforcing agreed-upon rules of conduct. Assertive educators do not express an intention to hurt, but want to help.

The Canters’ approach emphasises rules and consequences and the following chart is a good example of laying down ground-rules in the classroom

**TABLE 3: CHARTS FOR RULES AND CONSEQUENCES**

CLASSROOM RULES	
1.	-----
2.	-----
3.	-----
4.	-----
5.	-----

CONSEQUENCES	
(if you break the rules)	
1 <sup>st</sup> time:	-----
2 <sup>nd</sup> time:	-----
3 <sup>rd</sup> time:	-----
4 <sup>th</sup> time:	-----
5 <sup>th</sup> time:	-----

(Adapted from Steere 1988, 47)

According to Steere (1988, 47) rules should be specific and rules should be visible to all learners. Different charts should be used for different sets of rules. Just as with rules, consequences for violating rules should be explained and be visible to all learners.

To summarise, the emphasis in assertive discipline is on classroom control strategy that places educators in charge in the classroom in a humane and yet firm manner. It is a system that allows educators to invoke positive and negative consequences calmly and fairly and is a technique for dealing with difficult learners and teaching the class as a whole how to behave. The educator should always remain in charge in the classroom, but not in a hostile or authoritarian manner. He/she must take specific steps to teach students how to behave acceptably in the classroom, identify students’ personal needs and show understanding and willingness to help, continually striving to build an atmosphere of trust between educator and learners.

### (c) Critique

Assertive discipline is designed primarily for use in the classroom. Since many learner behaviour problems that alarm educators occur *outside* the classroom, the model may not offer much help in resolving all the educators' concerns. In addition, assertive discipline provides no opportunity for students to learn or practise conflict resolution skills (Duke and Meckel 1980, 13). Assertive discipline cannot be effective without communication. Any discipline management system the educator wishes to implement should first be discussed with school management because both the management and the parents should be aware of the proposed system. This will ensure that parents know of the educator's attitude regarding the importance of good conduct and its influence on teaching and learning.

## 2.3 COGNITIVISTS

This is a psychological approach, which utilises overt behaviour as a clue for deducing what goes on in the mind (Gage and Berliner 1992, 225). Cognitivists try to comprehend the kind of thinking associated with the particular content to be learned. They make a serious attempt to determine what goes on in the minds of learners, so that they can understand how they do mathematics, read or understand instructions (Gage and Berliner 1992, 225-228).

Cognitive scientists in the field of education study the types of behavioural problems that require different kinds of student cognition. They maintain that if we understand how successful/unsuccessful learners think about these problems, we can teach them to think in better ways. Simultaneously, as educators, we can learn to instruct them in more appropriate ways. The goal is to promote problem solving, transfer of learning, and to encourage cognitive processing of information for better and more effective decision making. In contrast to behaviourists, cognitivists place special emphasis on the thinking processes of the learner. Cognitivists consider the learner's active participation not just as responding to circumstances, but as organising and reorganising incoming information in processes of thinking and problem solving. To cognitivists, learning means using

mental structures to process information (Tuckman 1992, 24). Cognitivists put themselves into the mind of the learner and try to figure out how information is transformed, stored and retrieved in problem solving.

Pioneers in this field are the Gestalt psychologists, Köhler and Wertheimer. Köhler studied the problem solving behaviour of chimpanzees. He avoided detours and used tools such as sticks and boxes to achieve a remote goal. This process of discovering a single and continuous solution – even if it required moving away from a goal to get a necessary tool to achieve a goal – he called insight (Tuckman 1992, 42). This early work set the stage for more contemporary cognitive approaches in order to explain what goes on in the mind when learning takes place. Although there are numerous theorists who operate from a more cognitivist approach, two of these (Glasser and Dreikurs) will be discussed here as they focus in particular on student behaviour and discipline.

### **2.3.1 William Glasser’s theories of educational transformation**

#### **(a) Rationale**

William Glasser developed a tool he calls Choice Theory for use in his attempts to transform and revitalise education in schools. He designed three distinct models and practices, namely Choice Theory, Quality Management, and Reality Therapy (Palmatier 1998, 3-23).

*Choice Theory* can be described as a biological theory about our functioning as living creatures. The theory states that all behaviour is an attempt by individuals to satisfy needs that are built into the genetic structure of the brain. In short, all motivation is internal and not external, meaning that motivation is directed from the brain, which makes it cognitive in nature. There are five elements involved in Glasser’s Choice Theory. These are:

Basic needs. In our brains there are genetically encoded needs, e.g., love and belonging; power; competence; survival, fun diversion; and the freedom to choose options (Palmatier 1988, 22).

Reality. We constantly face a large number of disturbances in our environment that we must interpret, accommodate, and manage. This implies that we must make sense of external data through the perceptual ability of our brain.

Perceptual system. There are two perceptual systems, viz., the “all we know world” which relates to sensing the external world, and making sense of what we observe. Second is the “all we want world”. In this case we assign a value to what we know. We filter all this data through our values; we screen and label our intake as good, bad, or neutral. This is our quality world picture.

Comparing place. This is a special place in the brain where we measure and weigh the outside data and reference these pieces of information with the mental pictures of our current wants to see if we have a sensory match.

Behavioural system. This is the output part through which we act on the world to get what we want. We take the world perceptually into our heads and act on the world through our capacity to behave (Palmatier 1998, 25-46).

*Quality Management* is another of Glasser’s models that comprise his educational transformation theory. According to his Choice Theory no one can compel or bribe a person into doing quality work. Although an educator can make learners do some work to avoid punishment, he/she cannot make them do quality work. When one does quality work, it is done not because one is forced to do so but because in doing so one satisfies one’s own internal need for love and acceptance.

In order to manage people successfully, one must persuade them to put what you want (i.e. the managerial agenda) into their own quality worlds. In schools, therefore, when learners agree to customise their quality worlds in this way, they will do quality work and in the process transform the school into a quality school (Palmatier 1998, 22-23).

*Reality Therapy* is Glasser’s method of counselling that emphasises solving immediate problems rather than dwelling too much on the past. This theory is based on the assumption that no one can force anyone to do anything. To get a willing agreement to act in ways we would prefer requires a warm and friendly environment. Persuasion

requires trust between people. The stage must be set by being supportive and non-punitive. Micro-managing is out; encouraging initiative is in. Reality Therapy looks for what is right and builds on positives (Palmatier 1998, 27-48).

In applying Glasser's three-pronged educational transformation theory the educator must always keep in mind that the main thrust of this theory is to encourage learners to empower themselves and to take full responsibility for their behaviour at school. The educator must then proceed to remove the barriers to teaching choice theory; crises must be managed on an ongoing basis and specific ways must be devised for creating a suitable context for quality teaching and learning (Palmatier 1998, 48).

Glasser (1992) contends that when his choice theory is applied to classroom discipline practices, students *choose* to behave as they do; they are not forced to do so. He describes misbehaviour as a bad choice and appropriate behaviour as a good choice and urges educators to formulate class rules (and the consequences of breaking these rules) and to involve students in this process. He insists that educators should never accept excuses for misbehaviour and always should see to it that students experience the reasonable consequences, pleasant or unpleasant, of the choices they make. He also maintains that an educator's role in discipline should be one of continually helping students to make better behaviour choices. Glasser also popularised the holding of class meetings, now incorporated in almost all systems of discipline; he advocates that those meetings be conducted with students and educator seated in a close circle.

### **(b) Critique of Choice Theory**

Educators were at first enthralled with Glasser's ideas on classroom discipline. They were impressed by the concept of learners being taught to bear the consequences of their behaviour. They agreed that the educator should immediately identify misbehaviour and provide a prompt description of appropriate behaviour in the same circumstances (Wolgang and Glickman 1980, 102-103). Glasser's scheme of discipline as a total system did not, however, become widely used. Practically all educators use elements of his



theory in devising their classroom practice, especially the written rules, reasonable consequences for breaking rules, and holding class discussions on appropriate behaviour. But most educators feel they do not have sufficient time to follow the prescribed process with every student who misbehaves, counselling them over and over again on making productive choices as Glasser suggests. Moreover, educators find that students pay little attention to benign consequences and so continue to misbehave when they feel inclined to do so. The major limitation of Glasser's system of discipline is its unwieldiness. Busy educators just cannot get a handle on it well enough to work all of it into their daily teaching.

### **2.3.2 Gordon's international model of effective training**

#### **(a) Rationale**

Gordon believes that good classroom discipline involves students developing their own inner sense of self-control. He uses a behaviour window, which is a visual device that helps to clarify whether a problem exists and who it is that has the problem. He indicates that there are two feelings, namely a primary feeling, which an individual experiences after unacceptable behaviour, and a secondary feeling sensed after the resolution of the matter (Van Wyk 2000, 77).

Gordon rejects power-based authority and win-lose conflict resolution. Unlike Jones (discussed below) he advises educators not to use rewards or punishment to control student behaviour. According to him giving rewards to learners to control their behaviour is so common that its effectiveness is rarely questioned (Gordon 1989, 34-35). Using rewards, he says, will merely make learners concern themselves with getting rewards and forget about learning or behaving desirably. There is also the possibility that learners may equate the lack of rewards with punishment. To implement Gordon's model effectively planning, time, administrative support and cooperation from educators, parents and learners are needed. Educators and parents should see discipline as school-wide concern that must be handled on a collaborative basis.

Although other models regard motivation as a key to effective teaching and learning, Gordon sees rewards as detrimental as far as learning good behaviour is concerned. Learners must be made aware that misbehaviour is unacceptable and must learn to control their behaviour. The educator's role in helping them in this process is not, however, clearly captured in Gordon's model. Like all the models mentioned above, learners should be made responsible for their behaviour; discipline is a wide concern for all. Stakeholders should work together to create conducive learning and teaching environment.

Gordon (cited in Wolfgang and Glickman 1988, 30) provides examples of directive statements that should be avoided by educators.

Ordering, commanding, directing: "Stop playing with your pencil!"

Warning, threatening: "You had better straighten up, young girl, if you want to pass at the end of the year!"

Moralizing, preaching, using the words "should" and "ought": "You ought to choose your friends more wisely."

Advising, offering solutions or suggestions "What you need to do is to come early to do your work in time."

### **2.3.3 Dreikurs's mistaken goal model**

#### **(a) Rationale**

Harlan (1996, 24) states that Dreikurs approaches discipline from a cognitivist point of view by holding that behaviour is reasoned and goal directed. The underlying belief of this model is that learners want to belong, to be accepted, and that they are able to choose right from wrong behaviour. Dreikurs sees the *prime goal* (that of belonging) as an underlying motivator of student behaviour, and identifies the *mistaken goals* (such as attention, power, and revenge) that students turn to when unable to achieve the primary goal of belonging. In line with this, Dreikurs (1971) postulates two assumptions underpinning his approach to discipline: student behaviour is goal directed and people learn best through concrete experiences (Duke and Meckel 1980, 18). Dreikurs (1971)

claims that the key to correcting behavioural problems lies in exploring with the learner the goals prompting the learner's conduct. He asserts that a child should be held responsible for his/her action that is the result of a goal-directed decision taken by the child.

According to Dreikurs (1971) a child should be given a chance to make his/her own choices, being fully aware of the consequences of these choices. The consequences should be logically related to the rightness or wrongness of the choice. At the heart of Dreikurs's model is thus the use of logical consequences – in this respect it is similar to Glasser's reality therapy theory and Canter's theory. Dreikurs (1971) explained behavioural choices as the necessity of having students accept the logical, natural consequences of their behaviour (Harlan 1996, 24). In addition, Dreikurs asserts that democratic procedures must be followed that allow learners to contribute in the formulation of rules of classroom behaviour. Once the rules are established, the consequences of obeying or disobeying them can be determined. For Dreikurs every learner can attain his/her place in life but needs the active help of the adult (Wolgang and Glickman 1988, 94). As for the educator's behaviour, Dreikurs assumes that the best classroom manager is the educator because he/she has the psychological skills to change learners' behaviour. He urges that educators and students should collaborate to formulate rules of classroom behaviour and should link these rules with logical consequences that occur should students either comply with, or break the class rules.

### **(b) Principles of Dreikurs's model**

In an analysis of Dreikurs's findings, Harlan (1996, 24) writes that according to Dreikurs discipline is not punishment, but a way of helping learners to improve themselves. He emphasises choices and that the responsibility for one's behaviour is learnt by accepting (and sometimes suffering) the natural or related consequences of those behavioural choices. It is important that the child should be asked to choose between behaving in the correct manner and continuing with bad behaviour, which will be followed by adverse consequences. Dreikurs emphasises self-worth; learners need to feel capable of

completing tasks, have a sense of belonging and believe that they can connect with the educator and other learners.

A great deal of the success of Dreikurs's ideas in the classroom depends on how correctly educators are able to diagnose the motives underlying student misbehaviour. Incorrect diagnoses may undermine student confidence in the educator and make subsequent interactions more difficult. He identifies two types of consequences, namely *natural* consequence, which is a result of a learner's own behaviour and is not influenced by the educator, and *logical* consequence, where the educator imposes the response to the behaviour. Dreikurs advocates that logical consequences should be in proportion to the misbehaviour and that safety and a danger situation may prevent the use of logical consequences. Logical consequences work best when the child's goal and behaviour is "attention seeking" (Steere 1988, 30).

Dreikurs also provides a number of more specific suggestions on how educators should interact with students. He stresses that educators should never use punishment and should avoid using praise, which he feels makes students dependent on educator reactions. Instead of praise, Dreikurs would have educators use encouragement. Praise, by its nature, is directed at the character of the student. Encouragement, by its nature, is directed at what the student does or can do. Instead of saying "You can certainly play the piano well", an enlightened educator would say, "I notice a great deal of improvement", or "I can see you enjoy playing very much". Dreikurs gives encouragement a very strong role in the way educators should speak with students. He makes the following suggestions:

Always speak in positive terms; never be negative, encourage students to strive for improvements, not perfection, emphasise a student's strengths while minimising weakness, help students with how to learn from mistakes. Show that mistakes are valuable in learning, encourage independence and the assumption of responsibility, let students know you have faith in them; offer help in overcoming obstacles. Encourage students to help each other, show pride in student's work, display it and share it with others. Be optimistic and enthusiastic – a positive outlook is contagious. Use encouraging remarks such as "You have improved". "Can I help you?" "What did you learn from that mistake?" (quoted in Steere 1988, 29-30).

## 2.4 CONSTRUCTIVISTS

### (a) Rationale

Constructivism is an approach to knowledge that assumes that people know and understand in unique ways and create their own and “new” knowledge. The basic ontological assumption of constructivism is relativism, i.e. it assumes that human sense-making is a process that systematise experience so as to render it understandable. As a paradigm it places greater emphasis on the child’s development and understanding of more general social processes and relationships. The *direct approach* relies heavily on verbal instruction, modelling and rehearsal in teaching of situationally specific social problem solving skills, including impulse control and anger management. The *discovery approach* relies more on discussion, the Socratic method, role play and co-operative learning. In this approach the educator assumes the role of co-constructor of social understanding, i.e. one who facilitates and guides educator-student and student-student discussions and role-taking opportunities.

The distinction between the direct and discovery approaches is blurred in modern social problem-solving programmes, especially those programmes designed primarily for prevention. Remediation programmes tend to be based on functional approaches (Elias and Allen, 1992). In teaching self-discipline using the social problem-solving approach, instructors tend to apply multiple instructional strategies. Such strategies are used not only to teach specific social problem-solving skills identified by Spivack and Shure (1982) or Dodge (1986) and Crick and Dodge (1994), but also to teach additional and more general social cognitive processes that mediate social behaviour. These processes include empathy (Eisenberg 1997), moral reasoning (Bear *et al.* 1997), interpersonal understanding and negotiation strategies (Selman and Schultz 1990), social goal-setting (Erdley and Asher 1996), and impulse control and anger management (Lochman *et al.* 1993). Such processes are generally included in the most recent social problem-solving programmes and curricula are guided primarily by a functional or structural approach.

### **(b) Principles of constructivist discipline management**

Perhaps the best examples of the integration of both the functional and structural approaches as well as an increased interest in empathy and moral reasoning (Bear *et al.* 1998; Eisenberg and Harris 1997) and anger control strategies (Lochman *et al.* 1993) are Elias and Clabby's SPS programme (1989); "Second step", a violence prevention curriculum (Committee for Children 1992; Grossman *et al.* 1997), and Gordstein's (1988) comprehensive curriculum for treating, and to a lesser extent preventing, behaviour problems, the PREPARE curriculum. The programme and curricula integrate educator-directed social skills training, peer-focused strategies for promoting moral reasoning and social perspective taking, and self-directed instructional strategies for anger control. As such, they represent a multi-component approach that is increasingly seen in primary, secondary, and tertiary prevention programmes for school discipline problems (Hughes and Carell 1995; Larser 1994).

Due largely to the lack of research on the long-term effectiveness of social cognitive approaches, the popularity of such approaches to school discipline lies more in their theoretical appeal and social significance to parents and educators than in their demonstrated outcomes in preventing actual behaviour problems. Unfortunately, just as the effectiveness of operant behavioural strategies is limited largely to short-term improvements in behaviour (Du Paul and Eckert 1994; Stage and Quiroz 1997), the empirical support for constructivist approaches to classroom management is still inconclusive. The work of Ginott will be used as an illustration of a constructivist approach to classroom discipline.

#### **2.4.1. Ginott's congruent communication model**

##### **(a) Rationale**

Ginott's congruent communication model is one of the constructivist approaches to school discipline. From a constructivist point of view, playing the blaming-game is not constructive. Blaming prevents us from taking constructive action towards the resolution

of the problem. Haim Ginott, a former professor of psychotherapy, viewed discipline as a series of little victories; a long-term developmental process and an immediate solution to a child's misbehaviour (Charles 1989, 56-57). Ginott focused on how adults can build the self-concepts of children.

Ginott maintains that educators should ensure a secure, humanitarian and productive classroom through the use of what he terms "congruent communication", i.e. communication that is harmonious, where educators' messages to learners are relevant and matches learners' feelings (Burden 1995, 38). Educators should use calm language, which is appropriate to the situation and feelings. Ginott believes that the educators, like parents, hold the power to make or break the child's self-concept. He puts forward the following main points:

Educators' own self-discipline is the most important ingredient in maintaining good classroom discipline. Harmonious communication is vital in the classroom, educators should model good behaviour; educators should avoid labelling learners and there should be a conducive environment that promotes optimal learning; a dehumanizing environment will affect discipline negatively (Ginott 1973, 25).

### **(b) Principles of congruent communication**

Ginott's model is largely based on the words spoken to learners when "educators are at their best and when educators are at their worst". At their best educators strive to express their anger and feelings appropriately; they invite cooperation and accept and acknowledge learners' feelings. Educators at their worst are sarcastic. They label learners and do not model good behaviour.

Many educators act unbecomingly if they are constantly under attack. Ginott sees reward as an important element to help in changing learners' behaviour, but learners should not only rely on praise and reward to change their bad behaviour. One striking aspect of Ginott's model is that educators should handle conflict calmly without losing their temper. There will be times when an educator is upset and expresses displeasure by the use of an "I"-message (Steere 1978, 20). In this case an educator may say: "I am disappointed because you did not do your homework". The "I"-message is more

appropriate than the use of the “You”-message. The “You”- message shames and blames the learner, as is seen in the statement: “You are lazy”, which is disrespectful towards the learner.

Ginott’s model advocates providing opportunities for children to become less dependent on educators and to become more responsible for what happens in the classroom. The underlying principles of his model are: Developing a calm language that appropriately fits situations and feelings; finding alternatives to punishment; preventing oneself from judging a child’s character and remaining a good model; and training oneself to use “I”-messages rather than “You”-messages (Steere 1978, 21).

### **(c) Critique of Ginott’s model**

Ginott’s (1971) model clearly indicates that dehumanisation affects discipline negatively. It is also against labelling – calling learners by nicknames. Ginott insists that the only true discipline is self-discipline, which all educators should try to promote in their students. He makes a number of especially helpful contributions concerning how educators can communicate with students to foster positive relations, while at the same time reducing and correcting misbehaviour. He shows that it is important for the educator to be self-controlled and, beyond that, the value of congruent communication, which is educator communication that is harmonious with student feelings and self-perception. Ginott (1971) urges educators to take a calm measured approach when addressing misbehaviour, using messages that focus on what needs to be corrected without attacking the student’s character or personality.

Although misbehaviour can be forcefully silenced, genuine discipline (by which Ginott means self-discipline) never occurs instantaneously, but rather over time, in a series of small steps that result in genuine changes in student attitude. Ginott’s overall view on teaching and working with learners is summarised in the following excerpt from his *Teacher and Child*, quoted in Charles (2002):

As an educator I have come to the frightening conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It is my personal approach that creates the climate. It is my daily mood that makes the weather. As an educator I possess tremendous



power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or humour, hurt or heal. In all situations it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated, and a child humanised or dehumanised (Charles 2002, 27-28).

According to Charles (2002, 25) Ginott has done more than anyone else to set the tone for today's system of classroom discipline. Educators should have a solid system of discipline on which to rely; they want to be humane, but they also need discipline to be effective. They want it to make absolutely clear what sort of behaviour is appropriate in the classroom. They want that behaviour to be discussed and formulated into class agreements or rules. They also want everyone to know, up front, what will happen when students transgress the rules. Above all, they want to be sure they have the power to put an immediate stop to behaviour that is offensive or disruptive. They can find some, but not all, of those qualities in Ginott's (1971) proposals. Ginott does not, for example, provide adequate suggestions for rules and consequences, nor does he indicate how educators can put an immediate stop to grossly unacceptable behaviour. However, he makes a number of particularly helpful contributions on how educators should communicate with students to foster positive relations while reducing and correcting misbehaviour (Charles 2002, 27).

## **2.5 HYBRID THEORIES OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE**

The following models also provided background information on the influence of educators' lived experiences on classroom discipline practices. The behaviouristic standpoint (as explained above) concentrates on specific observable behaviour, rather than on what is going on inside learners' heads (Charlton and David 1993, 121). The models that are discussed below indicate that learners' behaviour is determined largely by their environment; but in essence they too concentrate on changing observable behaviour.

## **2.5.1. Jones's management model**

### **(a) Rationale**

Jones's model classroom management training programme acknowledges that there is no single, "best" method of dealing with discipline in the classroom. Classroom situations differ and they will therefore require different approaches. This underpinning rationale opens the opportunity to combine insights from behaviourist and cognitivist approaches. Every model makes some contribution to reducing classroom disruption and increasing productivity. These models can either fail if they are abused or succeed if used appropriately. Jones (1987) suggests the use of body language and incentive system (behaviourist elements) and efficient individual help for students (cognitivist approach).

Jones has the following recommendations for educators:

They should structure learning in their classroom properly; they should learn how to maintain control by using appropriate instructional strategies. They should build patterns and co-operation; they should develop appropriate back-up methods in the event of misbehaviour (Burden 1995, 50).

### **(b) Principles of school discipline**

Jones (1987) argues that educators lose approximately 50 per cent of their instructional time attending to learners who cause disturbances in the classroom. Effective body language, incentive systems and individual help can be used to redeem the lost teaching time. He further confirms that good discipline comes from effective body language, which includes posture, eye contact, facial expressions, signal and gestures (Burden 1995, 51).

Jones (1987, 85) holds that the body language is the language of the emotions, thus discipline is 90 per cent effective body language. He notes that most misbehaviour occurs away from the educator (Charles 2002, 132). Educators tend to make sure that all learners who are prone to misbehave are seated in the front of the classroom. Incentive systems as

one of the strategies is something outside of the individual, it makes the learner react. All educators know that well-motivated learners tend to work more diligently at school tasks and in doing so they learn more and cause fewer disciplinary problems.

A concern about this model is the need for a long-term commitment from educators. As is the case with reality therapy, considerable time is needed. It assumes that incentives make learners behave well and this enables motivated educators to be in a position to motivate learners. Suffice it to say that techniques of handling learner misbehaviour are often seen in the most effective and motivated educators.

Underlying belief of the model includes making rules that will be quickly enforced, learning and implementing Jones's body language and procedures for stopping misbehaviour. Remaining unemotional and firm in correcting behaviour and developing an incentive system are also important elements.

### **(c) Critique of Jones's approach**

According to Jones, there is no single method of correcting behaviour. It is clear from this model that learners differ, as do situations. These insights are of particular importance as they move school discipline away from a purely "recipe-like" approach to an approach that takes cognisance of learners, their needs and the particular situation. It also opens space for acknowledging the uniqueness of the educator in maintaining discipline.

## **2.5.2 Curwin and Mendler's model: discipline with dignity**

### **(a) Rationale**

Curwin and Mendler (1999) suggest strategies for improving classroom behaviour through maximising students' dignity and hope. The model sees the educator as important; his/her crucial responsibility is to help students. The educator must clearly articulate to learners that schooling is to their benefit. Curwin and Mendler use the term

“dignity” to indicate the value placed on human life. They say that the school exists more for learners than for educators (Van Wyk 2000, 85).

According to Curwin and Mendler it is the duty of educators to see to it that students learn and that they behave appropriately and responsibly. Furthermore, according to Van Wyk 2000, 85) they say that when the learner’s dignity is damaged, motivation is reduced, resistance is increased and the desire for revenge would be promoted. They provide three dimensions of classroom discipline, namely prevention; action and resolution. They see these aspects as valuable because they believe that the school can be stressful place. Educators can help learners to regain a sense of hope. It is incumbent upon educators to make learning more attractive in order to ensure success. Educators who lack confidence in themselves or who distrust learners may find the model too threatening and it also demands a great deal of time. Those who use the model should be patient as learners adjust to the fact that they have a role to play in classroom management. As indicated earlier, this model emphasised dignity and respect for others, for life and for oneself. Learners with chronic behaviour problems see themselves as losers – they do not try to gain acceptance in normal circles.

### **(b) Critique .**

This model emphasises that learners’ dignity is of great concern. Regardless of bad experiences and emotional scars that still torment educators, they must consider the dignity of the child first.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The behavioural approaches to school discipline focus on behavioural modification. They view behavioural change, such as the elimination of undesirable behaviour, as something that could be achieved through processes of reward, either withholding of reward, or meting out punishment. They therefore focus on changing the overt (external) behaviour rather than on internal mental states. Behavioural theories explain these behavioural changes as being based on the connection between elements and reinforced by this effect

(Tuckman 1992, 39). In contrast, cognitivist theories reject the notion of behaviour modification as some external means of control. They focus on the mental processes within the child and view undesirable behaviour as a means through which the child expresses his/her wants. These may be construed as misdirected goals or an ineffective means of drawing attention.

The task of the educator is to understand how the child thinks about discipline. They should therefore focus on how the child can be drawn into the drawing up of class rules and a schedule of consequences for not adhering to them. Constructivist theories operate from the premise that knowledge is a socially constructed entity and that the educator has an important role to play in the facilitation of children's construction of knowledge. Instead of prescribing rules to children, they need to be brought through teaching and experience to explore and impart meaning to the rules required to maintain an orderly classroom environment.

The theories discussed in this chapter therefore provide us with a wide spectrum of approaches that differ in their philosophical underpinning and practical application. It is not the purpose at this stage to argue in favour of any of these approaches. What is important in the subsequent chapters is to find a possible link between educators' perceptions of discipline and then to relate it to a specific paradigm that may inform their behaviour. It is accepted that the particular educator's own stance may be the result of training that he or she has received, or it could be based on their specific lived experiences. My aim in the subsequent chapters is to explore how these experiences have influenced them in the development of different practices to deal with school discipline.