CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH DESIGN

4.1   INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 1, my knowledge of the schools in the region where my research was undertaken and my own eagerness to see the transformation of these schools was a primary motivation in my decision to undertake this research project. While on my support visits to the schools I observed that some had more disciplinary problems than others. For example, the manager of one school called me to intervene when a learner was clashing with an educator. On another occasion a learner was found using drugs at school. I also became very aware of the high failure rate of learners, especially that of grade 12 learners. In addition, attendance registers indicated that the rate of absenteeism among learners was unacceptably high and that learners often arrived late for schools. Although these schools started at 8h00, lessons normally began at 8h20.

What perplexed me is why these particular schools were plagued by disciplinary problems. How could this situation be explained and what role did educators play? Based on my experience of schools in the region, when three schools indicated their interest to be part of the study, this was a confirmation that disciplinary problems were rife. Prior to my involvement with these schools, two educators from one of them were dismissed because they had been guilty of sexual harassment of learners. Four learners from another school were suspended after they were reported to be using drugs. I also noticed that in recent months the number of educators who had resigned was unduly high and was informed that there was a decline in learner enrolment. When schools reopen at the start of the academic year, officials from the Department of Education and senior politicians visited several of the schools to check whether teaching and learning had indeed begun on the first official day of the school year. I realised that in most cases, the process of teaching and learning did not start as smoothly or promptly in the secondary schools as it did in the better-organised primary schools. These factors all contributed to my growing

interest in how secondary school educators in particular, go about the discipline of learners. Why, I wondered, are they using the various different approaches to school discipline? To answer this question, I had first to make an effort to understand the way educators think about and practice school discipline.

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology followed in undertaking the necessary qualitative research to explore how educators' lived experiences have impacted upon their classroom discipline practices. The chapter begins by dealing with qualitative narrative research as the approach of choice and then moves on to discuss research procedure; data collection techniques; the procedure for data collection; procedure for data analysis; data analysis; ethical considerations during qualitative research; credibility and trustworthiness and finally, triangulation and crystallisation.

4.2 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

The word qualitative implies an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined or measured (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 4). Research studies that investigate the quality of relationships, activities and situations are referred to as qualitative (Wallen and Fraenkel 2001, 432). Czarniawska (2004, 38) also states that narration (or a narrative approach) means telling – it refers to the way people engage in a dynamic process of incremental refinement of their stories. The stories are recounted and then compared to an unfolding story-line to keep the organisation concerned from repeating historically bad choices and inviting a repetition of the past. The focus in this study is on the influence of educators experiences on their current classroom disciplinary practices. My argument is that if participants' responses to the interview questions are analysed, the information obtained will highlight the extent to which their lived experiences impact on the way they currently discipline their learners.

 As the study unfolded, data were collected and analysed. The qualitative research method used provided participants with the freedom to express themselves spontaneously about their life-world (Denzin and Lincoln 1994, 5). Holliday (2002, 4) adds that

qualitative research encourages the need to discover as much information as possible about the research topic. In this study participants were given an opportunity to talk about what happened to them when they were still learners.

 Information regarding classroom discipline was collected from participating educators through semi-structured interviews, observation and the narratives on their experiences. I then analysed the data collected to make them meaningful so that I could address the research questions prepared for the study. I established a cordial, healthy relationship with the participants to make it easy for them to communicate their experiences on how they were disciplined at home and at school while they were of school-going age. Qualitative research involves fieldwork and employs an inductive research strategy. In qualitative research the focus is on process, meaning and understanding (Merriam 1998, 8). Emphasis was placed on understanding educators lived experiences and to investigate if this does indeed influence their current classroom discipline practices. Razavier *et al*. (2002) support Merriam when they indicate that "Qualitative inquirers argue that human behaviour is always bound to the context in which it occurs" (Razavier, *et al*. 2002, 422).

My argument in this study is that the way an educator disciplines learners today may be a reflection of the manner in which he/she was disciplined in the past. Qualitative researchers also believe that it is impossible to develop a meaningful understanding of human experience without taking into account the interplay of both the inquirers' and participants' values and beliefs (Razavier *et al*. 2002, 423). I took this to imply that for me to understand the nine educators' lived experiences it would be necessary for me to interact freely with them to develop a deeper understanding of their norms, values and beliefs.

I visited three schools in order to gather responses to the research interviews I had compiled from data collection. In investigating whether their life experiences were influenced by their current practices in the classroom, qualitative data collection techniques such as narrative interviews and observation were used. The stories that were narrated by the educators were recorded in writing and electronically. There is no doubt

that a qualitative approach was the best method to research and understand the way educators behave today in their classrooms when they manage discipline.

The nature of the research problem lends itself to narrative research, specifically with regard to content and narrative data analysis. Participants in this study were asked to narrate their experiences, and in this research area quantitative research was not a feasible option.

According to Merriam (1998, 19), two important aspects of qualitative research that distinguishes it from quantitative work are qualitative description and induction. In the narrative interviews, participants described what happened to them when they were learners. From these narratives I was able to analyse the extent to which their lived experiences influenced their current classroom discipline practices. The narratives enabled me to investigate the opinions and perceptions of the participants towards classroom discipline practices. Hansen (1988) in his article *The Ethno-narrative Approach*, (1988, 995) claims that "we make sense of our lives by creating narratives that explain what happened in the past" (Hansen 1988, 995). Similarly, Monk and Winslade (1999, 2) write: "We live our lives according to the stories we tell ourselves and the stories that others tell about us".

4.2.1   Choice of narrative qualitative approach

The nature of this particular study, because it investigates experiences and their impact on current behaviour and actions, dictated that qualitative narrative research be utilised. After taking this decision I compiled a semi-structured interview schedule based on the research problem. Proceeding from there I went to the schools to observe the educators in action and to collect data. I was able to portray with a high degree of accuracy what I observed and heard. The participants' responses were recorded and interpreted; this enabled me to gain insight into how participants were punished or otherwise "disciplined" both at home and in the school environment.

This would not have succeeded as well as it did had the narrative method not been used. Both content and narrative analyses were made with the assistance of a tape recorder (with prior permission from the participants). This allowed me to listen to the responses again and again to capture the exact meaning and implications of the narratives.

Clandinin and Connelly (2000, 20) confirms that narrative inquiry is a valid method of understanding experience. By employing this type of research I was able to acquire a deeper understanding of the educators' lived stories and use these to determine whether or not what happened to the educators when they were learners had influenced their management of classroom discipline in the current teaching careers.

4.3   RESEARCH PROCEDURE

The research procedure utilised included purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, narrative interviews and observations, as qualitative data collection techniques.

4.3.1   Sampling

According to Ary *et al*. (1996, 437), the main consideration when deciding on sample size is the degree of accuracy one wants to achieve in the estimation of population values. Traditionally, secondary schools are judged on their performance using grade 12 results. The performance of every school is also used to measure the effectiveness and functionality of the manager. As circuit manager, I am concerned about the performance of secondary schools in Nkangala Region, especially in the circuit where the research was conducted. These schools were not only performing poorly in terms of their grade 12 results; there were also disciplinary problems, and I was frequently called upon to intervene to resolve these problems. My situation therefore offered a good sample of secondary school educators whom I could study to investigate the influence of childhood experiences on educators' classroom discipline practices.

Educators who are currently teaching in secondary schools from one circuit in Nkangala Region; were requested to be part of the study, all were themselves learners during the 1970-1980. The question is whether what happened to them in the mid-1970s and the years of school unrest that followed, impacted upon the manner in which they manage classroom discipline today. These educators began their teaching careers in the period 1983. Initially seven schools from the four circuits in the Region were invited to participate. Only 15 educators came to the first meeting, which meant that they were interested. When the study unfolded a total of nine educators out of an initial sample of fifteen remained. Fortunately these educators where coming from one circuit. After the Regional Director had given written permission for the affected schools to participate in the study, I arranged to give a presentation on the purpose of the study to the affected participants of each participating school. These schools remained anonymous and were labelled school A, B and C. The nine educators coming from one circuit also remained anonymous in order to adhere to ethical requirements.

The sample was selected as follows:

    School A: Three educators

    School B: Three educators

    School C: Three educators

Educators who were willing to participate were requested to forward their names to the principal of their respective schools. Principals and Heads of Department (HODs) were encouraged to participate if they so wished. Note that pseudonyms have been used to protect the identity of the participants, whose profiles are shown in Table 4 below.

TABLE 5: PARTICIPANTS' PROFILES

EDUCATOR	EXPERIENCE	TEACHING QUALIFICATION	OTHER QUALIFICATIONS	GENDER
Mr Tau	10 years	STD	-	Male
Mr Nkwe	18 years	STD	-	Male
Ms Nare	19 years	STD	Higher Diploma	Female
Mr Phala	13 years	B.ED	-	Male
Ms Tlou	17 years	STD	Higher Diploma in Education Management	
Ms Tshukudu	17 years	STD	BA	Female
Mr Kwena	19 years	STD	BA Higher Diploma	Male
Mr Tholo	14 years	STD	BA	Male
Ms Phuti	14 years	STD	-	Female

Macmillan and Schumacher (1997, 378), describe purposeful sampling as selecting information-rich cases for an in-depth study. In Table 4 it can be seen that all that participants have for a number of years been exposed to the issues under discussion in this research problem. They were in a position to provide rich information that enabled me to achieve the objectives of my study.

4.4   DATA COLLECTION TECHNIQUES

4.4.1   Semi-structured and narrative interviews

Semi-structured interviews allowed participants to have their voice heard. I used interviews to glean information that I could not observe directly. During the interviews, participants were given an opportunity to explain their understanding of discipline; how

they themselves were disciplined as learners; and what lessons they felt they had learnt from the discipline they received at home and at school. They were also asked about the offences they were punished for; how discipline was maintained during extra-curricular activities and how problem learners were managed. These questions provided a framework within which participants shaped their accounts of their lived experiences. The relationship I enjoyed with the participants made my task an easy one. The maintenance of cordial relationship between researcher and participants is recommended by Czarniawska (2004, 49) when he defines narrative interviews as "an observation of an interaction between two people". In my research project I interacted with nine participants on an individual basis.

During the first interview each participant was asked a series of pre-selected questions. I labelled this the semi-structured preliminary interview, which, apart from anything else, established the context within which I could proceed with the narrative interviews. The actual statements the educators made, including their observations and responses, provided the context of their lived experiences. All participants received the same set of questions and the semi-structured interviews covered nine aspects relating to discipline. All questions were of a probing nature and were asked in the same sequence on each occasion. The second set of interviews was different and depended on the responses obtained from participants during the first session. This allowed me to formulate a line of inquiry for each participant for the narrative interview. The data from the second interview were analysed before I proceeded with the next interviews and this process was sustained up to the point where there were no new insights emerging from the interviews.

A set of basic rules was observed during the interviews. I avoided long explanations of the study and was careful not to deviate from its main purpose. I also used the same sequence of questions (particularly in the first interview). I did not allow telephone or other interruptions that could sidetrack the participant. All interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis as this eliminated the risk that others could suggest an answer on behalf of another participant, or agree or disagree with the answers that were provided. I kept the interview questions simple and straightforward and did not offer interpretations

on the meaning of the questions. This general pattern is the one recommended by Denzin and Lincoln (1994, 364). The structure of the sessions minimised the chances of giving any hints to educators about what I was looking for and thus reduced the risk of bias. Stories told by the participant educators were then scrutinised in relation to their current management of classroom discipline.

Participants allowed me to use a tape-recorder during the interviews. I was thus able to go back to the data at a later stage. All the interview data were transcribed and submitted to close analysis. While tape-recording and making notes, care was taken not to influence or disturb the participants in their responses.

4.4.2   Observation

Observation is the systematic process of recording the behavioural patterns of people. It can be defined as "the process by means of which researchers established a link between reality and their theoretical assumptions" (Mouton and Marias 1990, 156-157). The assumption in this study is that educators' life experiences continue to influence the manner in which they conduct classroom discipline. While conducting the study I observed how participants established a link between what happened to them in the past and their current classroom disciplinary practices. I made use of participant observation in the study, which technique McMillan and Schumacher (1997, 516) describe as one conducted to "obtain and corroborate salient observation of different perspectives recorded in field notes and summary observation". Gummensson (2000, 29-30) agrees with Johnson and Christensen (2000, 147) who affirm that "participant observation aims to reveal behavioural patterns of research participants that will enable the researcher to collect additional information about the participants".

(a) Procedure of observation
During my first visit to the schools, participants where informed that I would also observe how the school as a whole and participants in particular managed the issue of discipline. Firstly, I requested the management of the school to provide me with a

timetable; the duty allocation; the number of learners in each grade; the number of periods per day; the time for teaching and time for breaks; the time-table for extra-curricular activities; the number of educators and the experience and qualifications of each; as well as the time book, attendance records and other information that could give me an overall picture of each school.

With the above-mentioned information I knew when the school began; the period attendance by educators; the time at which learners were due back from break; and absenteeism records of both learners and educators. When I arrived at the school, I would go to the office of the principal to inform him that I was about to begin a session with one of the participants and to fill in my details in the school journal. I then went to make observations outside. The template appearing in the appendices A on page 205 and B on page 206 were used. I was permitted to move around the school providing that I did not disturb teaching and learning. Sometimes I visited the school in the morning and on other days after lunch – not to interview the participants, but to observe punctuality, time spent on certain tasks and other indicators as mentioned above.

(b) Observation at the three schools
When visiting these schools I observed the following routine before beginning with the interviews.

(i) *School environment*
Because I usually arrived early, the School Management team allowed me into the staff-room and also to move around the school. At this time I observed the cleanliness of the classrooms and the surroundings, noted the provisions made for school safety and other indicators that would help me to meet the research objectives.

(ii) *Time spent on learning and teaching*
I noted on which day and at what time assembly was due to be held; the time at which lessons began and when breaks and a lunch period were due. I also observed how quickly

both educators and learners responded to the ringing of the school bell and the time taken for the change of periods. Other indicators related to time on task were also observed.

(iii) *School resources*

I noted if the sample schools had the necessary basic resources and how any lack of these impacted on classroom discipline practices. I focused on the availability of administrative space, libraries, laboratories and if there was an adequate number of toilets. In each case I checked whether available resources were adequately maintained.

(iv) *Discipline*

While at the participating schools I observed, in general terms, how the school was managing the issue of discipline For example, the level of noise coming from classrooms was noted. I investigated what was happening in the noisy classes and checked whether there was an educator present. The rate of late-coming by both learners and educators was observed. Different types of misbehaviour and the reaction of educators towards problematic learners were also observed. The way in which learners were disciplined outside the class was also noted. I was aware of learners frequenting the staff-room, either send by an educator or to fetch some books. Because I was moving around, I was able to see if any learners had been sent out of the class because of bad behaviour.

4.4.3   Educators' lived stories

I interacted well with the participants through conversation. Just as I did in the interviews, I asked their permission to use the tape-recorder which freed me to participate actively in the discussions. This affirms the view that "conversations are marked by equality among participants and by flexibility to allow participants to establish forms and topics appropriate to the group inquiry" (Clandinin and Connelly 2000, 109). Participants then responded to questions about their experiences. I listened to hear if any educator wished to repeat what he/she said in the interviews and if so, this was permitted. I also noted exactly what the participants were saying. In relating their stories the educators were requested to focus on several key issues:

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

By way of introduction the educator was asked to relate in her/his own words what was understood about discipline and to indicate when he/she started teaching. All responses were compared with data from earlier interviews and my observations made when on school visits.

4.4.4   Field texts

Gay and Airasian (1992, 223) write that "field notes describe what the observer heard, experienced and thought about during observation". Clandinin (2000, 93) adds that "field texts, in an important sense, also say much about what is not said and not noticed", which indicates that not only what was observed during observation and heard during narrative interviews was recorded. During any interaction with participants I had my memo-pad on hand to compile my field notes. I also picked up on some participants' responses by responding with a smile and asking questions relating to the moment. In my field notes I described what I heard and saw from the nine participants and captured the essence of the evidence from the participants and the schools. If educators became emotional when asked certain questions I was able to read the non-verbal reactions of the participants from their facial expressions. The tone of their voices was also significant as an indication of their emotions as they told their stories. In other words, "both description (emic) data and reflection (etic) data will be used in recording field text but they should be separated" (Gay and Airasian 1992, 224).

Field texts helped me to involve other participants in the course of the interviews, my observation and the narration of the educators' stories. Recorded field notes also served

as data collected and were later transcribed and analysed. Before data can be analysed, it must be documented and edited. Data was documented in accordance with the three steps outlined by Flick (1998, 169): recording, transcribing and constructing. In Chapter 5 of this thesis transcripts of semi-structured interviews have been given and in Chapter 6 there are transcripts of the educators' narratives. (See appendices C,D and E).

4.5   PROCEDURE FOR DATA ANALYSIS

In analysing data, I focused on the four core questions associated with qualitative data, namely, "what I observed and noticed; why I noticed what I noticed; and how I interpreted what I noticed; how I knew that my interpretation was the right one" (Holloway and Jefferson 2000, 55). In this study I decided to make use of content and narrative analysis.

Participants in this study began by telling their stories chronologically from the time when they were children; how their parents disciplined them and for which offences; how their educators at primary and secondary school punished them. They related their bad memories and how these were still alive for them. They also told about the lessons they felt they had learnt from the discipline they received from their parents and educators. I was able to capture the meaning in their stories with comparative ease. Educators' stories appear in appendix F.

4.5.1   Data analysis

Data analysis involves categorising, synthesising and searching for patterns in the data collected (Patton 1990, 202). Similar responses gathered during interviews and the narrations of educators' lived experiences were grouped together to establish connections. In other words data collected were coded to create meaningful sequences that can be organised. I was guided by the following figure provided in Wellington (2000, 137).

**FIGURE 1: Constant comparative method and continuous method:
Refinement of categories**

1. Data divided into units of meaning

2. Units grouped/classified (assimilation and accommodation)

3. Search for similar categories (could two be merged into one)

4.Examine amorphous categories (could one be split into two)

5. Checking: (a) do the categories cover all data? (b) are they different, rather than overlapping?

6. Integrating: Looking for connections, contrast and comparison between categories

Source: Wellington 2000, 137

The table above served as guideline to analyse the data collected by means of interviews, observation, participants' lived stories and field texts. What participants said regarding the influence of their experiences on classroom discipline practices were analysed word by word, sentence by sentence and statement by statement. Data was analysed immediately after it was collected, that is, I moved back and forth during the collection/analysing processes; data collection and analysis was ongoing and data collected from the first interviews was compared with the responses of the second interviews. Repeated data and statements were grouped together and recorded appropriately. Similar information was grouped into categories and was merged again as was deemed necessary, taking due notice of connections; a thorough check was also made to see that the final categories covered all the data collected. The purpose of this entire process was to understand clearly what was said and to have a deeper understanding of participants' responses.

4.5.2 Transcribing data from narrative interviews

It has been authoritatively written that "in the narrative interview, the informant is asked to present the history of an area of interest in which the interviewee participated" (Hoyle *et al*. 2002, 19) and such interviews were the major source of data in this study. Indeed, the educators' narratives became a way of understanding their lived experiences, which ties in with Trahar's (2006) view that "narrative research focuses qualitatively on participants' experiences and meaning given by them to those experiences" (Trahar 2006, 28).

In this study sample participants were able to give meaning to their lived experiences. The notion that experiences grow from other experience and lead, in turn to further experience has helped to investigate whether educators' life experiences do in fact influence their classroom discipline practices, and whether they have learnt from these experiences. Each participant's interview was transcribed and categorised as described above, and data were then coded and grouped according to the different sub-headings. (See appendix E)

4.5.3 Grouping of the qualitative data

After the observation and interview schedule, the data that was gathered from educators lived stories in the interviews were analysed; this implied engaging in some inductive analysis. I grouped the data in order to derive meaningful patterns from data gathered, as guided by Figure 1 above. All responses to the interviews questions were copied out and typed according to the different categories; this information is provided in Chapter 5. A careful study was made of this data to identify emerging themes and facts. Groups of responses were used for coding. This grouping was informed and guided by the relevant published literature and by my understanding of the raw data. It was assumed that accurate data analysis would give in-depth insight of the influence of educators' lived experiences on classroom discipline practices and a summary of all the interviews, educators' lived stories and observations was compiled to capture the essence of my

findings. However, I did not embark upon my research with any predetermined views on content analysis. In Chapters 5 and 6 I discuss narrative and content analysis in greater detail.

4.5.4 Coding and categorising

Interpretation of data is at the core of qualitative research. In this study categorising played a major role in understanding the influence of the participants' experiences on classroom discipline practices. Data was analysed immediately after the first interviews. Categorising of the information gleaned in the first interview included comparing concepts and cases (Wellington 2000, 136) and formulating questions in preparation for the second interviews.

4.6   ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

I treated what I observed and was told with the greatest confidentiality. To enhance participant ease, I gave the respondents my assurance of the complete confidentiality of their responses by using pseudonyms. In my first meeting with each participant I requested their cooperation; and the consent of each educator was secured after giving them a full explanation of the purpose of the study. During the interviews and observations care was taken not to invade the privacy of participants. Interviewees were also permitted to use pseudonyms to disguise the names of people directly involved in their responses.

It was emphasised that participation in the research was voluntary and free and that participants could opt to withdraw from the interviews or decide not to answer a specific question when required to narrate their experiences, with the result that they were made to feel at ease during every stage of the process. Official permission for the study, was granted by the Regional Director, the school governing body, the school management team and the educators themselves. My personal experience was invaluable in this research project. With my management skills and knowledge of the schools in Nkangala Region, especially those in the circuit from which the participants were drawn, I was in a good position to conduct the study. Schools selected are currently not performing well

and are plagued by disciplinary problems. Managers of these schools always refer disciplinary cases (those involving educators and/or learners) to the circuit and these therefore come to my attention. Although policies are in place on the management of discipline, they have thus far not been implemented. In their responses educator mentioned that there was a code of conduct for learners but that it was seldom used.

Because I am well aware of the situation in these schools I was able to build a non-oppressive relationship of trust with participants and promote good collaboration. I made sure they saw me as a researcher and not as their manager. From the very early stages of the project it was also made absolutely clear to the participants that there would be no monetary compensation, but participants were accorded respect and gratitude for their partnership role in the study. Appointments for interviews were set and agreed upon well in advance.

4.7   TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

According to Wellington (2000) trustworthiness is an alternative to the traditional reliability and validity. Trustworthiness is preferred over validity and reliability because of its four main components: credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability (Wellington 2000, 201).

The trustworthiness component of this study was achieved when a saturation point was reached. After the third round of interviews, all of which provided narratives of participants lived stories, perspectives and issues on the influence of educators' life experiences on classroom discipline, these began to reappear with greater frequency. Interviewees began to repeat important points; themes and patterns recurred. This created an awareness that a level of trustworthiness had been reached.

Credibility in qualitative research is concerned with the truthfulness of the enquiry's findings.

According to Gay and Airasian (1992), in checking the quality and credibility of the study the following questions should be addressed:

> Are the data based on one's own observation or is it hearsay? Is the corroboration by others or of one's own observation? In what circumstances was an observation made and reported? How reliable are those providing data? What motivation might have influenced a participants' report? What biases might have influenced how an observation was made or reported? (Gay and Airasian 1992, 225).

In view of these guidelines and with establishing the credibility of the study in mind, the following points can be made. Data was collected using four different techniques, namely (i) Semi-structured interviews; (ii) Narrative interviews and lived stories; (iii) Observations and (iv) My own field notes. I visited the various sites personally to collect the data. Findings from interviews and observation revealed similar patterns. The follow-up narrative interviews allowed expansion to provide missing details and further exploration – and thus probed more deeply into participants' attitudes, beliefs and experience. As shown in Table 4, the profiles of the participants indicates that all nine educators have teaching experience of more that ten years and that all meet the requirements prescribed by the purposeful sampling; this implies that they are reliable participants.

Both the content and narrative analysis concurred as far as the themes that emerged from narrative interviews and narrations of participants' lived stories were concerned. Each participant's response was checked against responses of other participants. I also promoted credibility by spending adequate time with each participant – as much as 45 minutes for every interview session. Participants were interviewed more than once. Then too, a check was made as to whether there was consistency over time with regard to what I heard during interviews and what I saw during observation. Information gleaned during the second interviews also concurred with that provided in the third set of interviews. I was able to gain deeper insight into what the participants said during the first interviews when follow-up questions were asked in the second interviews. This is an indication of credibility.

The development of the initial semi-structured interview was done in collaboration with my supervisor, a senior colleague in the Nkangala Region. After the initial set of interviews, the transcribed data was presented to the supervisor who coded parts of it (independently of my own coding). The two sets of coded data were compared to ensure credibility of the codes allocated. The second round of interviews was planned in conjunction with my supervisor, who assisted me in the identification of the themes to be probed. The final set of transcribed data was again submitted to the same colleague for coding, to ensure inter-coder reliability.

Narrative and content analysis were promoted by the use of tape-recording; the recording of the interview was transcribed verbatim to analyse information collected. Rephrasing and repetition of questions during interviews was used to obtain credible information (Krefting 2003, 214-222).

The procedure that was followed is also a factor in the credibility of the study; content that had to be analysed was defined, words and themes were determined, superfluous data were eliminated, the meaning of the remaining units were determined, and participants' exact words were used as substantiation (Kerlinger 2000).

Furthermore, as I have been working in Nkangala Region for 15 years I am fully proficient in the languages used by the participants, including Isindebele and Northern Sotho. Although the interviews were conducted in English I had no difficulty in understanding any information that was imparted in either of these other locally-used languages.

The conclusions drawn have been based on my understanding of what I was able to glean from the participants' stories and I can safely say that there is every evidence of credibility in these findings. Data collected through narrative interviews, observation and educators' lived stories, using the techniques discussed above, supports the conclusion that the influence of educators' life experiences does indeed impact upon on classroom discipline practices.

4.8 TRIANGULATION AND CRYSTALLISATION

Published research findings indicate that triangulation is "the use of two methods of data collection" while crystallisation is defined as "scrutiny of both verbal and non-verbal gesture to elicit the participants meaning" (Cohen and Manion 1995, 233, 294). It is clear that in this particular study crystallisation is the more important concept of the two, because not only was the physical evidence important – so too were all the non-verbal gestures, emotional expressions and movements of the participants. All these assisted me in the conclusions I drew about the influence of the educators' life experiences. As shown above my own experiences and my exposure to education management also contributed to the analysis of participants' responses and ensured that the richness and complexity of the issue of school discipline can be enhanced by studying it from more than one standpoint.

I ensured that crystallisation was indeed achieved by following a specific procedure when analysing interview data (Cohen and Manion 1995, 292). The taped interviews were duly transcribed, noting not only the lateral statements but also the non-verbal conversation of participants. I was able to understand what the sample educators said rather than what I expected them to say. I listened to the tape-recoding many times and went through my field notes repeatedly in order to correlate the findings and provide a context for the emergence of any specific meanings, themes and patterns.

Data was analysed on an ongoing basis, after each episode of data collection. All nine participants indicated that their lived experiences contributed to the manner in which they currently discipline learners. The study took place at three schools (A, B and C) and as a participant observer I was actively involved in the activities of each. Both content and narrative analysis revealed similar tendencies at all three schools.

4. 9   CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have discussed the research method utilised, namely qualitative research. In addition, discussion has been presented on the reasons for the choice of narrative qualitative methodology, research procedure, sampling, data collection techniques, narrative interviews held, observations conducted and field work undertaken.

The design of this study project has been structured to provide the required research data to address the purpose of this study. I took time to visit the schools where the sample was taken to acquaint myself with the reality of the situation on the ground; this proved invaluable by facilitating the manner in which the research procedure was conducted.

The procedure utilised in the collection of data included a purposive selection of three schools with educators who were learners during the period 1974-1980, educators who began teaching in from 1983 to date. It is not within the scope of study to focus on all issues regarding the influence of educators' life experiences on classroom discipline practice.