

**EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF POWER RELATIONS AND DISCIPLINE IN  
RURAL SCHOOLS**

by

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## DECLARATION

I, Tarch Tabudi Tauatswala, hereby declare that the dissertation titled **Educator Perceptions of Power Relations and Discipline in Rural Schools of Bahananwa Circuit, Limpopo Province** is my own unaided work. The research report has never been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university. All the sources I used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

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Date

## PROOF OF EDITING

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22 October 2018

### TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the master's dissertation titled **Educator Perceptions of Power Relations and Discipline in Rural Schools** by **Tabudi Tarch Tauatswala** has been edited for grammar errors. It remains the responsibility of the candidate to effect the recommended changes.



Prof. Tinus Kühn

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## GLOSSARY OF TERMINOLOGY

CP	Corporal Punishment
DBE	Department of Basic Education
HODs	Heads of Department
Km	Kilometres
LRC	Learner Representative Council
RCL	Representative Council for Learners
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SASA	South African Schools Act
SGB	School Governing Body

## **ABSTRACT**

This study investigates educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. Discipline is a method of modelling character in preparation of attaining a desired goal. There is a decline of discipline in schools, which makes it difficult to attain the desired goal of education. This decline in discipline makes instruction and learning difficult in some schools and impossible in others. Some educators struggle to maintain discipline in the classroom, especially after the Government banned the use of corporal punishment in schools. Educators believe that their authority over learners has been compromised, while learners enjoy teachers' powerlessness.

This qualitative case study was guided by the following research question: "What are educator perceptions of power relationships and discipline in rural secondary schools?" Data was collected by using semi-structured interviews with five principals and ten educators from the five sampled secondary schools in Bahananwa Circuit in the rural areas of Limpopo Province.

## **Key Words**

Emotional support, social support, academic support, relationships, discipline, educators, punishment.

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## CHAPTER 1: ORIENTATION AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

### 1.1. INTRODUCTION

A school stands or falls by the effectiveness of its discipline. A disrespectful, hurtful and threatening school climate can rob learners of their education. The aim of school discipline is “to create a safe and a happy learning environment conducive to instruction and learning,” and to ensure “the safety of educators and learners,” (Kapueja, 2014:202). Schools therefore have to develop a Code of Conduct for learners. However, learner discipline has become a challenge in most rural secondary schools (Kapueja, 2014).

Corporal punishment was used as a form of discipline in South African schools prior to 1994. Section 10 of the South African Schools (Act 84 of 1996) prohibits the use of corporal punishment in schools. This is supported by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Section 10) that states that “every person has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way.” Without alternatives to corporal punishment many educators feel disempowered (Ntuli, 2012), anxious and confused (Cinognani, 2004). While educators are struggling to find “suitable alternative methods to enforce discipline in the classroom,” (Ntuli, 2014:83) respect for them is dwindling. There are educators who feel that the prohibition of corporal punishment causes a decline in discipline in the schools. Some educators believe that their power to discipline learners was lost when the use of corporal punishment was banished in schools.

In this study the researcher looks at the different types of indiscipline in schools and how stakeholders such as educators, parents and community members have an influence on the collapse of discipline. The researcher also reviews the powers that the educators have in instilling discipline in schools and the effective ways in which discipline could be maintained.

### 1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Discipline as explained by Maphosa and Shumba (2013:54), is an “important aspect of the normal running of any school.” They also suggested that “instruction and learning” can only take place effectively in “an environment characterised by

discipline,” (Maphosa & Shumba, 2013:55). Morrell (2013) points out that a lack of discipline and safety has become a challenge in schools since the Department of Education banned the use of corporal punishment. Maphosa and Shumba, (2013:55) indicated that “it is becoming increasingly difficult for educators to ensure discipline in schools.” Ntuli (2012:77) highlighted that “some educators suggest that their influence and power in the class have been weakened as a result of the banning of corporal punishment in schools.” Learner compliance has also declined. Unlike in the past, learners now question educators’ decisions and their refusal to take instructions from educators is seen as “a threat to the classroom order that is necessary for effective instruction and learning,” (Shaiknag, 2014:262). Educators purport that the Department of Education does not give them enough support in their conflicts with learners and they are therefore forced to find alternative strategies to gain learner compliance. Van Wyk (2014:163) states that “poor communication between the school and the Department as well as inadequate training of school leaders with respect to policy implementation has resulted in, among other things, inadequate discipline in schools.”

Intrigued by the questions raised by literature on the topic of research the researcher decided to investigate not only the level of indiscipline in schools, but also the perceptions that educators have of their power to discipline learners in rural secondary schools. This study would hopefully offer some insight into why discipline has declined drastically in schools and what can be done to help educators regain their power and authority in classrooms. The purpose of this study is not to generalise; rather it is to gain a better understanding of specific contextual factors that may otherwise influence discipline in rural secondary schools in Limpopo. The researcher endeavoured to find out how educators contribute to developing learners socially, morally, emotionally and psychologically; developing well behaved learners who will grow to become responsible citizens in future. The researcher further investigated the contribution that is made by the family towards learner discipline, as well as the role played by the Department of Education in assisting educators to manage discipline in schools successfully.



It is therefore the primary objective of this study to investigate educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. The researcher is aware that the results of this study might not be generalized to a larger population because the sample group was small and the participants were not chosen randomly. The outcome of this study should contribute to improving discipline in schools.

### 1.3. RATIONALE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Principals and educators are aware that corporal punishment in schools is outlawed by the Department of Education as outlined in South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) and the National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996). However, Ntuli (2012:83) suggests that “educators find themselves in a predicament due to ineffective methods or strategies of disciplining learners provided by the Department of Education.” Portela and Pells (2015:12) highlighted that “some educators feel that alternative disciplinary measures to corporal punishment are not effective while others are not even aware that there are alternatives to corporal punishment provided for them to employ.” Educators feel disempowered and that their authority over learners is compromised. This is because the Department of Education provides “minimal and sporadic training on alternatives to corporal punishment,” as proposed by Ntuli (2012:77). The study therefore aims to investigate educators’ perceptions of power and discipline in secondary schools, as well as to find out what educators do or do not do to cause a decline in discipline in schools.

### 1.4. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

#### 1.4.1. Aim

The aim of the research is to explore educator perceptions of power relation and discipline in rural secondary schools of Bahananwa Circuit in Limpopo Province.

#### 1.4.2. Objectives

The study was guided by the following objectives:

- (a) To understand challenges faced by principals and educators in enhancing learner discipline in schools in Bahananwa Circuit.
- (b) To determine the relationship between the banning of corporal punishment and the decline in learner discipline in schools.

- (c) To understand educators' attitude towards applying alternatives to corporal punishment.
- (d) To determine how educators describe their role as providers of social, emotional and academic support to learners.
- (e) To explore how educators describe their relationship with learners in schools.
- (f) To make recommendations on the way forward.

## 1.5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions emanated from the statement of the problem presented above:

- What are the educators' perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools?

This study is guided by the following secondary research questions:

- How do educators describe their role as providers of emotional support to learners?
- How do educators describe their role as providers of social support to learners?
- How do educators describe their role as providers of academic support to learners?
- What challenges do educators experience in their relationship with learners?
- How do educators describe their relationship with learners in rural secondary schools?

## 1.6. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research is framed by the educator-learner relationship theory proposed by Hagenauers, Hascher and Volet (2015) who suggest that the interpersonal relationship formed between an educator and a learner is the strongest predictor of the educator's joy (positive relation) or anxiety and discomfort (negative relation). The educator's interpretation of situations and the emotion he or she attaches to the situation determine the type of action he or she is likely to take in response to the situation. According to Hagenauer *et al.* (2015) there is an interpersonal relationship that exists between an educator and a learner. The manner in which the relationship is structured determines the type of atmosphere that is created in a school. The

relationship must be characterised by care and support. The theory suggests that educators have different teaching goals and that conflict arises when learners' behaviours make educators fail to reach those goals. The theory argues that negative emotions of educators, such as anger and frustration, are due to learners' misbehaviour and classroom indiscipline. Indiscipline is associated with causing stress to the educators (Louis, Mayrowetz, Smylie & Murphy, 2009). Ideally learners should regard educators as caring and supportive in the relationship. A good educator-learner relationship ensures that learners behave well because they realise the importance of good behaviour and not because of the fear of what the educator will do if they do not (Louis *et al.*, 2009).

The educator-learner relationship, as explained by Louis *et al.* (2009) is characterised by caring as the main theme. Louis *et al.* (2009:99) suggest that "caring and caring leadership provide the foundation for a school community." They explain caring as a "process of helping another person" – in this context a learner – "grow in his/her own right and not to be bound by the interests and well-being of the educator but by those of him/herself," (Louis *et al.*, 2009:99). According to Louis *et al.* (2009:100) caring is "intended and expressed by the educator and perceived and received by the learner." Accordingly, caring promotes development, well-being and the welfare of learners, in the same way as it addresses their particular needs. It is therefore imperative that educators as caregivers should address the immediate needs of the learners as the ones cared for. A caring educator is characterised by attentiveness, motivational displacement (putting the needs of the learner ahead of his/her own), openness, transparency and genuineness (Louis *et al.*, 2009).

An educator-learner relationship should be free from any form of abuse, intimidation and free from the use of corporal punishment (Louis *et al.*, 2009). Educators need to create a deeper and a longer lasting relationship that gives them the opportunity to know and be attentive to learner needs. A caring educator creates an enabling condition for a learner to trust and to see him or her as dependable (Louis *et al.*, 2009). An educator who uses corporal punishment is not seen by learners as caring and dependable; instead learners develop fear and distrust of such an educator. According to this educator-learner relationship theory educators who continue using corporal

punishment “lack basic regard for the dignity of their learners,” as outlined by Morrell (2010:141).

The nature of the educator-learner relationship “sets the stage for caring and the cultivation of both academic support and discipline in the classroom,” (Louis *et al.*, 2009:101). When a caring relationship does not exist learners “may be placed in a compromised position with regard to teaching and discipline,” (Lofkvist, 2015:33). Deteriorating and negative relationships are not good to learner outcomes and to their development. The educator-learner relationship should be characterised by emotional support, social support and academic support (Louis *et al.*, 2009). Lofkvist (2015:34) suggests that the relationship “saves learners from events and forces that may damage them and threaten their success in school.” Therefore an educator-learner relationship that is characterised by conflict and mistrust may have a deleterious effect on how the learner learns.

This theory helped the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the relationships between educators and learners, and how educators perceive their power relationships and discipline. It further helped the researcher find out how educators structure their relationship with learners to ensure a positive relation among themselves (Hagenauers *et al.*, 2015). This is necessary because a relationship between an educator and a learner that is characterised by love, care, respect and trust eliminates to a large extent emotions of anxiety and creates a feeling of joy, trust and commitment in both parties (Lofkvist, 2015). Under such conditions educators are less likely to revert or resort to the use of corporal punishment to discipline learners. Hagenauer *et al.* (2015) indicate that the emotional response of an educator depends on his/her evaluation of a situation at hand, and that an educator’s negative emotions are frequently related to learners’ misbehaviour or lack of classroom discipline, which, if not viewed from a positive relational perspective, can lead to the use of inappropriate disciplinary measures.

## 1.7. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 1.7.1. Research Paradigm

Taylor and Luitel (210:83) define a paradigm as “a comprehensive belief system, world view, or framework that guides research in a field.” They further explain a paradigm as

“a loose collection of logically related assumptions, concepts or propositions that orient thinking and research,” (Taylor & Luitel, 2010:84). There are several major paradigms that govern inquiries into the policies and practices in education. This study uses an interpretive paradigm (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2014) where the main purpose is to investigate educators’ perceptions of power relationships and discipline in rural secondary schools. The relevance of this paradigm stems from its ontological assumption that states that social reality may be interpreted differently from one researcher to another. Creswell (2014) suggests that the researcher who uses this paradigm seeks to understand rather than explain behaviour.

### 1.7.2. Research Approach

The researcher chose a qualitative research for this study. This approach allows the researcher to “focus on the subjective views and experiences of the participants” when finding answers to his research questions (Hancock, Ockleford & Windridge, 2007:137). It is an appropriate approach when one seeks to “discover and understand a phenomenon, a process or the perspective of people involved,” (Hancock et al., 2007:137). The researcher used a qualitative approach because his aim was “to understand human phenomena and to investigate the meaning that people give to events they experience,” (Creswell, 2014:89). The approach gives the researcher a detailed description of how educators perceive power relationships and discipline in rural secondary schools. This method enabled the researcher to collect data on the perceptions and experiences of principals and educators teaching in the rural areas of Bahananwa Circuit in Limpopo Province.

### 1.7.3. Research Design

McMillian and Schumacher (2010) describe research design as a procedure for conducting the study, which includes the general plan of the project. The design is structured in a manner that will answer the research question and sub-questions, thereby revealing how principals and educators relate to learners and how these relationships impact on discipline in schools.

For this study, the researcher used an interpretative case study as his research design. Yin (2009:66) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between

phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used". Similarly, Dupper and Dingus (2008:244) define a case study as "a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organisations or groups of organisations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and process involved in the phenomenon under study".

The case study is relevant to this study because the examination of data in the case study is conducted within a natural setting, that is, "within the situation where the activity takes place," (Yin, 2009:79). Case study is important because the detailed qualitative accounts produced in case studies help the researcher to explain "the complexities of a real-life situation that may not be captured through experimental or survey research," (Dupper, *et al.*, 2008:246). Case study mainly focuses on one instance or on a specific case and therefore provides an in-depth study of the case. The main focus of the case study is therefore on relationship and processes (Yin, 2009).

#### 1.7.4. Data Collection

The strategies used to collect data in qualitative research are flexible and may emerge during the course of the research (Kitto, Chesters, & Girbich, 2008). For the purpose of this research, the researcher used in-depth interviews as the primary data collection strategy. This study relied mainly on interviews as a strategy for collecting data. Yin (2009) describes three types of research interview, namely structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. In the case of a structured interview, the researcher "asks a list of predetermined questions, with little or no variation and with no scope for follow-up questions to responses that warrant further elaboration," (Yin, 2009:80). Unstructured interviews, as described by Yin (2009:80) "do not reflect any preconceived theories or ideas and are performed with little or no organization." Yin (2009:80) further explained that semi-structured interviews "consist of several key questions that help to define the areas to be explored, but also allow the interviewer or interviewee to diverge in order to pursue an idea or response in more detail."

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviewing, according to MacMillan and Schumacher (2010), is the best design when the researcher is conducting several follow-up interviews to collect

data. The researcher uses this interview format in order to provide participants with “some guidance on what to talk about,” (Macmillian & Schumacher, 2010:114). According to Maphosa and Shumba (2010:142) “the flexibility of the semi-structured approach allows for the discovery or elaboration of information that is important to participants that may not have been thought of previously as pertinent by the research team.” Maphosa and Shumba (2010:143) further suggest that the semi-structured strategy allows the researcher to “discover how individuals think and feel about a topic and why they hold certain opinions, through discussions.” The strategy is also important in that ambiguities can be clarified and incomplete answers are followed up during the interview (MacMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

### 1.7.5. Participants and Sampling

#### 1.7.5.1. Research Site

The study was conducted in Bahananwa Circuit that falls in the Capricorn District. The circuit is in a rural area of Limpopo Province. The circuit was specifically sampled as it has many reported cases of learners having discipline problems. The circuit was also convenient to the researcher as the school where he is working is in the circuit. The information received from the circuit office is that at least four cases of physical abuse by educators are reported on daily basis. The higher percentage of reported cases received by the circuit is from secondary schools, hence the selection of secondary schools as the site for the study.

#### 1.7.5.2. Research Participants

Bahananwa Circuit, which is in rural area of Limpopo Province, comprises 17 secondary schools. Educators from five secondary schools from this circuit were used as case study for this investigation. The researcher applied purposive sampling to select the five schools based on their convenient location near to his own school. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2010:119) a sample is “a group of subjects or participants from whom the data is collected.” In qualitative research the researcher “purposefully select participants or sites that will best help him understand the problem and the research question,” (Creswell, 2014:178). The specific participants consisted of three educators from each school, selected on the basis of their length of service and experience – one principal, one educator with less than five years teaching

experience, and one educator with more than 10 years teaching experience. Personal experience has revealed that younger educators are more likely to experience difficulties in disciplining learners than older educators. It was in the interest of this research to find out how these educators model their relationships with learners and how they perceive their power to discipline learners with whom they interact.

#### 1.7.5.3. Sampling

Qualitative research approach is regarded to be generally based on non-probability or purposeful (purposive) sampling, which has also been adopted in this study. Participants were selected based on “some defining characteristics that made them the holder of the data needed for the study,” (Morrel, 2013:79). The study sampled principals and educators as they are relevant subjects because the study is concerned with educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in schools. This statement is in line with McMillan and Schumacher (2010:326) who state that a researcher searches for “information-rich key informants, groups, places or events to study; and these samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena the researcher is investigating.” Non-probability sampling method was considered by the researcher because according to North, K (2015:74) the method could help the researcher to “understand something about the cases without needing to generalise to all such cases.” The researcher is aware that in non-probability sampling, not everyone has “an equal chance to participate in the study,” as explained by Morrel (2013:80).

#### 1.7.6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data analysis in qualitative research is an on-going, emerging and non-linear process that involves analysing, categorising, synthesising, identifying key themes and patterns and summarising data (Morrel, 2013). Data analysis refers to “the identification, examination and interpretation of patterns and themes in text-based data, and how the existing themes and patterns help answer the research question” (Creswell, 2014:149). According to Creswell (2014:151), “qualitative data analysis takes place throughout the data collection process.” As such, during the process of collecting data, the researcher continuously reflected on impressions, relationships and connections in the data collected.



Several data analysis strategies are used in qualitative research (Eggleton, 2010). For the purpose of this study the researcher used thematic analysis to analyse the data collected. Thematic analysis is an intensive filtering and a revealing process (Creswell, 2014). Creswell (2014:151) suggested that thematic analysis could help the researcher to “make sense of the data in terms of the participants’ definitions of their perceptions, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities.” The researcher identified and listed the categories and reduced them into themes (Creswell, 2014). This was done “during and after the process of data collection because data analysis involves breaking up data into manageable themes, trends and relationships,” as described by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:109). According to McMillian and Schumacher (2010:110), data analysis in qualitative research is “an inductive process of organising data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among those categories.” Thematic analysis, as described by Eggleton (2010:144) is “not grounded in any particular theoretical framework and can therefore be applied across a wide range of qualitative research approaches, making it flexible.”

#### 1.7.7. Trustworthiness and Credibility

As described by Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2007:193) trustworthiness in research refers to “the demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound, and also when the argument made based on the results is strong.” Patton (2009) suggests that the researcher can increase the trustworthiness of a qualitative study by aiming at maintaining a very high level of credibility and objectivity throughout the study. According to Kitto, Chester and Girbich (2008) qualitative research is concerned with measuring the magnitude, size or extent of a phenomenon. Kitto *et al.* (2008) advise that data collection in a qualitative approach is done by formal rules or procedures and verification; prediction and empirical generalisation are the desired outcomes. Questions of trustworthiness are addressed by how well the study does what it is designed to do.

Trustworthiness in qualitative research should be understood from the context of the researcher’s ontological point of view (Creswell, 2014). In a qualitative approach, the researcher “assumes that reality is constructed, multidimensional and ever-changing; there is no such a thing as a single, immutable reality waiting to be measured,”

(Hancock *et al.*, 2007:193). In a qualitative approach the researcher increases the trustworthiness of the study by maintaining a high level of credibility and objectivity throughout the study.

The researcher employed the following strategies to strengthen internal validity of the study (Hancock *et al.*, 2007):

#### 1.7.7.1. Member Checking

The researcher used member checking as a technique that helped him improve the accuracy, credibility and transferability of the study (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). According to this strategy the researcher took back the data collected from the study participants and submitted the transcript to the people from which data was derived and asked if the interpretations were plausible. Member checking helped to confirm accuracy of the data and ensured stability in the research.

#### 1.7.7.2. Consistency and Dependability

Reliability is concerned with the question of the extent to which one's findings will be found again in the investigation if it is to be repeated (Hancock *et al.*, 2007). Hancock *et al.* (2007:200) suggest that "the more times the findings of a study can be replicated, the more stable or reliable the phenomenon is thought to be." Therefore, reliability is achieved if the research yields the same results when repeated by different researchers. The researcher was aware that reliability in social sciences is problematic because human behaviour is not the same as studying inanimate matter. Human behaviour is never static (Hancock *et al.*, 2007). The researcher in this study therefore strived for consistency and dependability rather than reliability.

### 1.8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is the responsibility of every researcher to ensure that the research he or she planned is ethically accountable and conforms to acceptable norms and values. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:129) defines ethics as "a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules for the most correct conduct towards experimental behavioural expectations". The researcher had to conduct his research in an ethic of respect for all participants involved in the study and continuously upheld ethical principles.

Before conducting the research, the researcher obtained approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria. The researcher obtained formal permission from the Limpopo Department of Basic Education as well as from the management of the sampled schools.

Furthermore, the researcher obtained informed consent from each participant. He assured participants that he would apply the principle of autonomy and confidentiality in conducting this research. The safety of the respondents and their right to privacy were also considered (De Vos *et al.*, 2011).

The researcher ensured that “the participants understood the purpose and the importance of the research,” (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:141). Participants were advised to sign the voluntary consent form. The researcher informed the participants about “their right to withdraw consent at any point without any penalty,” (De Vos *et al.*, 2011:141). Finally, the researcher ensured that participants had pre-publication access to the report before it was finalised. The five sampled schools were offered anonymity during the process of conducting the research. The researcher protected the participants by not revealing their identity.

## 1.9. STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

To answer critical questions emanating from the research problem, this study is divided into the following chapters:

### **Chapter 1: General Background and Orientation**

The chapter introduces the reader to a problem under investigation in terms of its nature and scope, the background to the problem, the procedure followed in investigating the problem and the assumptions that informed the collection and interpretation of the data. The chapter sets the parameters of the study.

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The chapter provides a review of literature on educators’ perceptions of power and discipline in schools. It outlines the role played by parents, peers, educators and society regarding learner indiscipline, and what educators and the Department should

do to restore discipline in schools. These insights were later used as a basis for the interpretation of data collected from the participants.

### **Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology**

This chapter outlines the research methodology that the researcher used to obtain data from respondents about educators' perceptions of power and discipline in rural secondary schools in Limpopo Province. It describes the research design, which includes the acquisition of permission from the Department of Education to conduct research, the process followed in the selection of respondents, the research instrument used, the administration of the interviews, processing of data and ethical considerations.

### **Chapter 4: Presentation of Research Findings**

The chapter outlines the case study used to obtain information on the problem of discipline in Bahananwa Circuit in Limpopo Province. The researcher probes how educators emotionally, socially and academically support learners to develop self-discipline and self-control. The chapter also probed how educators model their relationships with learners in selected schools and how those relationships influence educators' perceptions of discipline in schools.

### **Chapter 5: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusions**

This chapter presents the insight gained from the investigation as a whole, relating it to my theoretical position. It provides a summary of the study, together with conclusions and recommendations derived from it. The empirical research conducted in Chapter 3 and the data analysis that follows in Chapter 4 are integrated in order to present the conclusion and recommendations. The chapter puts forward tentative suggestions for approaches that could be followed in addressing the problem of discipline in schools.

#### **1.10. SUMMARY**

In this chapter the researcher clarifies the aims and objectives of his investigation, which explores educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. The chapter outlines the researcher's theoretical framework and

provides a brief description of the research design and methodology as well as the ethical considerations of the study.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Morrel (2011) discipline has become a serious concern in most school in the country. Morrel (2011:231) points out that “understanding and managing learner behaviour has become a challenge for schools in South Africa.” Uzzochina (2015:165) suggests that “educators have an important responsibility to facilitate a climate for the development of positive learner behaviour.” Discipline is an important requirement for successful instruction and learning in schools (Nxumalo, 2013). Traditional techniques of managing discipline in schools no longer serve the purpose of solving modern learner behavioural problems. In many cases instruction and learning have become difficult in some schools and even impossible in others because educators do not know how to administer discipline (Kapueja, 2014). It is difficult, if not impossible, for most learners to focus on learning when they have to deal with disrespect, bullying, harassment, public humiliation, hate speech, threats or violence (Kapueja, 2014) . This decline in discipline is happening not only in South African schools; it is a worldwide phenomenon. Some educators suggest that since corporal punishment was outlawed, their power for maintaining discipline has been diminished (Portella, 2015). The document introduced by the Department of Education titled “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment” does not seem to be effective in maintaining discipline in schools.

As proposed by Bush (2007:317) “education should influence the behaviour of those experiencing it.” Bush (2007:318) indicates that education is in turn “influenced by physical, emotional, intellectual, psychological, social and economic changes occurring in the learner’s environment.” Schools should therefore be characterised by a climate of orderliness which can be “achieved and maintained through enforcing discipline in schools,” as proposed by Mestry and Khumalo (2012:138). De Wet (2009:255) proposes that schools “have an important task to teach learners to differentiate between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.” According to Garrison (2010:73) schools must “create opportunity for the development of insight and learning.” It is therefore evident that “in a positive school situation, breaking of school rules is viewed as not only a negative action towards the school, but also a negative

action towards fellow learners and teachers and the disruption of mutual relationships,” as suggested by Ntuli (2012:69). It is therefore important to note that “in a positive school climate, school rules are instrumental to the whole development of the learner, (Ntuli, 2012:69).

## 2.2. DISCIPLINE VERSUS PUNISHMENT

Jones and Jones (2010:74) define discipline as “an orderly system that creates the conditions in which serious learning takes place and that allows for the objectives of the school to be achieved”. Jones and Jones’ definition is confirmed by Garrison (2010:130) who defines discipline as “a process of subordinating immediate wishes, desires, impulses and interests for the sake of more effective and dependable action.” Therefore discipline, as explained by Uzzochina (2015:369) ensures that “an individual develops orderly conduct, self-control as well as self-direction.” Mphale, Moletsane and Mabalani (2015) suggest that “teaching in schools goes beyond gathering learners for learning only,” but also relates to “addressing behavioural problems of the learners.” Teaching goes hand in hand with discipline. According to Bush (2007:392) “discipline is an important part of the day-to-day classroom management.” Bush (2007:394) further suggests that discipline is “closely bound to instruction and learning,” and that “good discipline can be ensured through good management and teaching skills.” Clarke (2011:127) concurs with Bush but further suggest that “discipline binds individuals together in order to enable them to work, live and harmoniously interact with one another beneficially.” Discipline as a concept should not be associated with pain or fear because discipline is not punishment (Clarke, 2011). Discipline should therefore be viewed as a system of guiding the learner to make reasonable decisions. Punishment on the other hand can be explained as “an act of causing pain, suffering or loss that serves as retribution when unpleasant consequences follow socially unacceptable behaviour,” (Murray, Waas & Murray, 2010:562). Punishment in schools should not be aimed at attacking learners because learners might respond with anger, resentment and a desire to strike back (Nxumalo, 2013).

In the school situation the aim of discipline is to guide and direct learners towards self-discipline. School-discipline as explained by Eggleton (2010:21) refers to “a situation

in which learners are taught respect for school authority, obedience to school rules and regulations as well as the maintenance of established standard behaviour.” This view is supported by Murray *et al.* (2010:566) who define school discipline as “school policies and actions taken by the school personnel to prevent learners from displaying unwanted behaviour, primarily focusing on school conduct, codes and security method, suspensions from school, corporal punishment and teachers’ methods of managing learner action in class.” In a way school discipline should mould learners to develop self-discipline. Mouton, Louw and Strydom (2013:37) explain self-discipline as “a willingness to accept laid down rules and regulations as well as the ability to act in accordance with societal expectations.”

A learner is believed to have self-discipline when he or she can set a goal for him-/herself and then make sacrifices and efforts that are necessary to obtain it. The goal of disciplining learner should according to Mouton *et al.* (2013:39), “be character development in the form of social consciousness.” This implies that a self-disciplined learner should be “able to control his/her inner riotous tendencies, which are forces that drive disobedience and disorderly conduct,” (Mouton *et al.*, 2013:40). Based on the above explanation, we can assume that discipline differs from punishment in the sense “that punishment is accompanied by force, pain and frustration, while discipline implies training and helping the learner to reach the required outcomes, set boundaries for behaviour and practise self-control,” (Shaiknag, 2014:440).

Shaiknag (2014:441) purports that “discipline is important for the safety and physical wellbeing of the learner as well as for his or her social, emotional and cognitive development.” Shaiknag (2014:442) further suggests that “when all discipline options have been exhausted and favourable behaviour does not occur, punishment becomes the final resort.” Contrary to punishment, discipline is applied with love and care. Discipline develops in learners a sense of “responsibility, independence and maturity in learners,” as suggested by Edward (2008:126). As described by Edward (2008:148) punishment “does not necessarily change behaviour,” instead punishment makes “the learner to be more careful not to be caught out again.” Edward (2008:127) purports that “punishment is the expression of power within a system of controlling through fear while discipline is aimed at preparing the learner for his/her future life situation.



Blandford (2008) suggests that discipline in the school is the function of administration. Discipline depends on the principal's administration and his/her supervisory and leadership style. Discipline in schools, as explained by Blandford (2008:74) is "the readiness or ability of learners to respect authority, and obey school rules and regulations to maintain a high standard of behaviour necessary for the smooth running of the teaching and learning process". Where rules are observed, there is order, discipline and an environment conducive to learning (Blandford, 2008). Blandford further states that rules also help to enhance learners' self-esteem and encourage the individual learner to recognise and respect the rights of others. We can therefore deduce from Blandford's explanation that discipline teaches learners about self-control and responsibility, and it provides a safe school environment where learners feel free, protected, happy and safe. Clarke (2011) states that discipline establishes a positive educator-learner relationship. Kapueja (2014:129) suggests that "successful schools are those where educator-learner relationships have the potential of creating an environment conducive to learning in the classroom."

### 2.3. TYPES OF DISCIPLINE PROBLEM

School discipline as defined by Mphale *et al.* (2015:67) is "the regulation of learners and maintenance of order in schools." Indiscipline results when learners fail to observe rules laid down by authority. According to Straus (2010:105) the banning of corporal punishment in South African schools in 1996 (SASA 84 of 1996) led to "educators experiencing all kinds of disciplinary problems in schools." Literature reveals that learner indiscipline differs from one school to another and from one country to the next (Portella, 2015). It ranges from light indiscipline, such as making noise in the classroom, to serious forms of misconduct, such as drug abuse and rape.

Late coming can become a serious indiscipline if it is not curbed at an early stage (Steward, 2014). Schools should have policies in place to control late coming. In some schools educators are faced with learners who fail to do homework and those who are disruptive in classes. Disruptions in classrooms according to Nxumalo (2013) might be caused by learners who (1) mumble, (2) shout answers without being asked to, (3) walk around in class without educators' permission, and (4) throw objects around. According to Mouton *et al.* (2013), educators also complain of learners who abuse

alcohol and drugs in schools, which is an obvious example of unacceptable behaviour. Problems such as aggression, verbal abuse, rough play, fights, vandalism, theft and bullying are reported to be occurring in secondary schools in the United States (Edwards, 2008).

Studies suggest that maintaining discipline in Australian schools is regarded to be a major source of considerable stress to educators and consequently a major cause of resignation from the profession (Steward, 2014). This is usually the case where learners disrespect other learners or educators. It is reported that in Lesotho educators experience problems of learners carrying weapons to school (De Wet, 2009). Other learners in Lesotho use compasses, stones, pens, sticks and knives to injure their opponents. Straus (2010) indicates that in Kenya, “learners’ behavioural problems constitute barriers to learning, which makes schools unsafe and impacts negatively on learning and the overall wellbeing of learners and educators.”

According to Kapueja (2014:69) “when supervision is absent, it leads to a lack of communication that further leads to the indiscipline of learners in schools.” It is imperative for learners to observe rules and regulations so that order, discipline and an environment conducive to learning may be created (Bladford, 2008). Kapueja (2014:70) states that learners’ disciplinary problems in South Africa “range from the rejection of reasoning to late coming , truancy, noisiness, physical violence, theft, threats, verbal abuse, lack of concentration, criminality, gangsterism, rape, constant violation of the school’s code of conduct and substance abuse.” Kapueja (2014:71) also identified other examples of indiscipline in South African schools such as “dress code violation, disrespect for constituted authority, fighting, the use of profane language, destruction of school property, thieving, leaving the school compound unpermitted and acts of insubordination.” Dupper and Dingus (2008:59) comment: “Severe indiscipline has been experienced in South African secondary schools, where schools have evolved into battlegrounds where dangerous weapons like guns lie side by side with pens and notebooks in learners’ schoolbags”. Large classes are also likely to create an environment for improper behaviour. It is difficult to pay individual attention to individual learners in a large class; consequently effective discipline cannot be exercised (Nxumalo, 2013).

Nxumalo (2013) describes disrespect for educators as a type of indiscipline that is experienced in secondary schools in KwaZulu Natal. Poor conduct of learners includes swearing at educators, using foul language in the presence of teachers, mocking and calling educators names, defying educators' instructions and verbal confrontation with educators. With all these types of indiscipline explained, one is challenged to find out how educators can structure their relationship with learners in such a manner that their perception of power and discipline can be realised in schools. This is a concern and it is the reason for this study.

## 2.4. CAUSES OF INDISCIPLINE AND BEHAVIOURAL PROBLEMS

There are several factors that influence the manner in which learners behave themselves in schools. How a learner grew up at home, how he relates to his educators and peers at school, socio-political and economic factors and the type of role models she/he associates her-/himself with, influence behaviour at school. Learners who grow up in a supportive and caring environment tend to behave well at school and accept discipline.

### 2.4.1. Home

Van Wyk (2014:199) is of the opinion that the family "forms the arena of the child's first encounter with rules and regulations of discipline and obedience" and that "if the child does not grasp and act upon these principles, he or she will struggle to survive in a society with order". The type of a family in which a child grows up will later influence the manner in which the child responds to discipline at school. Children who grow up in families that are characterised by conflict are likely to become prone to discipline problems (Straus, 2010). Similarly, children who are exposed to high poverty levels develop stress and tension and may not be disciplined. Children who grow up in a neighbourhood that is characterised by violence and intimidations may have a behavioural problems as they grow older. Straus (2010:81) purports that at times indiscipline may occur if a child is "unable to cope with the physical and emotional changes of adolescence."

Stewart (2014) points out that death in a family or a divorce can impact negatively on learner discipline. A child who is a victim of sexual abuse, or who has been exposed

to acts of sexual abuse and drug abuse, may also have disciplinary problems as a learner. According to Louis *et al.* (2009:170), parents who “fail to teach their children discipline at home,” increase the possibility of the children “being problems to the school authority.” School discipline can also be affected by factors such as “single parenthood, the negative influence of television, and differences in value systems between the home and the school,” as explained by Murray *et al.* (2010:570). Parents need to be careful how they reprimand their children. Bryan and Feed (2012:77) suggest that “parents who are harsh, rejecting and neglecting have children at higher risk of engaging in aggressive and violent behaviour.” Bryan and Freed (2012:78) found out that “learners who were physically punished in childhood manifested several long-term effects,” which included “having fewer friends and a greater frequency of negative social interactions, as well as elevated levels of depression and anxiety.” Bryan and Freed (2012) state that children who are products of maltreatment and abuse at home during childhood are at high risk of becoming violent at school. Literature reveals that a parenting style in which parents put more emphasis on physical discipline is directly related to aggression in learners later at school. Such learners have less social competence with their peers, developing an external rather than an internal moral orientation, and show less motivation for intellectual achievement relative to learners whose parents are authoritative (Alsaif, 2015). Alsaif (2015:62) indicates that sometimes “parents shelve their primary responsibility of raising morally sound offspring, expecting the educators to make up for their own shortcomings in child raising.” Parents who spend little time at home create a situation where children may seek unsuitable social experiences elsewhere.

Parents are supposed to be partners in their children’s schools, and must share responsibility and accountability with principals (Van Wyk, 2014). This suggests that children whose parents participate in school activities are better behaved and are more eager to learn.

#### 2.4.2. School

Children spend most of their quality time at school. The school therefore has a major role to play in developing the child who should become physically, psychologically, emotionally and socially fit in the society as he grows (Morrel, 2011). This role can be

achieved through meaningful interaction between the child as a learner and the educators at school. According to Portella, (2015) a developing child still has much to learn to add meaning to his or her life. A learner who experiences difficulty in coping with the physical and emotional changes of the school environment may become difficult to discipline. Such a learner may develop a feeling of alienation and isolation (Van Wyk, 2014).

Educators who go to class unprepared may also contribute to learner indiscipline. Learners lose focus when they are faced with an educator who is not sure of his/her subject matter (Gregan-Kaylor, 2010). The same applies if an educator develops negative attitude to learners. Learners become demoralised and become unwilling to learn from the educator. Such learners may become disruptive and unruly in the presence of the educator.

Hagenauers, Hascher and Volet (2015:392) are of the opinion that “learners who experience bullying and intimidation either within the school or outside” may develop disciplinary problems. Some learners become undisciplined because they are victims of sexual abuse, especially if it is done in the school by the educators. Learners lose trust of such educators and therefore do no longer deduct meaning from what those educators teach them, (Hagenauers *et al.*, 2015). Classes that are left unattended by educators may also lead to disruption of the whole school. Educators must honour the periods by going to class and teaching the learners meaningfully. Educators complain of learners who abuse alcohol and drugs, which is an obvious sign of unacceptable behaviour (Eggleton, 2010). Educators should also avoid creating intimate relationships with learners as this may make them reluctant to discipline those learners even when those learners fail to observe the stipulated rules of the school. Overcrowded classes, as suggested by Eggleton (2010), also make it practically impossible for educators to monitor learners’ behaviour and deal with discipline problems effectively. Individual attention becomes a problem in big classes. Educators should be consistent in the application of rules and regulations (Eggleton, 2010). They must also be consistent in administering discipline. Fairness increases credibility and the leadership skills of educators.

Educators should be careful when educating learners. In order not to promote poor discipline among learners, educators should understand the learning conditions of the learners. Murray, *et al.* (2010) confirm that knowledge of learners' background will assist educators in knowing the type of help they could give to such learners in order to help them cope with discipline. Educators should not require learners to learn information which is not meaningful to them (Edwards, 2008). Edwards adds that educators should encourage independent thinking in learners. They should not establish rigid conditions for learners to meet lest the learners feel unaccepted. Educators should also guard against using disciplinary procedures that promote misbehaviour (Edwards, 2008). Edwards (2008:147) is of the opinion that educators "must exercise their power and authority in the best interest of the learner with emphasis on the development of self-discipline, independence and maturity." Edwards (2008:148) further suggests that "discipline should, at all times, be firm, consistent and positive." When supervision is absent, it leads to poor communication that further leads to poor discipline among learners in a school. According to Arcus (2009), it is not advisable for an educator to send a learner out of class as a form of punishment for misbehaviour because as an educator you may not be able to monitor what the learner is doing during the time when he/she is sent out.

Edwards (2008:150) indicates that there are educators who "still use corporal punishment as a means to foster discipline among learners in South African schools." Corporal punishment is applied by "hitting learners with the hand or with a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc.," (Edwards, 2008:151). Alsaif (2015:97) adds that corporal punishment can also involve "kicking, shaking or throwing objects at learners, scratching, pinching and burning, scolding or forced ingestion. Alsaif (2015) points out that learners who are victims of corporal punishment in schools develop symptoms such as poor academic performance and low class participation. Such learners may avoid school or drop out for fear of getting beaten by educators. They may also have declining self-worth or self-esteem and may develop fear of teachers and school (Downs, 2015). Educators should also guard against levelling unnecessary criticism against learners. Downs (2015) suggests that when commenting on learners' work educators should remember to praise the learners, motivate and give them incentives when these are due.

### 2.4.3. Peers and community

Learners do not live in isolation but are part of a broader community. As a social being a learner has to have friends and peers. Arcus (2009:149) states that problematic behaviour that is displayed by adolescents can usually be traced to peer influence because the peer group demands “blind conformity to norms as part of the in-group or the learner is shoved towards the out-group”. A learner may develop improper behaviour if he or she is under peer pressure to rebel against school authorities. Acceptance by the peer group is very important and therefore a rejected learner may display improper behaviour (Nxumalo, 2013). Mouton *et al.* (2013), state that bullies and intimidations at school can also negatively influence the behaviour of learners. Another cause of disciplinary problems in schools may be poor examples set by some heroes and leaders in the community as explained by Mouton *et al.* (2013). Gregan-Kaylor (2010) comments that learners usually choose “heroes” who provide poor role models, who also abuse codes of practice. Prominent members of the community such as politicians, business people and church leaders engaging in unethical conduct may also negatively influence the behaviour of learners at school. Adults should be careful of how they conduct themselves in the presence of learners because learners learn by imitating.

## 2.5. HISTORY OF DISCIPLINE AND THE USE OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Studies reveal that during the colonial period learner discipline was strict and harsh. According to Downs (2015:39) there was “a general consensus then that children were possessed by the devil and that the only way for the devil to leave was by using physical force on the child.” Corporal punishment was used as a means to enforce discipline. Corporal punishment is defined by Dupper and Dingus (2008:246) as “the infliction of pain by a teacher or other educational official upon the body of a learner as a penalty for doing something that has been disapproved of by the punisher.” According to Dupper and Dingus (2008:247) corporal punishment was applied to children for the following three reasons: (1) to produce people that would conform to accepted social norms; (2) to beat out the obstinacy that was viewed as a syndrome of original sin; (3) to ensure that learning occurred.

The saying “spare the rod and spoil the child” was highly adhered to during the Sumerian period. Portella (2015) comments that Sumerians believed in the excessive use of discipline whereby corporal punishment was the order of the day. Corporal punishment was used to enforce absolute obedience to the authority of the elders and the Law of God.

Morrel (2011) mentions that in South Africa corporal punishment was initially used in white single-sex boys’ schools. Girls were excluded from the practice (Morrel, 2011). When blacks were first introduced to schooling through Bantu Education in 1955, black boys and girls were equally exposed to “the use of corporal punishment in South African schools,” (Shaiknag, 2014:439). In the past two decades there has been a “growing criticism of corporal punishment in schools,” (Human Rights Watch, 1999). Morrel (2011:295) indicates that “the ending of apartheid laid the foundation for the ending of corporal punishment in South African schools.” South Africa banned the use of corporal punishment in 1996 (SASA 84 of 1996). The argument against corporal punishment, as outlined by Shaiknag (2014:440) is that it did “serious emotional damage to learners and affected their self-esteem.” Shaiknag’s view is supported by Murray *et al.* (2010:571) who indicate that corporal punishment also “impacted adversely on learner academic performance.” It is therefore illegal to inflict corporal punishment on learners. Yet Cicognali (2004:44) reveals that “the use of corporal punishment is still rife in South African schools.” (Murray *et al.* (2010:572) suggest that “rural schools in particular can be regarded as high risk populations in terms of falling prey to the use of corporal punishment.”

What aggravates the situation is that parents also use corporal punishment at home to discipline their children. In fact Garrison (2010:94) is of the opinion that “slapping and spanking children are not only considered acceptable, but generally believed to be highly effective and quite necessary.” Educators who support the use of corporal punishment in the school setting contend that “physical intervention allows for an instant response to disruptiveness,” as reflected by Cicognali (2004:51). The importance of corporal punishment according to its supporters is that “the learner is immediately placed back in an instructional setting, rather than being suspended from school, which has the potential for interrupting learning indefinitely.” The aim of this



study is amongst others, to suggest an alternative to corporal punishment that educators will be able to associate with and one that learners will also find acceptable.

## 2.6. LEARNER DISCIPLINE – THE FRUSTRATION FACING EDUCATORS

Downs (2015:6) states that “in a school the state of educators’ morale can have an important impact on learners’ behaviour and the overall climate of the entire school community.” Educators’ morale, according to Garrison (2010:76), directly correlates among other things, with “the learners’ attitude and mind-set toward learning, and the learners’ overall behaviour and discipline.” Kapueja (2014:45) cited “violence in schools, lack of parental and administrative support and lack of societal appreciation” as some of the “contributing factors towards teachers’ low morale in schools.” In his research Van Wyk (2014:52) maintains that educators in the rural secondary schools indicated that they experience “serious discipline problems,” and that they are “disempowered to deal with the disruptive behaviour of learners in class”. Lack of discipline contributes to a large extent to the erosion of a culture of instruction and learning in schools. Educators also express frustration over the time and energy they spend in learners with behavioural problems, time and energy that “could have been used for instruction and learning,” (Nxumalo, 2013).

According to Chapter 1 of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) every person has “the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman and degrading way.” Section 28(1) states that “every child has the right to be protected from malnutrition, maltreatment, neglect, abuse and degradation.” Chapter 2 of the South Africa Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) and the Bill of Rights contain “various rights that are applicable to a safe school environment conducive to effective instruction and learning.” In line with the Constitution, the Department of Education “banned the use of corporal punishment in all South African schools,” as addressed in the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996). It is therefore illegal to inflict corporal punishment in South Africa. The Act suggests that “any person who contravenes sub-section 1 is guilty of an offence and is liable for conviction to a sentence that could be imposed for assault.”

The teaching environment has to be characterised by orderliness and discipline. Uzzochina (2015) contends that learners are expected to conduct themselves according to stipulated rules and regulations. This is necessary because classroom misconduct interferes with instruction and learning (Uzzochina, 2015). However, there are times when a learner may fail to observe the rules or behaves in a manner that is contrary to the stipulated rules. This is regarded as misconduct and requires disciplinary actions that are applied to discourage misbehaviour. Educators may in such circumstances resort to using unlawful means of maintaining discipline such as corporal punishment. Morrel (2011:299) suggests that “corporal punishment was an integral part of schooling for most teachers during the twentieth century in South African schools” and that “most educators today still regard corporal punishment to be indispensable to their work.”

The transition to a democratic government in South Africa in 1994 led to many changes. Among those changes was the banishment of corporal punishment by the Department of Education in 1996 as stipulated in Section 10 of the South African Schools Act, (Act 84 of 1996). According to Van Wyk (2014:200) “poor communication between the school and the Department as well as inadequate training of school leaders with respect to policy implementation,” results in, among other things, inadequate discipline in schools. Shaiknag (2014:441) states that there are some educators “who argue that corporal punishment, if used properly, is an effective way of preventing and curbing misconduct,” while others contend that corporal punishment “does not result in long-term behavioural change, but rather that it teaches the child to avoid the punishable behaviour when the person who does the caning is available.”

The abolition of corporal punishment brought about some challenges to educators as they battled with how they should go about handling learner misbehaviour. Educators are today faced with situations where learners do not regard the alternative disciplinary measures as big consequences; not enough to change their bad behaviour (Mestry & Khumalo, 2012). Educators experience situations where learners have neither fear nor respect for them and behave as they please. Research conducted by Nxumalo (2013) shows that declining respect for educators’ authority and disruptive behaviour in rural secondary schools are the main causes of the erosion of discipline. Straus (2010:114) indicates that educators become frustrated when they have to discipline learners

because “the management structures in schools do not give clear guidelines on the management of learner behaviour.” They report incidents involving learners calling them foul names and making obscene gestures when educators give them instructions or try to restore order in the classroom (Nxumalo, 2013). Nxumalo further reports that in some schools female educators indicate that they are afraid of older boys in schools. Straus (2013:115) comments “that principals today lack tools they used to have for dealing even with the unruliest learner at school. Formerly, they could expel such learners permanently or send them to special schools for the hard-to-discipline.” Unfortunately, suspension and expulsion may accelerate the cause of delinquency, thereby providing behavioural problem learners with extra time to associate with troublesome peers. As a way to assist educators, the Department of Education introduced “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment” in the form of school level codes of conduct, and by involving parents in the affairs of their learners (SASA, 84 of 1996). The document introduced by the Department of Education titled, “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment” does not seem to assist educators in bringing learner misconduct under control.

Traditional techniques of managing discipline in schools are no longer enough to solve modern learner behavioural problems. Such techniques tend to bring reaction rather than prevention (Lofkvist, 2015). Verbal reprimand as one traditional discipline measure has failed because many learners have become immunised by years of verbal abuse at home. According to Hagenauers *et al.* (2015) educators are also disillusioned by parents and the Department of Education that continually expose them to lawsuits as they are accused of not using the “correct measures” or not having followed the correct procedure to discipline learners. Educators therefore experience confusion and fear of infringing on the rights of learners and this fear deters them from enforcing discipline (Hagenauers *et al.*, 2015). The idea is when the rights of learners are over-emphasised, the learners begin to undermine the authority of educators and administrators, particularly “if their own parents are ranked higher in society than the educators,” as outlined by Hagenauers *et al.* (2015:389). Parents fail to attend meetings when they are invited by educators because they do not have time, or they are not interested in addressing their children’s discipline problems at school. Suspension is no longer effective in curbing misconduct as many learners treat it as

time-off. The procedure to expel a troublesome learner from school takes quite a long time and in most cases it is never implemented (Eggleton, 2010).

Louis *et al.* (2015) suggest that there are schools where discipline has completely collapsed, where fights among learners are the order of the day. Louis *et al.* (2015:166) contend that where discipline collapses “educators are expected to act as law enforcers.” Educators are expected to “act as counsellors and mediators to assist victims of violence and deal with situations that are threatening to turn ugly,” as suggested by Mouton *et al.* (2013:39). It is in such situations that educators feel so helpless in the face of school violence that they may resort to using corporal punishment (Louis *et al.*, 2015). Portella (2015:66) suggests that educators who are “accustomed to using corporal punishment are likely to continue to use it in schools.” To assist such educators, the Department of Education has offered “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment” by “introducing school-level codes of conduct and giving parents unprecedented involvement in school affairs,” as indicated by Ntshangase and Naidu (2013:655). Ntshangase and Naidu (2013:656) emphasize that the “approach stresses consensus, non-violence, negotiation and the development of school communities.” The understanding is that educators “should involve other stakeholders when dealing with issues concerning discipline in schools,” (Cicognali, 2004:38).

## 2.7. EFFECTIVE WAYS TO MAINTAIN DISCIPLINE

Learners need an environment free from intimidation and abuse in order to learn effectively. When learners “believe that the adults around them are not only fair but genuinely concerned about protecting them, the school becomes a community that inspires affection, trust and the longing to please,” (Downs, 2015:124). Downs also suggests that effective schools are schools that pay focused attention to the social and emotional well-being of every learner, actively value each individual in the school community, and look for ways to include all voices in the success of the school. When a supportive and caring environment has been established, learners tend to behave. If everyone has a purpose and goes about the business of achieving it while helping others in the process, discipline largely takes care of itself (Lofkvist, 2015).

Educators should be ready when they go to class; they should be punctual, organised and well prepared for lessons. They should also be “firm and confident as learners always exploit uncertainty,” (Stewart, 2014:169). This type of behaviour by educators promotes discipline. Stewart (2014) further proposes that educators should display a high level of self-discipline and be consistent in their application of the rules. Effective educators build a positive relationship with learners and ensure that learners are stimulated (Straus, 2010). Alsaif (2015) says that the classroom disciplinary policy or rules should be drawn up by both the educator and the learners. Participative compilation of the classroom discipline policy will ensure that learners take ownership of it. The Learner Representative Council should also be involved in maintaining discipline in the school (Garrison, 2010).

In accordance with SASA (Act 84 of 1996) schools must “adopt a Code of Conduct for learners to establish a disciplined and a purposeful school environment.” Nxumalo (2013:26) describes a Code of Conduct as “a form of subordinate legislation that reflects the democratic principles of the Constitution of South Africa with more emphasis on human dignity, equality and freedom”. A Code of Conduct for learners should contain rules prescribing the kind of behaviour expected from learners and the standards of behaviour a school seeks to maintain (Nxumalo, 2013). In line with the Act, therefore, each and every school must draw up its own Code of Conduct. Parents, learners and teachers must be involved in the development of the Code of Conduct. Involving all the stakeholders is in line with the Department of Education (2000), which puts the emphasis on democratic discipline based on participation and involvement; hence the members of the school governing body are informed and included in the disciplinary process. Van Wyk (2014:197) suggests that “principals, deputy principals, heads of department, as well as others who have leadership responsibilities from within and outside the school, such as those individuals who serve on the SGB, should work together as teams.” Garrison (2010:129) is of the opinion that “for successful policy implementation in schools, policies have to be co-owned by all parents and even by community members who have no direct interest in schools.” Garrison (2010:130) further suggests that “all stakeholders should understand the origin and content of policies.” Nxumalo (2013:134) concurs with Garrison but goes further to say that “discipline policies have to be aligned with

national and provincial policies and must be structured in such a way that they prohibit misbehaviour, but also provide for a prohibition of future negative occurrences.”

Learners should observe rules and regulations so that order, discipline and an environment conducive to learning may be created (Blandford, 2008). Rules enhance learners’ self-esteem, encourage individual learners to recognise and respect the right of others, and affirm cooperation as well as responsible independence in learning. Kapueja (2014:171) commented that “schools should create a suitable environment for learners in which they can feel safe to make contributions to matters such as the discipline policy.” According to the South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996, Sections 20 and 21), the SGB of a public school “must, among others, adopt a Code of Conduct for learners of the school after consultation with them as well as with parents and educators.”

Educators should set realistic and achievable targets for learners. They should “create a stimulating environment that will make learning a pleasure,” (Van Wyk, 2014:200). Van Wyk (2014:200) further suggests that educators need to “plan their discipline to the same degree that they plan their lessons.” They should be well equipped in advance to handle certain crisis situations. Van Wyk (2014:201) contends that educators should immediately deal with learners who “become disruptive during a lesson, or refuse to carry out tasks.” Educators should as much as possible know learners’ personal context and background. In this way educators will be able to understand why some learners behave in a strange manner and what they should do as educators to assist those learners. According to Shaiknag (2014:437), educators are supposed to “function within a framework of rules, rights and responsibility, and not in terms of their status as educator.” Shaiknag (2014:437) further proposes that educators should take note of the fact that behaviour does not exist within a vacuum, and therefore “they should try to discover the source of a learner’s behaviour.” Educators are supposed to be role models for their learners and should always be presentable and inspiring to the learners. They should have “the best interests of the learners at heart,” as proposed by Mestry (2012:105). According to Mouton *et al.* (2013:34) educators are regarded as “the main implementers of discipline policies in schools.” Educators should therefore “have an important say in deciding about

discipline policies,” (Mouton *et al.*, 2013:34). Mouton *et al.* (2013:34) further contend that “educators are professional people who have expert knowledge about instruction and learning, and discipline and these activities are interrelated.” In the same way that a school is responsible for instruction and learning, a school should also take responsibility for matters relating to discipline.

## 2.8. THE ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The Department of Basic Education is the key role player in education. It develops policies that control how schools should be run (SASA, 1996c). According to the Van Wyk (2014:196) the department should therefore “ensure that the policies instituted are executed efficiently.” Dupper and Dingus., (2008:248) suggest that the departmental officials “should be visible and performing well at ground level.” Dupper and Dingus (2008:249) further propose that “regular scheduled school visits should be done to determine the extent at which discipline policies are implemented by the schools.”

Kapueja (2014:126) is of the opinion that officials from the Department of Education should “not only conduct investigations about the implementation of policies,” they should also “promote and provide training to educators on different policies.” Apart from personal meetings with school staff, training sessions, such as workshops, must be organised and presented to educators. Kapueja (2014:127) further suggests that the Department should “train school governing bodies (SGBs) so that they can participate meaningfully in policy implementation.” Kapueja (2014:127) challenges the department to “present workshops for SGB members who are illiterate” and run them “in their home language.”

## 2.9. THE EDUCATORS’ PERCEPTION OF POWER IN A RELATIONSHIP

Perception can be defined as “the process by which people translate sensory impressions into a coherent and unified view of the world around them,” (Cothran & Ennis, 2007:64). Human behaviour is guided by the perceptions that one has. Perception is therefore an individual’s personal theory of reality. Nxumalo (2013:38)

defines perception as “the act of receiving information through the senses; it is the brain’s process of organising and interpreting sensory information to give it meaning.”

Cothran and Ennis (2007:65) define power as “the ability or the capacity to control or to influence the behaviour of others or the course of events.” The term *authority* is often used for power perceived as legitimate by the social structure. A child needs adult authority to learn to obey the authority that is essential for acceptance in society and attain the freedom to live harmoniously with other people. Nxumalo (2013) maintains that society expects learners, as young people, to respect educators as their elders, since educators have more experience of life. Without authority there cannot be an educational situation (Nxumalo, 2013). An educator should exercise authority when the learner displays unacceptable behaviour, thereby taking appropriate disciplinary intervention. This intervention will attain its meaning if learners trust and respect educators. According to De Wet (2009), learners should realise that educators have power over them and that educators’ educational training and experience will benefit them as learners. Cothran and Ennis (2007:104) point out that power “should not be seen as a matter of getting people to do things, but a relation of human attitude and activities against a background of conflicting interests”.

In the process of teaching, Bush (2007:406) suggests that educators aim to “gain and maintain the cooperation of learners.” Although educators still hold power in the classroom, “changing educational, social, economic and political conditions have altered the traditional view of an educator as the primary power holder in the classroom,” (Cothran & Ennis, 2007:92). Traditionally educators were seen as expert knowledge givers and therefore received automatic respect from learners. Bush (2007:399) contends that educators “hold moral authority and therefore power in schools.” The advancement of modern technology compromises the authority of educators as learners can get knowledge through electronic media, such as cellular phones and other media.

Cothran and Ennis (2007:63) point out another “change that has altered the traditional power equation,” namely that secondary school learners have become “less committed to their studies and less engaged in academic activities.” Learners seem to invest much of their time, efforts and attention in social concerns. Cothran and Ennis



(2007:64) maintain that some learners come to school “to meet their friends, others come to see their partners and yet others come to school just to get out of the house”. Learners who value non-educational goals may regard educators as “less influential and less important than the social aspects of school,” as suggested by Nxumalo (2013:86). This may create tension in classroom that ultimately influences school effectiveness. “The interactive nature of the teaching process is built on a social relationship between educators and learners,” (Cothran & Ennis, 2007:65). Bush (2007:404) indicates that the educator-learner relationship should be characterised by compliance that may only be possible if there is “willingness on the side of both educators and learners to work together.” The relationship between educators and learners, therefore, “is a battle to manage the conflict of interests,” as proclaimed by Cothran and Ennis (2007:65). Cothran and Ennis (2007:65) maintain that unlike the traditional relationship where an educator was the “sole source of classroom power, a relationship of reciprocal power between educators and learner exists, wherein each member achieves a degree of control over the other.” Therefore educators no longer have total power over learners as traditionally was the case.

## 2.10. SUMMARY

Discipline has become a problem in South African schools since the Department of Basic Education banned the use of corporal punishment. The purpose of discipline was discussed, which according to literature is to maintain order by and to make learners realise the importance of obeying disciplinary rules and to take responsibility for their behaviour. The researcher describes how learners’ home, the school and peers may negatively influence their behaviour and affect how such learners accept discipline at school. The researcher also highlights educators’ perceptions of power in relations with learners and frustrations educators’ experience when they have to discipline learners. The researcher further explores the history of discipline, the differences between discipline and punishment, and the different types of poor behaviour and misconduct that learners display at school.

## CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

### 3.1. INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter discusses literature on challenges experienced by educators in disciplining learners in schools. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research methodology and design used by the researcher in this study namely; the methods used to collect and analyse data in order to address the educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. The purpose of this chapter therefore involves explaining sample selection, describing the approach used in this study; describing the data collection procedures; and providing an explanation for the procedures used to analyse data. The chapter also looks into the trustworthiness and credibility of this study, as well as the ethical considerations made by the researcher when conducting research.

### 3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.2.1. Research Paradigm

Mphale, Moletsane and Mabalane (2015:69) define a paradigm “as a set of basic beliefs.” Patton (2010:69) describes paradigm as “a worldview that defines for its holder, the world, the individual’s place in the world and the range of possible relationships to that world.” According to Creswell (2014:145) a paradigm is “an approach to research that provides unifying framework of understanding knowledge, truth, values and the nature of being.” There are several major paradigms that govern inquiries into the policies and practices in education. This study used interpretive paradigm where the main purpose was to investigate educators’ perception of power relationships and discipline in rural secondary schools. Interpretive paradigm was selected because of the researcher’s ontological assumption that he might not be separated with the reality. The researcher assumed that knowledge could “never be objectively observed from outside rather it should be observed from inside through the direct experience of the educators,” (Cicognali, 2004:45). This means that knowledge could be accumulated through social interaction with participants. The researcher therefore attempted to understand educators’ perceptions of power and discipline

through the meanings that educators assign to those perceptions. As an interpretive research, the researcher “did not predefine dependent or independent variables, but focused on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerged,” (Creswell, 2014:81).

The researcher’s ontological assumption was that reality is indirectly constructed based on individual interpretation and is therefore subjective (Creswell, 2014:83). The researcher also assumes that people interpreted and made their own meaning of events and that there could be multiple perspectives on one incident. The researcher’s epistemological assumption stemmed from the fact that knowledge aroused from particular situations and as described by De Vos; *et al* (2011) knowledge could not be reducible to simplistic interpretation but knowledge could be gained through personal experience.

### 3.2.2. Research Approach

McMillian & Schumacher, (2010:68) suggest that the purpose of the research approach is “to provide the most valid and accurate answers possible to the research question.” For the purpose of this study the researcher employed a qualitative research approach. The researcher’s choice of this approach was informed by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:69) who suggested that “qualitative research is suitable for researchers working in the social sciences and who are interested in studying human behaviour.” The purpose of this study was to investigate educators’ perceptions of power relations and discipline in secondary schools. The qualitative approach was suitable for this study because part of its objectives was “to focus on how people or groups of people could have different ways of looking at reality,” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2012:177). The other reason behind the researcher’s choice of the qualitative research was that it developed explanations of social phenomena and perceptions, which could not be done when one had used other approaches. In other words, qualitative approach helped the researcher “to understand the social world in which we live and why things are the way they are,” as explained by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:121). This approach also proved to be appropriate in a situation where the researcher wanted to understand why people

behaved as they did, their opinions and attitudes, as well as “how people were affected by the events that happened around them,” (Creswell, 2014:98). The researcher was aware that the results of this study might not be “generalizable to a larger population because the sample group was small and the participants were not chosen randomly,” (Creswell, 2014:99). Qualitative Research is primarily an exploratory research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010) and it therefore allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of underlying reasons, opinions and motivations behind the decline in discipline in rural secondary schools. This approach exposed the researcher to new ways of understanding. Creswell (2014) points suggests that predetermined hypotheses (as in a quantitative approach) limit what will be collected and might as a result cause biasness.

### 3.2.3. The Research Design

For the purpose of this study the researcher used a case study as his research design. Yin (2009:66) defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple source of evidence are used”. His view is supported by Dupper and Dingus (2008:244) who define a case study as “a detailed investigation, often with data collected over a period of time, of one or more organisations or groups of organisations, with a view to providing an analysis of the context and process involved in the phenomenon under study”. McMillan and Schumacher (2010:128) describe research design as “a procedure for conducting the study, which includes the general plan of the project.” The researcher used a research design as “a plan for collecting and analysing evidence” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010:128) that could make it possible for him to answer the research question and sub-questions, thereby revealing how educators and learners relate to one another and how those relationships impacted on educators’ power to apply discipline in schools. Due to feasibility and accessibility, an interpretative case study of five secondary schools in Limpopo was chosen. This helped the researcher gain an in-depth understanding of the participants’ perceptions and views on the research topic.

The advantage of a case study, as explained by Creswell (2014), was that it provides a researcher with a unique example of real people in real situations. The researcher used a case study because it allowed him to be integrally involved in the case (Creswell, 2014). It was through the case study that the researcher could know what it was like to be an educator in a school where learners were ill disciplined, that is, to catch a close-up reality, thoughts and feelings of educators about the situation in which they found themselves. The researcher also looked at the fact that a case study allowed him to present research or evaluate data in a more publicly accessible form than other kinds of research reports (Hancock; *et al.*, 2009). Case study allowed the researcher to select a small geographical area (five schools in this study) and a very limited number of individuals as the subjects for study. The researcher's choice of a case study was also informed by Kitto; *et al.* (2008) who suggested that case study is the only viable method to elicit implicit and explicit data from the subjects and that it strictly follows the scientific conventions used in social sciences.

### 3.3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Discipline has become a fundamental issue towards successful schooling. Good discipline is necessary in order for the school to effectively carry out its core business of providing good teaching and learning. According to Louis, Mayrowetz, Smylie and Murphy (2009:114) "the nature of the educator-learner relationship sets the stage for caring and the cultivation of both academic support and discipline in schools." Different concepts related to discipline had been defined in relation to this study in order "to determine what is relevant to the field of study and what not," as proposed by Louis *et al.* (2009:117). Louis *et al.* (2009) further indicate that learners cope with emotional distress by seeking emotional support from people close to them (educators). They further state that the quality of emotional support learners receive from educators varies widely ranging from the sensitive and helpful to the insensitive and aggravating, and this has important quenciquences. They explain that learners who receive sensitive emotional support are able to cope with problems more effectively, and they are likely to enhance a sound social relationship between themselves and their educators. Louis *et al.* (2009) believe that there is a substantial individual differences amongst educators in their ability to supply quality emotional support.

Louis *et al.* (2009:118) describe social support as “an exchange of resources between two individuals” (an educator and a learner) in which case “the provider’s aim is to enhance the wellbeing of the recipient.” According to Louis *et al.* (2009:118) “the effect of support may be positive, negative or neutral because the outcome is tied to the perceived intentions of either participant.” In other words there “are potential costs and benefits associated with the exchange for both participants,” as suggested by Louis *et al.* (2009:119). Louis *et al.* (2009:119) are of the opinion that learners “must signal their need for assistance.” Educators’ ability to accurately read the signal from the learner may on the other hand, “be influenced by a number of complex factors which may include social skills, mood, values about giving help and the characteristics of the setting” (Louis *et al.*, 2009:120). The benefit of providing support is to keep educators and learners in mutually nurturing relationships and that way mutual respect is created. The benefit for educators comes from the fact because of them the life of the learner has been positively influenced for the better. Based on the above description by Louis *et al.* (2009) the researcher did conceptual analysis of the following concepts: emotional support, social support, academic support and the establishment of mutual respect.



Fig 3.1. Diagrammatic representation of the Conceptual Framework

### 3.3.1. Emotional Support

The researcher was interested in finding out how educators did provide emotional support to learners in secondary schools as part of ensuring good learner discipline. Most secondary school learners are in their adolescent stage and they started to experience serious emotional swings (Shaiknag, 2014). They therefore needed emotional support from their educators. Morrel (2011) suggests that understanding and managing a secondary school learner's emotional behaviour has become a challenge to educators. Bush (2007) is of the opinion that a school climate which is characterised by orderliness is a suitable environment for promoting good emotional support. This is supported by Van Wyk (2014) who purports that a learner who experiences difficulty in coping with the emotional changes of the school environment might become difficult to discipline, and might develop a feeling of alienation and isolation. The following sub-questions were asked during the interview session in order for the researcher collect data on how educators do or do not support learners emotionally:

1. Do you regard yourself to be emotionally supportive to learners? Please explain.
2. How do you deal with/discipline learners who show signs of emotional instability at this school?
3. According to you, are there educators at this school who do not provide emotional support to learners? What do they do?
4. What do you think could be done (by either the school management or the department) to help you improve your emotional support to learners?

### 3.3.2. Social Support

It is important for learners to see educators as caring and supportive in their relationship with them. A good educator-learner relationship ensures that learners behave well because they see the importance of good behaviour and not because of the fear of what the educator will do if they may not (Louis *et al.*, 2009). Louis *et al.* (2009) further suggest that learners who received adequate social support from educators developed attitudes of trust, respect and pleasure in studying; and they also develop strengthened autonomy. Social support therefore promotes development,

well-being and the welfare of learners in a school (Louis *et al*, 2009). Educators have to respect learners' constitutional rights. Even when disciplining learners, educators have to use more supportive and cooperative disciplinary methods as outlined in the South African Schools Act. An educator-learner relationship should be free from any form of abuse, intimidation and from the use of corporal punishment (Louis *et al*, 2009).

The researcher used the following sub-questions during the interview session in to collect data on how educators do or do not provide social support to learners:

1. Do you regard yourself to be providing adequate social support to learners at this school? Please explain.
2. How do you discipline learners who do not regard/respect other learners as social beings?
3. What do you think other educators should do to provide social support to learners?
4. What does the school policy say regarding learners who behave in an anti-social way?

### 3.3.3. Academic Support

It is the purpose of the school to provide learners with academic support. As explained by Stewart (2014), an educator should be ready, punctual, organised and well prepared for lessons. Educators should also be firm and confident as learners easily lose trust in educators who show some uncertainty. Stewart (2014) further suggests that educators should display a high level of self-discipline. Louis *et al* (2009:98) indicate that "caring for learners in an academic setting requires that the school pay attention to the quality of instruction to ensure that a learner's opportunity to develop is not impeded by using weak instructional approaches." The researcher used the following questions to extract information from participants relating to educational support:

1. How do you deal with learners with different intellectual abilities (learning abilities) in your classes?



2. How do you assist learners with leaning barriers (disruptive) in your school so that they may also pass at the end of the terms?
3. How do you discipline learners who fail to do their homework, fail tests or absent themselves from school without valid reason? Please explain.
4. How do you provide academic support to learners at this school?

#### 3.3.4. Establishment of Mutual Respect

When educators fail to create a caring relationship in a school learners “might be placed in a compromised position with regard to teaching and discipline,” (Lofkvist, 2015:132). Educators need to create a deep and longer relationship that gives them the opportunity to know and be attentive of the learner needs. A caring educator creates an enabling condition for a learner to trust and to see him or her as dependable (Louis *et al.*, 2009). On the contrary, an educator who uses corporal punishment as a way to instill discipline is not seen by learners as caring and dependable; instead learners develop fear and distrust for such an educator (Louis *et al.*, 2009). A caring educator is characterised by attentiveness, motivational displacement (putting the needs of the learner ahead of his/her own), openness, transparency and genuineness (Louis *et al.*, 2009). Therefore educator-learner relationship which is characterised by conflict and mistrust may have deleterious effect on how the learner learns, while a relationship between an educator and a learner which is characterised by love, care, respect and trust eliminates to a large extent tensions and creates a feeling of joy, trust and commitment in both parties (Lofkvist, 2015).

The researcher used the following questions to determine how educators successfully create or fail to create a relationship characterised by mutual trust with the learners:

1. What kind of challenges do you experience in your daily relationship with learners? How do you deal with these challenges?
2. How do you describe your relationship with the learners in this school?

### 3.4. DATA COLLECTION STRATEGIES

The researcher in this study opted for interviews as his data collection strategy in order to obtain in-depth information about his topic of research. According to Cohen *et al.*, (2012:61) interviews are “the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative

research.” There are three types of interviews as outlined by Cohen *et al.* (2012) namely; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews. The researcher employed the unstructured interviews. Cohen *et al.* (2012:71) confirm that unstructured interviews allow the researcher “freedom to probe the interviewee to elaborate on an original response or to follow a line of inquiry introduced by the interviewee.” This type of interview also allowed the researcher to diverge from the key question in order to pursue an idea or responses from principals and educators in more detail (Cohen *et al.*, 2012). In other words using unstructured one-to-one interviews helped the researcher to probe in case the response lacked sufficient details.

The semi-structured one-to-one interviews were conducted with the aim of getting educators to express their ideas about their perceptions of power relations and discipline in secondary schools. The relevance of semi-structured interviews as advocated by Cohen *et al.* (2012:73) lied in the fact that they were used by the researcher “to determine individuals’ perceptions, opinions, facts and forecasts, and their reactions to the initial findings and potential solutions.” Before interviewing, the researcher prepared open-ended questions.

The researcher got a permission to conduct this study in schools from the Department of Education in Limpopo Province. He later wrote letters to the five sampled school principals to announce his intention to conduct research in their school. When the permission was granted the researcher identified educators who were to participate in the study, gave them letters to explain the aims of the study and requested them to sign consent forms. The researcher visited the five sampled secondary schools in the Bahananwa Circuit to administer the instruments to the principals and identified educators. It took the researcher three weeks to complete interviews with the participants. Interviews were only conducted after school in order not to interfere with the smooth running of schools. The researcher used a digital audio recorders to record participants. Digital audio recorders are “easier to use and less intrusive than tape recorders,” as suggested by Merrill and West (2009:253).

### 3.5. PARTICIPANTS AND SAMPLING

A sample, as explained by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:77) is “a group of participants selected from a larger group of people (population) from whom data is collected.” McMillian and Schumacher (2010:77) refer to “the process of selecting participants from a population as sampling.” A qualitative researcher believes that reality is a subjective meaning of participants (Creswell, 2014) because participants might create multiple meanings from the same event. This is because people construct meaning differently, therefore the researcher’s goal was to “understand reality from the participants’ own point of view,” (Creswell, 2014:151).

The researcher used purposive sampling as a strategy to select participants. Purposive sampling is the sampling technique best intended to draw out the experiences and understanding of a particular expert group (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). According to Creswell (2014) researchers use purposive sampling to ensure that the sample could add their experience of knowing the subject being studied. In other words the researcher purposefully sampled participants who according to Creswell (2014:151) “would best help him to understand the research problem and to answer the research question.”

The researcher used convenience sampling to sample five secondary schools in Bahananwa Circuit. According to Kitto, Chesters and Girbich (2008:321) convenience sampling is “cheaper than probability sampling and can often be implemented more quickly.” Convenience sampling is also suitable when the research sites are chosen “because of their close proximity to the researcher and are therefore easier for the researcher to access,” Kitto *et al.* (2008:322). Kitto *et al.* (2008:322) suggest that “convenience sampling is affordable, easy to apply and the subjects are readily available.” However the researcher is aware that “convenience sampling may not be taken to be representative of the population,” (Creswell, 2014:152). Bahananwa Circuit is situated in the deep rural areas of Limpopo Province. The five schools were sampled because they are closer to the school where the researcher is working so it was easier and quicker to access participants. Out of the five sampled schools two had high enrolments (>500 learners) while the other three’s enrolments were low (<300

learners). Two of the schools are annually producing good results (as reflected in school records based on Grade 12 results) while the other three were under-performing. The researcher's personal experience is that schools with disciplined learners are likely to produce good results as compared to schools with learners who are not well behaved. This is because in schools where learners conduct themselves well, teaching and learning are effective. Kapueja (2014) suggests that good discipline in a school is often directly proportional to good learner performance. The researcher has deliberately chosen secondary schools because most secondary schools seem to be the ones which experience a collapse in discipline. This choice was supported by studies by Ntuli (2012) and Kapueja (2014) which were conducted in secondary schools in Kwa-Zulu Natal which also revealed that there was a lot of indiscipline taking place in rural secondary schools. The researcher also aimed to investigate if a higher or a lower enrolment had or did not have any influence on discipline.

The researcher used purposive sampling to sample five principals and ten educators for this study. As explained by Cohen *et al.* (2012:113) purposive sampling technique "is the deliberate choice of the participant due to the qualities the participant possesses." Cohen *et al.* (2012:113) further indicate that purposive sampling is a "non-random technique that does not need the underlying theories or a set number of participants." The researcher therefore decides on "what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to provide the information by virtue of knowledge or experience," as proposed by Cohen *et al.* (2012:114). Principals were considered in this study because they are the ones who manage learner discipline at school. They see to it that educators manage discipline effectively in schools. They were therefore "likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena that the researcher was investigating," (Ntuli, 2012:88). They were in a position to reveal the perceptions that they had regarding their power to discipline learners. Educators were also consulted in this study because they are the ones who maintain discipline in classrooms. They are the ones who spent most of the time with learners. As suggested by Ntuli (2012:89) the researcher was more concerned with "an increase in understanding of the phenomenon under study" than in the generalisability of the results of the study.

### 3.6. GAINING ACCESS TO PARTICIPANTS

The researcher personally delivered letters to principals of the five sampled schools to seek for permission to interview them. They all agreed and signed the consent forms. The researcher also requested them to allow educators at their schools to participate in his research. From every school line-ups the researcher identified (with the permission and assistance of the school principal) one educator who is a member of the disciplinary committee; preferably someone with more than ten years teaching experience. The second educator the researcher identified per school was the one with less than five years teaching experience. Once identified the researcher asked the principal to call those educators to his attention. The researcher explained the purpose of his research to the educators and requested them to take part in the research. Once those educators agreed to take part the researcher gave them consent forms to sign. Dates were then set for the researcher to visit educators for interviews. Interviews were conducted after school in order not to temper with the smooth running of schools. The researcher conducted interviews at venues conveniently identified by the participants. The researcher explained to participants the aim of the study and requested them to be honest participants. Data was recorded by using an electronic device. A reflexive diary was also used to take notes during the interviews. Participants were informed of the right to withdraw if they became uncomfortable at any stage of the interview. They were also assured of confidentiality.

### 3.7. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Creswell (2014:49) defines qualitative analysis as “a relatively systematic process of coding, categorising, and interpreting data to provide an explanation of a single phenomenon of interest.” A phenomenon of interest in this study was the educators’ perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. As a qualitative researcher he emphasised inductive reasoning in which case data were gathered first and synthesised before generalizations could be made (Creswell, 2014). The researcher used inductive reasoning because it allows him to be open to new ways of understanding, as there were no predetermined hypothesis as would be the case with quantitative research (Creswell, 2014). By applying inductive analysis the

researcher was able “to synthesise and make meaning from the data, thereby starting with specific data and ending with categories and patterns,” (Creswell, 2014:54). The data collected by an electronic device were transcribed. The notes were repeatedly read to make meaning of what the participants had said. As he was reading and re-reading the transcribed data, the researcher categorised educators’ perceptions into three subcategories: those of the principals, those of long serving educators, and those of the newly employed educators. The researcher categorised “data into themes since data analysis involved breaking up the data into manageable themes, trends and relationships,” (Cohen *et al*, 2012:123). The researcher structured his data analysis by sticking to the following steps outlined by Creswell (2014:55-56): (1) the researcher transcribed interviews from sound files and arranged data into sub-categories; (2) the researcher then scrutinised all transcribed information “to obtain a general sense of data” and then “reflected on its overall meaning;” (3) the researcher “took the text data gathered during data collection, segmented sentences into categories and labelled those categories as themes;” and (4) data was then categorised under the themes that the researcher had identified: emotional support, social support, academic support and mutual relationships.

### 3.8. TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

Hancock, Ockleford and Windridge (2009:245) refer to “trustworthiness in research as the demonstration that the evidence for the results reported is sound, and that the argument made based on the results is strong.” Patton (2010:171) states that the “trustworthiness of a qualitative study can be increased” by the researcher aiming at maintaining a very high level of credibility and objectivity throughout the study. The purpose of this study is to understand participants’ perspectives; therefore different questions were asked about the conduct of educators in relation to learners at school. Trustworthiness of qualitative research should be understood from the context of the researcher’s ontological point of view (Creswell, 2014). In a qualitative approach the researcher assumes that “reality is constructed, multidimensional and ever changing; there is no such a thing as a single, immutable reality waiting to be measured,” (Hancock *et al.*, 2009:247). In a qualitative approach the researcher increases the

trustworthiness of his study by maintaining a high level of credibility and objectivity throughout the study.

The researcher was aware that as a principal and head of discipline at his school, he might have had his own biases, such as his own orientation and cultural background that might unduly influence the collection and analysis of data generated by participants. To curb this and to ensure that the findings would be regarded as consistent and dependable, the researcher employed member checking as a technique that helped him improve the accuracy, credibility and transferability of the study (McMillian & Schumacher, 2010). According to this strategy, the researcher takes back the data collected from the participants and submits the transcript to the people from which data has been derived and asks if the interpretations are plausible. Member checking helped to confirm accuracy of the data and ensured stability in the research.

### 3.9. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2011:129) define “ethics as a set of widely accepted moral principles that offer rules for, and behavioural expectations of correct conduct towards experimental subjects and respondents.” The definition is supported by Merrill and West (2009:168) who define ethics “as sets of guidelines, principles and codes that are used to guide the behaviour of the researcher when conducting research.” The researcher operated within an ethic of respect for all participants involved in the study and continuously upheld ethical principles at all times.

#### 3.9.1. Informed Consent

Ntuli (2012:83) refers to informed consent as “the right of the research participants to be fully informed about all aspects of a research project that might influence their decision to participate.” As suggested by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:91) the researcher ensured that “the participants understood the purpose and the procedure of the research,” and the importance of their contributions to the body of knowledge. The participants were made aware of the fact that their involvement in the study was voluntary. All participants were requested to sign the informed consent forms. Informed consent as explained by McMillian and Schumacher (2010:91) is “the right

of research participants to be fully informed about all aspects of a research project that might influence their decision to participate.” The participants were also informed of “their rights to withdraw at any time during the process of interview and thereafter if they felt uncomfortable with the proceedings,” McMillian and Schumacher (2010:92). The researcher assured participants that data collected from them would be confidential and that in situations where the researcher might want to quote, pseudonyms would be used.

The researcher submitted his research proposal to the Ethics Committee of the University of Pretoria, where he was enrolled. After receiving approval from the Ethics Committee the researcher applied in writing to the Limpopo Department of Education to visit schools for the purpose of data collection. He subsequently wrote letters to the principals of the sampled schools to ask for their consent to participate in the research, and to permit educators at their schools to take part in this study.

### 3.9.2. Protection of Participants

The principle of autonomy and confidentiality was applied in this research. The researcher ensured that “the information provided by participants did not in any way reveal their identity,” as suggested by Cohen *et al.* (2012:57). McMillian and Schumacher (2010:92) state that the researcher “is ethically responsible for protecting the rights, interests and the welfare of participants in his study.” All five sampled schools were offered anonymity when conducting interviews. The researcher kept the descriptions of each school short and not too descriptive to guarantee full anonymity for the involved secondary school. The researcher used symbols such as Principal A, Educator D, and so on to refer to participants to maintain their anonymity.

## 3.10. SUMMARY

In this chapter the researcher outlines the research approach he used and why he preferred it. He chose a qualitative research approach because it is most suitable for studying human behaviour that can never be quantified. The researcher used an interpretive paradigm because he believed that knowledge can never be objectively observed from outside, but through the social interaction with the participants. This



paradigm proved effective during the data collection process. The researcher opted for a case study as his research design to collect data from the participants. Case study allowed the researcher to be integrally involved in the case, and therefore he was able to do a detailed investigation that helped answering the research question. The chapter also outlines interviews as the research design. "Interviews are the predominant mode of data collection in qualitative research," (Cohen *et al.*, 2012:56). The researcher used purposive sampling strategy when selecting participants. This sampling strategy is best intended to draw on the experiences and understanding of a particular expert group (that is, people who have knowledge of the subject being studied), as explained by McMillian and Schumacher (2010). The chapter outlines how data was collected, and the procedures followed in gaining permission to conduct the research from both the Department of Education and the principals of schools. An electronic device was used to collect data. Data analysis was done by way of transcribing data from the audio-tapes and categorising it into manageable themes. Participants were informed of their rights in participating in the study, such as the right to withdraw from participating during or after the interviews. Participants signed consent forms. They were assured of confidentiality and anonymity in participating in the study. The next chapter is based on the presentation of data and presents the discussion of findings.

## CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS OF THE EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

### 4.1. DATA PRESENTATION AND FINDINGS

The behaviour of educators in a school determines the school climate and the culture of the school. A positive school climate gives educators greater job satisfaction and a feeling of security. It also optimises the culture of instruction and learning in a school. Negative school climate, on the other hand, prevents optimum learning and development in a school.

It has been outlined that the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) prohibits the use of corporal punishment in schools. Any form of physical harm may lead to dismissal of the educator involved. The South African Council for Educators (SACE) urges educators to acknowledge the noble calling of their profession by adhering to the SACE code of conduct. The code emphasises that educators should respect the dignity and the constitutional rights of learners, and assist them in their realisation of their potential and the acquisition of moral values.

In the previous chapter the researcher provides a detailed discussion of qualitative research and its methodology. This chapter focuses on the analysis, presentation, and interpretation of the empirical data that was elicited from the participants by means of the items that constituted the interviews. This study investigates educators' perceptions of power relations and discipline in secondary school. The researcher wanted to examine the powers that educators have to discipline learners and the strategies that they apply as they discipline learners in a situation where corporal punishment no longer applies. The results of the analysis are presented in Chapter 4 and aim at addressing the following five research questions:

1. How do educators describe their role as providers of emotional support to learners?
2. How do educators describe their role as providers of social support to learners?
3. How do educators describe their role as providers of academic support to learners?
4. What challenges do educators experience in their relationship with learners?

5. How do educators describe their relationship with learners in rural secondary schools?

#### 4.2. OVERVIEW OF PARTICIPANTS SELECTION

It must be indicated in advance that the researcher is a principal in one of the schools that fall under Bahananwa Circuit in the Blouberg Municipality. The five schools selected as case study are all from the same circuit. Bahananwa Circuit is a deep rural area in Limpopo Province with isolated villages. The area is situated about 25 kilometres from the Botswana border post. The nearest shopping complex is Senwabarwana, which is more than 80 km away, with Polokwane being the nearest town at about 170 km. The area is characterised by poverty-stricken families and most parents work on the farms that surround the area. There is a high percentage of child headed families in the area.

The five sampled schools were classified as Quintile 2 schools. In terms of government categorisation of schools Quintile 2 schools are those schools where learners do not pay mandatory school fees (SASA, b41). Government has a Norms and Standards allocation for school funding where learners from Quintile 2 schools are exempted from paying school fees. Communities of Quintile 2 schools are regarded as very poor; most parents are unemployed, and the few that are employed work as farm labourers. The sampled schools do not have libraries, laboratories nor computer centres. The two or three computers in each of these schools are used by educators; learners do not have access to them. Most of the classes are overcrowded due to insufficient buildings. The researcher used non-probability sampling to select schools for this study. The five schools were sampled because they were closer to the school where the researcher was working and it was easier and quicker to access participants. Of the five sampled schools two had high enrolments and three had low enrolments. Two of the five sampled schools had a track record of producing good results, one school performed moderately while the other three were underperforming as reflected in the schools' records of performance.

Schools with learners that are disciplined are likely to produce good results compared to schools where learner discipline is a problem. Because the study investigates discipline in schools all five principals were sampled. This is because principals are the heads of discipline in schools (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). The researcher sampled two educators with differing teaching experience from each of the sampled schools: one with less than five years teaching experience and the other with ten years or more. The purpose was to record the perceptions of disciplining learners of older educators who had been teaching before the banning of corporal punishment, and compare them to the perceptions of newly employed ones that started teaching after the banishment corporal punishment.

### 4.3. THE PARTICIPANTS

Table 4.1. Information about the participants.

Name of school	School status (as reflected in school records)	Level of discipline (according to the principal)	Enrolment	Principals Name	Gender	Age	Experience as manager	Educator 1	Gender	Age	Teaching experience	Educator 2	Gender	Age	Teaching experience
A	Performing	High	640	A	M	43	14	A	F	39	11	AA	M	30	4
B	Underperforming	Low	348	B	M	48	18	B	F	44	24	BB	M	28	5
C	Performing	High	251	C	M	55	15	C	M	41	19	CC	F	25	2
D	Underperforming	Moderate	540	D	M	50	23	D	M	52	26	DD	F	31	3
E	Performing	Low	282	E	M	46	8	E	M	53	13	EE	M	33	5

Table 4.1 shows that a total number of 10 educators and 5 principals were interviewed. The researcher used letters of the alphabet to represent the educators who participated in the case study, as can be seen in the table. The rationale was to protect the identities of the participants; for example, school A is headed by Principal A and the two educators sampled from school A are Educator A and Educator AA. The table also displays the gender of the participants. In this table it is evident that 11 participants

(about 73%) were males and 4 (27 %) were females. All principals who participated in the study were males. This is in line with Maphosa & Shumba (2010) who assert that gender stereotypes, socialisation factors, bias and the patriarchal nature of society still make it difficult for women to be accepted as managers.

Table 4.1 also reveals that all principals who participated in the case study were over 40 years old. According to the Public Administration Act an educator should have a minimum of five years teaching experience before he or she can be considered for a principalship. The table reflects each school's level of performance at the time of the interviews. Two secondary schools performed above average, one school performed moderately and the last two schools underperformed.

#### 4.2. Qualifications of participants

Qualification	No. of respondents		%
	Principals	Educators	
Matric + 3 year diploma	0	2	13
Matric + 4 years degree	1	6	47
Matric + honours degree	3	2	33
Matric + master's degree	1	0	7
Matric + Ph. D	0	0	0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 4.2 provides details about participants' qualifications. One principal had a matriculation certificate plus a four-year degree while the other three had obtained honours degrees. Only one of the five principals had obtained a master's degree; none had a doctoral degree. Research has revealed that qualifications can be used for the purpose of selecting an individual for a principalship, but do not necessarily represent the competency of the principal to manage discipline in a school (Dupper & Dingus, 2008). There is, however, a significant relationship between the supervisory strategies used by school principals and learners' disciplinary problems (Ugboko & Adediwura, 2012).

The table also reveals that two of the educators had only a matriculation certificate plus a three-year diploma. The majority of the participants had a matriculation certificate and a four-year degree; two participants had obtained honours degrees. Neither of the educators interviewed had a master's degree or a doctorate.

#### 4.4. PRESENTATION OF DATA

It must be emphasised that the study is structured in such a manner that it investigates educators' perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. The researcher presents the data in alignment with the research questions. Themes that emerged during the interviews are discussed as sub-topics under each research sub-question.

##### 4.4.1. Research Question 1: How do educators describe their role as providers of emotional support to learners?

For this section, the researcher asked participants the following interview questions:

1. How do you provide emotional support to learners? Please explain.
2. How do you assist learners who show signs of emotional instability at this school?
3. How do you discipline learners who abuse other learners emotionally?

From the data collected with these questions the following themes emerged:

##### 4.4.1.1. Educators' ability to identify emotional instability in learners

It is evident from the data collected that educators are generally able to identify learners who experience emotional instability, as can be seen from the following excerpts<sup>1</sup>:

*Normally such a learner becomes withdrawn, he/she looks disinterested in his/her studies and she/he may either sleep during the lesson or talk to other learners in the presence of an educator. The performance of a learner who experiences emotional problems also drops remarkably – Educator A*

Educator C supported Educator A in this regard and indicated that he was helped by experience:

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<sup>1</sup> Responses are provided verbatim and have not been edited.

*. Experienced as I am, I can tell by merely looking at the learner what the learner feels at the time in question. Such a learner does not enjoy company, he may look shabby and always forgets to do schoolwork – Educator C.*

It is therefore clear that educators are aware of learners who are emotionally disturbed at school.

#### 4.4.1.2. How educators deal with learners who show signs of emotional instability

Educators explained how they go about supporting learners with emotional instability. Principal A explained that caring for learners with emotional instability is part of his work:

*At times I organise psychological services for learners who have lost their loved ones. I prepare them to cope with life after losing their loved ones – Principal A.*

Educator D also emphasised the importance of providing support to learners with emotional challenges. He said:

*Many learners are nowadays emotionally scattered. I create a situation where learners feel free to divulge and I in turn give them support – Educator D.*

Principal C also agreed that learners who are emotionally disturbed should be taken care of:

*I adopted eight learners with emotional problems at our school. We agreed on holding sessions after school during which time I motivate them and tell them about the importance of school – Principal C.*

#### 4.4.1.3. How educators discipline learners who emotionally abuse other learners

Data analysis indicated that there are learners at schools who abuse other learners emotionally. Such learners would make derogatory remarks at other learners, tease them or undermine them. Learners who are emotionally abused may become delinquent and may ultimately drop out of school. The researcher wanted to find out how educators discipline learners who tease other learners. Though participants

differed in terms of how they would discipline such learners who bully others emotionally, most of them believed in talking to them. One educator suggested the following:

*I do not prefer to discipline a learner in front of other learners. If it happens during a period I will call him (the bully) by the name in order to call him back to the classroom. I will then set aside a day and time at which I will call him and talk to him. I will let him realise the negative results of what he does in the classroom – Educator BB.*

Principal E approached it differently. This is what he said:

*Fluctuating moods are to me a sign that something is not going well in a learner's life. I will call the learner and engage him/her in a number of activities that will assist me to find out where the problem lies. If I fail to find the problem on my own I will engage the learners' parents.*

Other educators mentioned that it was sometimes difficult to discipline learners who abused others emotionally, and the ones with emotional tantrums. Educator BB commented:

*It is not easy to discipline such learners. You need to be cool with them. Find out what prompts them to behave like that – Educator BB.*

Participants generally agree on involving the parents where they do persuade a learner on their own. They believe that disciplining a learner as a collective is a good tool in curbing unbecoming behaviour in a learner. A parent could also be tasked to observe the behaviour of a learner at home and report to the educator at school. One educator pointed out the following:

*The cause of the problem might be rooted at their homes I may even involve the services of the social workers and psychologists if I suspect that parents might be withholding some important information about the child – Educator CC.*

Participants were worried about parents who seemed to be uncooperative. They complained about parents who sometimes failed to attend meetings when invited.



Participants also commented on other educators who did not provide emotional support to learners. Most participants agreed that there were such educators at their schools. One educator said:

*Learners may hide personal information about themselves from such educators even when they are their class teachers, and divulge the information to any other educator whom they can trust – Educator E.*

His statement was supported by Principal C:

*There are educators who make life difficult for emotionally unstable learners. Such educators would divulge the confidential information about a learner in the staff room. Other educators use derogatory remarks to address learners in their classes – Principal C.*

Educator CC concurred with Principal C:

*There are educators who do not support learners. Actually, some of them are the main causes of emotional instability in learners. It might be because an educator himself has a problem (emotional or financial, for example) and therefore needs assistance before he could be able to assist learners – Educator CC.*

She went further and explained:

*Some educators would bring private information about a learner to school and this may make a learner feel uncomfortable. As such a learner may become emotionally reactive – Educator CC.*

Principals D and E who head small schools indicated that they did not have educators who ill-treated learners with emotional instability. They attributed it to having a few staff members.

It can be concluded, based on the above information, that educators who divulge information of a personal nature about the learners dampen the spirit of the learners. A learner might, as a result, harbour anger and lose trust in all educators at the school.

Educators are therefore partly responsible for emotional instability in learners that might ultimately lead to poor learner discipline.

Participants suggested what they thought could be done by the Department of Education to assist them to provide effective emotional support to learners. The majority of participants proposed that the Department of Education should provide schools with psychologists and that at least one psychologist should be stationed at the circuit office and be easily accessible by educators. One educator suggested that those psychologists should not only attend to learners but should attend to educators as well. One educator had a different view:

- . *Educators who have other qualifications other than teaching, e.g. nurses, should exploit their qualifications to support learners with emotional problems at school. They could do this by starting support teams in schools. The Department should also develop a district support team that comprises experts from different fields. The team should convene workshops and assist educators with what they should do to help learners who need emotional support – Principal A.*

Educator B agreed with Principal A but added the following:

*The Department must introduce subjects on topics that address learner emotions and how learners should respond to their emotions. If learners can get educated about their emotions, they will be able to control them. They will therefore not allow their emotions to distract them from their educational goals – Educator B.*

The rationale is that learners' emotions should be channelled and controlled so that they should not lead to learner indiscipline.

#### 4.4.2. Research Question 2: How do educators describe their role as providers of social support to learners?

The researcher used the following interview questions to probe participants to answer the above question:

1. Do you regard yourself to be providing adequate social support to learners at this school? Please explain.
2. How do you discipline learners who do not regard/respect other learners as social beings?
3. What does the school policy say regarding learners who behave in an anti-social way?

The following themes were distilled from the data collected with these questions:

#### 4.4.2.1. How educators provided social support to learners

The researcher is aware that learners who do not get adequate social support have a tendency to become undisciplined. Such learners may become unruly, beat other learners and also break school property. The researcher wanted to find out whether educators provided adequate social support to learners in schools.

Participants generally agreed that they provided support to learners who had social problems. Some principals indicated that they assisted learners who did not have identity documents to liaise with the Department of Home Affairs. Other principals suggested that they supplied uniforms to needy learners and helped them pay for school trips with money from their own pockets. Educator B indicated that she had identified five families with social problems and adopted them. She indicated that every month she would buy food and electricity for the adopted families. Educator EE, who was new in the field of teaching, indicated how she went about securing donors and sponsors to buy uniforms for needy learners. She further indicated that at times she would buy shoes and sanitary pads for learners who could not afford to buy their own.

One principal indicated how he provided support to learners who stayed alone at home with absent parents:

*A learner who stays alone at home turns to think that he is superior to other learners and the educators at school. This is because parents leave him with all the money to run the family by himself. A learner may end up undermining educators and other learners. As an educator I sit down with the learner, talk to him and make him realise that family property is not his and that he should*

*concentrate on his studies to get educated and become a responsible adult in future – Principal B.*

Educator DD agreed with principal B but added:

*It is not only learners who need to be given social support, educators also do so that they can effectively provide for such to learners. Learners are different and they respond differently to different supports. They therefore need somebody with the knowhow – Educator DD.*

Principal A's approach to giving social support to learners was slightly different from what other participants highlighted earlier. This is what they did at their school:

*We have realised that learners who need social support more often than not are girls than boys. As a result, we have created a special office managed by lady HODs. The office stores used school uniforms, used matric dance dresses, etc. When those HODs identify a learner who wears worn out clothes, they call her/him aside, interview him/her and give him/her clothes. At one stage one learner came to school to report that their house had burned down. The principal immediately suggested that we raise funds for the learner in the form of donations. Learners also donated from their own pocket monies. We later took the learner to town to buy him a school uniform, clothes and food. We also had to raise funds for another learner to rebuild a roof that was blown off by the wind – Principal A.*

It emerged from the interviews that educators were aware of learners who needed social support and that some educators tried their best to assist those learners.

4.4.2.2. How educators disciplined learners who turn out to be social bullies  
The researcher further wanted to determine the educators' perceptions of disciplining learners who did not respect other learners as social beings, who stole from other learners and who bullied other learners and educators at school. Many respondents indicated that disciplining a learner who behaved in a socially unacceptable manner was not easy. Some believed that such a learner should be talked to while others suggested the engagement of parents. Educator B indicated how he dealt with bullies at their school, especially because he believed that bullying is a result of abuse:

*Before I can discipline such a learner I first try to assist him by identifying the type of the problem he has. Usually such learners stop bullying others once their problem has been identified and resolved. Most of the learners who bully other learners at school usually project anger that they have from home. Unfortunately a learner who is bullied might lose interest in his studies and become lonely. The learner might also drop out from school and even worse, a bullied learner might commit suicide – Educator B.*

Educator B suggested that parents should be involved in monitoring the behaviour of their child at home. According to this educator only learners whose anti-social behaviour persisted should be disciplined. Educator B insisted on encouraging learners to live in harmony with others.

Principal C complained that disciplining learners with socially unacceptable behaviour has become difficult since the banning of corporal punishment. He indicated that if he had a learner who behaved in a socially unacceptable manner, he would discipline him by letting him do activities such as sweeping the floor, cleaning the toilets or maintaining the school grounds. This method of disciplining learners had its own disadvantages in that the learner had to carry out his punishment while other learners were in the class, learning. This could be regarded by authorities as denying the learner an opportunity to learn. Principal C further complained that sometimes a learner would turn what the educator used as a disciplinary measure into entertainment:

*If you try to punish a learner by letting him clean the toilet, for example, his friends would come and help him and the purpose of that disciplinary measure becomes defeated – Principal C.*

Most participants indicated that they had never seen a document called “Alternatives to Corporal Punishment” issued by the Department of Education. Educator C acknowledged having seen the document but added that the document *is not effective* and that *it can only apply in certain areas, but not here.*

Educator E viewed his power to discipline learners differently:

*My view is that if a learner misbehaves we should not only confront that learner, we should discipline all learners who witnessed what happened. For example, if two learners fight in a class, all learners in the class must face disciplinary action. In this way learners will be able to discourage each other from fighting. I therefore believe in corporate discipline that will make all learners take responsibility – Educator E.*

Most participants indicated that they rarely had cases where a learner would bully educators or intentionally damaged school property. Educators generally agreed on interviewing a learner who has committed social misconduct before any disciplinary actions can be taken against him/her. They believed in involving parents if a learner did not seem to change from displaying unacceptable social behaviour. Principal D suggested that all learners should be encouraged to *report anything* that they did not like about other learners, even if it could be just a threat.

#### 4.4.2.3. School policy on learner discipline

When asked about their school policy with regard to learners who behaved in an anti-social way, principals confirmed to having such policies in schools. They were, however, reluctant to commit themselves to adhering to the policies. Most educators claimed that they had never seen any policy document on discipline in their schools and that they disciplined learners by using common knowledge. Educator CC had this to say:

*The content of the disciplinary policy suggests that after identifying such a learner, the educator should interview him/her and suggest a suitable disciplinary measure for the offence. If the behaviour persists, an educator should involve the services of the disciplinary committee. If there is still no improvement, the School Governing Body together with the learner's parents should be engaged. At this stage a learner can be suspended from school for a period not exceeding seven days. In extreme cases an educational councillor may be invited to intervene – Educator CC.*

Her perception was supported by Principal E who emphasised the issue of suspending learners who fight at school. The researcher wanted to find out from him if he never

experienced a situation where learners who did not like school would deliberately start a fight so that they might have a week of staying at home; this is how he responded:

*No. They don't. Learners naturally do not want to miss school – Principal E.*

The researcher discovered that in some schools the policy on discipline did not exist as principals failed to produce it when asked to do so. In schools that had them, they looked old and were never updated. Schools kept the policies just for compliance with the requirements of the Department of Education. Educators did not follow them when they had to discipline learners. Other educators reported that they had never seen a policy on discipline in their schools; an indication that learners also did not have knowledge of the contents of the school policy on discipline. The researcher was therefore convinced that there was no consistency in administering discipline in schools. This might be the cause for learners to behave in an unbecoming manner in some schools.

#### 4.4.2.4. The position of corporal punishment in schools

The researcher discovered that most of the principals and some educators did not agree on banning of corporal punishment. Though they agreed not to be administering it any more it was clear from the deliberations that participants still regarded corporal punishment as the best and the quickest way to discipline learners. One educator replied as follows when asked if he administered corporal punishment:

*I personally do not apply corporal punishment for fear of losing my job – Educator D.*

This response could indicate that educators did not necessarily stop using corporal punishment because it was a violation of learners' rights, or because it was morally wrong to do so, but they associated using a cane with losing their jobs. When asked if he would be happy if corporal punishment could be reinstated in schools Principal E responded:

*Yes, unfortunately I cannot define what kind of corporal punishment should be allowed but it should be something that the learner should feel that he is being punished for misbehaviour. Learners enjoy it when an educator chases him out of the class during her period. Other learners may be guilty of the same*

*misbehaviour so that they may also be chased out to go and play with their friends outside the classroom – Principal E.*

Educator B could not agree more with Principal E.

*Corporal punishment was the quickest way to solve problems in children. Now educators have become so harmless and learners are enjoying it – Educator B.*

Educator E also pleaded for the reinstatement of corporal punishment in schools.

*I am aware that corporal punishment has been abolished and yet some educators still apply it. In my view, corporal punishment should be reinstated. But it should be controlled, for example using it may be restricted to one or two lashes. I am saying this because since it was banned most learners are unruly – Educator E.*

#### 4.4.2.5. The role played by other educators in learner discipline

Participants were asked what they thought other educators at their schools should do to provide social support to learners. Educator AA suggested that educators should exercise patience when they deal with secondary school learners:

*Being impatient with learners may land an educator in trouble; you may beat them and they may in turn report you to the authorities or to the police. Phones are very advanced this days. Learners may secretly video graph you and circulate you on social media – Educator AA.*

Principal B emphasised that educators should love school learners like their own children:

*Educators should create social support groups whose tasks will be to assist learners in need of help. Educators who were initially not good to learners must be included in the social group once they show that they have changed their attitude. This way the whole staff end up being loving and welcoming to all learners – Principal B.*

Other participants suggested that educators should treat learners with respect and that they should not shout at the learners, no matter what the learner has done. They



should be supportive so that they can gain the confidence of the learners. Educator B added the following:

*Educators should call learners by their names and avoid using derogatory remarks about learners. Educators should also stop gossiping about learners in the staffroom – Educator B.*

Educator CC said the following in relation to what she thought other educators should do to assist learners:

*Educators should find out from learners what they are going through. You may find out that some learners have moved from homes where parents are drunkards, fighting or in the process of divorce. Educators may also find information about a particular learner from the learner's peers. This way we will be able to find out whatever is going on in a learner's life, and we will be able to provide social support – Educator CC.*

#### 4.4.2.6. Developing self-discipline and self-control in learners

The researcher asked the participants what measures that they took to ensure that learners developed self-control and self-confidence. Principal A suggested that thorough preparation on the side of the educator before going to class is the best tool to encourage self-discipline in learners. He emphasised that educators should have time to plan:

*Having no time table is a recipe to disaster. During teaching time educators must teach, and during sports all educators involved must be seriously engaged – Principal A.*

The rationale is that learners should be engaged at all times to avoid idle minds. Educator B attributed self-discipline and self-control in learners to the fact that they had religious observance every morning:

*It is during this time that a Bible is used to encourage good discipline. The Bible emphasises the dos and the don'ts to learners – Educator B.*

The other strategy that educators implement in schools to develop self-discipline in learners is inviting guest speakers to address the learners. It was indicated by

Educator BB that they sometimes invited pastors to come and talk to learners about the meaning of life. Principal D explained how they maintained self-discipline and self-control at their school:

*We invite learners who previously attended at this school to come and motivate learners – Principal D.*

He added that they also invited learners who were badly behaved when they were still at their school:

*At times we invite former learners who were not well behaving, and who have since changed their way of behaving for the better. Those are the best examples because they would start from where they were and get to where they are now – Principal D.*

Educator DD emphasised the importance of drawing up classroom rules together with learners on the first day of teaching:

*If a learner breaks the rule, the learner himself should decide on the type of punishment that he thinks is suitable for his/her offence. Moreover, learners pledge at the beginning of the year, promising “I will never do this or that.” I also encourage learners to set targets that each thinks he/she will achieve at the end of the year. A learner who loses it will always be referred to his/her set target and asked whether he/she still sees it coming – Educator DD.*

Principal D highlighted the importance of explaining the Code of Conduct to learners at the beginning of the year. According to him the more learners chanted the code of conduct policy, the more they internalised it. He stated that he displayed the code of conduct in every class and on the notice board. He said that every year in January educators familiarised newly admitted learners with the school's code of conduct.

Educator EE was of the opinion that learners would be encouraged to develop self-discipline if educators rewarded good behaviour and good performance. According to him, all learners would become motivated and work harder to qualify for a reward.

The responses on self-discipline and self-control are concluded with the response from Educator C:

*I know for sure that there are learners who smoke and those who bring along cellular phones to school. I would move from class to class to find learners who smoke. Then I task them to go to the toilet and pick up whatever the remains of cigarettes that are there. In a way I make them realise that this is unacceptable at school. I do the same even when I find out that a learner has messed up the toilet seat. All learners will go and clean the toilet. Next time they will immediately report if one learner does the wrong thing – Educator C.*

#### 4.4.3. Research Question 3: How do educators describe their role as providers of academic support for learners?

The purpose of the school is to provide learners with academic support. Learners who receive adequate academic support tend to behave well at school and ultimately perform well in their studies. Learners who stay in class with no educators attending to them are likely to be disruptive, noisy and may end up misbehaving. This is a cause for concern in schools where educators do not honour periods, and where educator absenteeism is the order of the day. Learners may feel neglected. As a result learners may become truant. The researcher therefore wanted the participants to describe their role as providers of academic support to learners. In order to answer the above question the following interview questions were asked to the participants:

1. How do you provide academic support to learners?
2. How do you deal with learners with different intellectual abilities (learning abilities) in your classes?
3. How do you assist learners with learning barriers so that they can achieve their potential?

From the data collected with these questions the following themes emerged:

##### 4.4.3.1. Providing academic support to learners

In order to obtain answers to the above question the research started by asking participants to explain how they dealt with learners with different intellectual abilities in their classes. Principal A explained that they arranged learners in classes according to their ability:

*We currently have six Grade 8 classes. The best learners are in the Grade C class and the weaker ones are in the Grade F class. When going to class educators prepare themselves accordingly. For example, when an educator teaches in class F he has to be as slow and give thorough explanations – Principal A.*

He indicated that the strategy worked well for them as a school. He further explained that if a learner's performance improved in a Grade F class he/she was promoted to the Grade E class, which is the second best after the Grade C class. Principal A was convinced that such learners were motivated and they all worked very hard to get promoted to a "better" class. He indicated that parents were aware of what they did as a school. Parents encouraged their children to work harder to be promoted to the higher level, thereby promising them gifts. Principal C concurred with Principal A. According to him learners were grouped according to their ability:

*An educator moves at a faster speed in a class with a brighter group of learners and adjusts his/her pace of teaching when going to the class of slow learners. In the latter class the educator should make thorough follow-ups and provide the necessary assistance – Principal C.*

Educator D believed in peer teaching where bright learners were used to assist those learners who were less gifted. He suggested that in the process, bright learners consolidated their own knowledge and the slow learners developed the desire to know more. Asked whether the bright learners did not become conceited and looked down on those who were less gifted, Educator D responded as follows:

*It happens sometimes and I immediately reprimand them. It also helps if those less gifted learners also accept it positively – Educator D.*

Other educators with small classes indicated that they gave the less gifted learners extra homework in order to engage them more. They also valued giving the less gifted learners thorough individual attention. Some educators argued that grouping learners according to their level of intelligence demoralised the less gifted. Less gifted learners, as explained by Educator BB, may develop an inferiority complex, lose interest in education and become disruptive.

#### 4.4.3.2. Dealing with learners with different intellectual abilities and disorders

Educators are faced daily with learners of different intellectual ability. There are also learners with specific disorders: some have slow reactions while others are hyperactive. In both cases the disorder creates an attention deficit in a learner. All parents want to see their children passing their grade at the end of the year. The researcher wanted to know how educators balanced the situation so that all learners benefited from daily lessons. Several participants indicated that they curbed hyperactivity by giving such learners roles to play. Educator AA suggested that he would task such a learner to collect and give learners daily written work, write corrections for others on the chalkboard, or get the learner to collect homework books every morning.

Some participants talked about setting different targets for learners, such as that the less gifted learners were given easier targets than their counterparts. When a particular learner has reached the set target, the educator raises the target to encourage good academic performance. Educator C suggested that learners with attention deficit disorder should be referred to the support groups developed at their school. He believed that disruptive behaviour might be a product of abuse. He therefore emphasised the inclusion of parents, social workers and psychologists in assisting learners with attention deficit disorder to succeed with their studies. His view was supported by principal D who indicated that as a school staff they had struck an agreement with social workers and local police to visit their school once a month. He commented that some few weeks after the visit of those officials, learner behaviour improved remarkably in classes.

#### 4.4.3.3. How do educators discipline learners who are uncooperative?

The participants were asked to describe their power to discipline learners who wilfully failed to do homework, failed to write tests, and who absented themselves from school without valid reason. Educator D confirmed that they had such learners in their school:

*Learners sometimes believe that class work and homework is not important because it does not contribute to a pass per cent at the end of the year. Under*

*the circumstance I will call the learner to account. If his/her reasons are not convincing I will give punish him or her – Educator D.*

Educator B had a different perception in relation to a learner who happened not to do his school work:

*I will make sure that every time whenever he is given homework, his book is submitted directly to me for control. If the learner persistently fails to write homework I will involve the parents. Parents must be made aware of their child's situation so that they may not be surprised by the poor results that he may produce at the end of the year – Educator B.*

Asked whether they did not experience a situation where a learner would come with a different guardian every time he was sent home to call the parents, Educator B responded:

*At our school we register only one parent when we admit a learner. She/he is the one who should attend whatever case or a meeting for the learner – Educator B.*

Principal C had a different view. He was of the opinion that a learner who did not write tests, who came to school on certain days had a psychological problem that might need the assistance of psychologists. He believed that such a learner was actually reacting to the problem that he had within him/herself. Other educators indicated that such a learner should be given immediate punishment while others believed that the learner should be given a warning, which should be followed by suspension if uncooperative behaviour persisted.

Participants acknowledged that they were aware of learners who would write the test but failed to submit the script to the educator when others did. Educators believed that this type of behaviour had escalated since the banning of corporal punishment in schools. Some educators believed that displaying the results of every test on the notice board could help to encourage learners who were initially not writing tests to start writing and submit them for marking. One educator emphasised the importance of talking to learners in order to understand their situation:

*I normally tell fellow educators to encourage learners. You may find that such a learner comes from a child-headed family where there is nobody at home to encourage him to go to school. Some learners may be coming late because they have younger sisters or brothers to take care of before coming to school. Others might be coming to school late because they slept over. Always give learners the benefit of doubt – Educator A.*

Educator A's explanation suggested that a learner should only face disciplinary measures after receiving a fair hearing. Her understanding, therefore, was that a learner who received disciplinary measures for something that he/she did not have control over might become hardened and his/her unbecoming behaviour might become worse.

The researcher wishes to conclude with a response from Principal A. He was very firm and he displayed a serious facial expression and a firm tone when he responded to the question:

*If a learner does not do school work, call the parents immediately. Don't even give him a second chance. There is no way a learner can pass if he or she is not doing school work. No matter how far away the parent may be, the learner shall have to go and call that parent or else he/she is not allowed to enter the class. The policy says that parents should take full responsibility for their children. Parents must realise that we cannot work with their children if they are not supportive – Principal A.*

When the researcher wanted to find out whether learners did not sometimes taunt him to consider using a cane, he responded as follows:

*No. Corporal punishment is prohibited by law so I never go that far. Well, there are parents who would encourage us to beat their children and I refer them to the Constitution. However, some parents lose control in the office and beat their children. In such cases I would intervene and say "not in front of me. I am the one who invited you so if you beat your child in front of me I regard that as disrespect" – Principal A.*

#### 4.4.3.4. How do educators promote discipline by using academic achievement?

It is expected of educators to go the extra mile to provide academic support to learners, especially in a situation where learners do not achieve good results. Learners who achieve academically become motivated to learn and therefore have little or no time to engage in bad behaviour. Educators usually support learners academically by increasing contact time. Participants indicated that they tutored learners in the morning prior to normal contact time. Others completed previous years' examination papers with learners to prepare them for the style of question set by external examiners.

Principal D indicated that he helped learners to perform well by purchasing extra learning material for each subject at school. According to him, sticking strictly to the prescribed textbook could deny learners the opportunity to obtain the views of other writers. He believed that different material could help to unlock some misunderstandings that learners might be having. Educator C emphasised the importance of importing good educators from neighbouring schools. In this way learners shared the insights of different educators and their chances of achieving good results increased.

Participants also made mention of enrichment classes that were presented on weekends and during school holidays. Educator EE indicated that enrichment classes helped them complete the syllabus in time, so that they had time to do revision. In school C and D principals annually registered their Grade 12 learners with institutions that offered winter enrichment classes as well as spring classes. Contrary to educator EE, educator B was of the opinion that the best way to provide academic support was through exposure:

*Expose learners to opportunities in life. Expose them to educated people who are successful in life. Make them realise the benefits of being educated. Call learners' attention to previous learners who persevered with their studies and are now successful in life. Challenge learners to set their own targets –*  
Educator B.



According to Principal A there should be more contact time between educators and learners:

*Give them regular testing and feedback. Analysed results should be made known to learners. Repeat a test if learners have not performed well in it. After all, memory gains strength through repetition. Children learn lyrics of songs they like through repetition. Why should it not be true for subjects they do at school?*  
- Principal A.

#### 4.4.4. Research Question 4: What challenges do educators experience in their relationship with learners?

The following interview questions were asked to obtain information from participants that could help the researcher to understand the challenges faced by principals and educators in schools:

1. What challenges do you experience in your daily relationship with learners?
2. How do you deal with these challenges?

The researcher wanted to explore the challenges that educators faced during their daily interaction with the learners, and how they went about solving them. Although some participants indicated that they did not have any major challenges to report on, others confirmed that they experienced a great number of challenges in their schools. Educator D indicated that most of the challenges they experienced as educators were due to the fact that they were teaching learners who were adolescents:

*These learners have reached a stage where they test everything. Some of them do not have respect, especially those who come from child-headed families. I am also challenged by learners who do not do their school work and by learners who do not wear their school uniform even if they have one. Dealing with pregnant learners in school is also a challenge to me – Educator D.*

Responding to how he resolved the challenges, Educator D indicated that he sometimes punished learners who showed signs of disrespect. He also sent learners who did not do their written work home, so that their parents should be part of the resolution taken. Learners who did not wear their school uniform were also sent home to put on the school uniform. Regarding pregnant learners, their parents were tasked

to come to school on a daily basis to be on standby in case their daughters experienced labour problems. Educator D also revealed that there were female educators in their school who assisted pregnant learners with the skills to deal with the challenges of pregnancy.

Educator BB had a problem with learners who smoked, especially those who smoked dagga on the school premises. According to Educator BB, such learners would lose control after smoking and become difficult to deal with. Principal D complained about parents who did not honour meetings:

*Those parents fail to support education. In some cases parents send grannies to attend meetings at school. This really shows a lack of commitment. Children from child-headed families are also a problem – Principal D.*

He indicated that as a staff they resolved the problem of parents who do not come to the meeting by sending learners home to go and persuade their parents to come to the meeting. Principal D explained that grannies were allowed to attend meetings only if the biological parents were not within reach.

One principal complained about overcrowding in their classes:

*An average class at our school has 60 learners. This makes it impossible for me to provide individual attention. Uncooperative parents who criticise every initiative the school tries to come up with are also a cause for concern. They never learn to appreciate anything – Principal A.*

Educator E's response sums up the challenges that educators face in schools:

*The main challenge is that learners have become very lazy. They never want to do anything. They are always giving reasons to explain their laziness. These days we fight for learners with the world which is pulling them towards drugs, alcohol, intimate relationships and gambling. Parents do not convincingly play their role at home. We have to bridge the space between the school and the learner's home. It is this space that learners may abuse – Educator E.*

#### 4.4.5. Research Question 5: How do educators describe their relationship with learners in schools?

The last interview question enabled each participant to describe his/her relationship with learners. The responses received by the researcher varied greatly. Principal A, and Educators A, C, DD and EE explained that their relationship with learners was good. They cited examples like learners confiding in them, learners openly appreciating the contributions they made in their lives and other learners asking to visit their families during school holidays. Educator DD was confident when indicating how some learners would leave come to ask for help from her or ask for advice.

On the contrary, Principals B, C and D as well as Educators CC and E indicated that their relationship with learners could not be described as good. Learners regarded them as rude and “not understanding”. But they generally agreed that learners tend to have good relationships with them once they have completed their studies at tertiary level. They supposed the reason why learners did not have a good relationship with them was because they did not compromise principles, they never missed their classes and they did not have time to hold casual talks with learners; unless it was an educational matter.

The remaining educators indicated that they could hardly describe their relationship with learners. Educator A responded as follows:

*One year I am a friend to all learners in the school, the other year half the number of learners and some other year I am being rude to all learners. I cannot have a good relationship with learners who do not do their schoolwork. I don't smile at a learner who is disobedient – Educator A.*

#### 4.5. FINDINGS

Discipline remains a challenge to educators in rural secondary schools. From the discussions held with the participants the following findings were made:

**Finding 1:** Although educators generally provide emotional and social support to learners, there are still educators who fail to provide adequate support to learners, which ultimately leads to indiscipline in schools.

**Finding 2:** Learners who do not receive adequate academic support from educators tend to lose interest in education and may become disruptive in classes.

**Finding 3:** Educators complained about insufficient or a total lack of support from learners' parents, which ultimately resulted in learners being undisciplined.

**Finding 4:** Educators indicated that maintaining discipline in school is made difficult by learners who have become addicted to social media and those who take drugs. Such learners are always engaged and as a result fail to obey authority. Educators also complained about learners from child-headed families who are delinquent and consistent late-comers.

**Finding 5:** Educators find it difficult and time-consuming to apply alternative measures to corporal punishment when disciplining learners, to such an extent that some of them wish for the Department of Education to reinstate corporal punishment in schools.

**Finding 6:** Educators relate well to learners who are cooperative and do their schoolwork. Educators are not at ease with learners who are ill-disciplined and refuse to take instructions from authorities.

**Finding 7:** The Department of Education should provide educational psychologists in schools that can assist educators in dealing with learner discipline, as educators are convinced that there are some emotional, social and academic problems that learners have that are beyond them.

#### 4.6. SUMMARY

It was revealed during the data analysis that disciplining learners in school is still a challenge to most educators and principals. Educators have different perceptions of discipline. Some educators are able to establish discipline in their classrooms while other educators are struggling to achieve the same. Educators find it challenging to discipline learners who emotionally abuse other learners. They generally rely on the intervention of parents, psychologists and social workers. Educators blame some parents who do not cooperate when they are invited to school about their troublesome children. Most participants confirmed that there are educators at their schools who cause learners to misbehave by revealing learners' confidential information in staff

rooms, calling learners derogatory names, and not providing emotional, social or academic support to learners.

Participants challenged the Department to do more in providing schools with psychological services for both learners and educators. Participants also suggested that the Department should curb the problem of overcrowded classes by building more classrooms in needy schools. The study has revealed that some educators still regard corporal punishment as a necessary tool to maintain discipline. They suggest that instead of banning corporal punishment completely, the Government should have it controlled.

Participants outlined the efforts they took to ensure that learners develop self-discipline and self-control. They attributed it to thorough preparation; religious observances, organising motivational sessions and collectively setting classroom rules. Knowledge of the code of conduct is regarded as motivational in getting learners to become self-disciplined. Educators described how they discipline learners who fail to do written work, who do not submit assignments and those are not regular attenders.

The study underscores the challenges experienced by educators and how educators dealt with these challenges. Pregnant learners, learners who take drugs, lazy learners and uncooperative parents are some of the challenges that educators highlighted.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of this study was to examine educator perceptions of power and discipline in rural secondary schools as reflected in Chapter 4. Discipline remains an important aspect of the normal running of schools as suggested by Morrel (2011). It is evident that discipline in rural secondary schools is on the decline; as a result, schools have become unsafe for both educators and learners. The banning of corporal punishment as a form of learner discipline in schools (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996) seems to have contributed greatly to the collapse of discipline in schools. Straus (2010) points out that the banning of corporal punishment has led to educators experiencing all kinds of disciplinary problem. Educator morale is dampened and in some cases educators feel disempowered to enforce discipline in schools. They feel that their influence and power in the classroom have been compromised. Educators are anxious, confused and demoralised (Straus, 2010). Effective instruction and learning cannot take place in an unsafe environment. Social media and poor parental guidance also impact learner discipline in schools negatively.

In the previous chapter the researcher outlined the analysis and interpretation of data collected from participants through interviews. It is the purpose of this chapter to discuss the findings of the study, together with drawing conclusions and making recommendations for future study.

### 5.2. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The researcher wanted to determine how participants perceived their power to discipline learners who misbehaved in rural secondary schools. In order to achieve this aim, the researcher asked participants questions in relation to their ability to

provide emotional support, social support and academic support as well as how participants managed their mutual relationship with learners.

#### 5.2.1. Finding 1: Failure to provide adequate emotional and social support

As mentioned in Chapter 4, educators generally provide emotional and social support to learners. However, there are educators in schools who fail to provide adequate support to learners, which ultimately leads to indiscipline in schools. Any school has a role to play in teaching learners the differences between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Principals and educators are aware of learners who need emotional and social support in schools. They are also aware of some of their colleagues as well as some learners who abuse other learners, both socially and emotionally. A number of educators indicated that it was difficult to discipline learners who abuse other learners emotionally or learners with emotional tantrums, especially since the Department of Education banned the use of corporal punishment in schools. It has been revealed in the discussions that there are educators who cannot differentiate between discipline and punishment. Clarke (2011) maintains that discipline as a concept should not be associated with pain or fear because discipline is not a form of punishment.

Some educators indicated that they believed in talking to an abusive learner rather than disciplining or punishing him/her. Educators believe that it is easier to determine the exact root cause of a learner's abusive behaviour through talking. Family background may influence how a learner conducts him/herself, both socially and emotionally.

There are learners who come from single parent homes, or from families where divorce is in progress, or where the parents are drunkards; some learners come from families where parents are always fighting. These factors may contribute to learners' emotional instability. Educators acknowledge the necessity to provide emotional support to learners to create a positive school climate that is characterised by love and respect. This links closely with Mestry and Khumalo (2012:144), who point out that "in a positive school climate the breaking of school rules is regarded not only as a negative action towards the school, but also as a negative action towards fellow learners and teachers, and as the disruption of mutual relationships". Some principals and educators perceive learners who emotionally abuse other learners as a sign to show

that something is amiss in the life of the learners. This view is supported by Shaiknag (2014) who proposes that educators should take note of the fact that behaviour does not exist within a vacuum, and that educators should try to find out the root cause of an unusual and an unacceptable behaviour in a learner. Participants were of the opinion that educators need to be sympathetic in handling learners who have emotional problems and politely find out what prompts them to behave as they do.

Educators indicated that there were learners in schools who needed social support, and that, if they did not get the support, they became social misfits. Downs (2015) is of the opinion that effective schools are those that give focused attention to the social and emotional well-being of every learner. It has been revealed that learners who do not get social support do not see the importance of life and may end up stealing from educators and other learners or they might ill-treat them. The study has also revealed that learners who do not get social support may start to take drugs and alcohol, bunk classes or fail to do school work.

Educators acknowledged that it is not easy to discipline a learner who has become a social bully. They were convinced that bullying is a result of abuse. They believe that bullies project the anger that they bring from home on other learners in the school. Most educators suggested that parents should be actively engaged in monitoring the behaviour of their children. Principals and some educators suggested that the disciplinary measures taken against learners who display an anti-social behaviour should depend on the behaviour itself. Generally principals complained that most of the disciplinary measures they took against social bullies did not serve the purpose of ensuring that discipline was maintained. Instead, learners would turn the disciplinary measure into a joke or leisure time. The statement confirms Straus's (2010:341) comment that principals nowadays "lack tools they used to have for dealing with the unruliest learners at school".

One principal proposed what he called "collective discipline". He suggested that if a few learners did something wrong, like fighting, all learners who witnessed what happened should face disciplinary measures. He believed that learners would in future immediately report any learner who broke the school rules and they would discourage one another from engaging in any form of misbehaviour. This substantiates the



findings of Uzzochina (2015) who states that classroom misconduct interferes with instruction and learning. A number of educators believed that there should be a hearing before disciplinary actions are taken against learners who have misbehaved. Parents should only be involved if misbehaviour persists.

Principals and educators acknowledged that administering discipline is not consistent in schools because some schools do not have any policy on discipline. In a few schools that had such policies participants revealed that these were old and were never updated. Schools kept policy documents only for the purposes of compliance with departmental requirements. Shaiknag (2014:234) states that educators are supposed to “function within a framework of rules, rights and responsibilities, and not in terms of their status as educators.” It appears that learners do not have knowledge of the contents of the policy on discipline.

From the analysis of the interview data it emerged that there are educators who play a passive role regarding learner discipline, who want to be popular with the learners, thereby turning a blind eye to learner misbehaviour. This is in line with Kapueja (2014) who found that some educators try to please learners when they are supposed to be disciplining them. Principals indicated that there are educators who are afraid of learners and therefore find it difficult to enforce discipline. Effective instruction and learning cannot take place in a situation where educators fail to administer and maintain discipline. It has been highlighted that there are educators, as explained by a number of participants, who think that disciplining learners is the sole responsibility of a principal.

Some participants indicated that there are educators whose behaviour promotes learner indiscipline, who would divulge confidential information about learners in the staffroom. A learner may become aggrieved if he realises that the secret he/she shared with one educator has become known to everybody. It is difficult for an educator to discipline a learner who has lost trust in the educator.

Participants complained about their colleagues who were impatient with learners. Most secondary school learners have reached adolescence and are very sensitive regarding the manner in which educators address them. It is therefore vital that

educators avoid shouting at them. Educators should treat learners with respect; they should love learners as if they are their own. They should be supportive so that they can win the confidence of the learners. Educators should avoid using derogatory remarks when addressing learners in their classrooms; such remarks demoralise learners and make them harbour anger. As proposed by Ntuli (2012:117) “the management of discipline calls on educators to make learners feel emotionally comfortable and physically safe, so that learners can develop self-discipline and accountability for their actions”.

The above finding can be summarised by indicating that learners need emotional and social support in order to benefit from the teaching provided by their educators. Learners become unruly and the level of discipline declines if educators fail to provide learners with adequate emotional and social support.

#### 5.2.2. Finding 2: Learners who do not receive adequate academic support become problematic

As concluded in Chapter 4, learners who do not receive adequate academic support from educators tend to lose interest in education and may become disruptive in classes. The main purpose of the school is to provide learners with academic support. Van Wyk (2014) maintains that instruction and learning can only take place effectively in an environment characterised by discipline and respect. The researcher wanted to find out how participants dealt with the issue of providing academic support to learners. A number of educators indicated how they grouped learners in classes according to their abilities. For example, if a school had three Grade 8 classes, the first class would comprise learners who were very bright, then the next class the average group and the last class would be for the less gifted learners. Educators suggest that this type of arrangement helped them to prepare their lessons accordingly.

Other educators did not agree on the above perception. They believed that learners should be arranged into heterogeneous groups. Educators believed that if learners are separated, those who are grouped as less gifted are likely to look down at themselves, become demoralised, lose interest in education and become disruptive. These educators believed that if learners are grouped together the less gifted would be encouraged by those who are gifted so that they can participate in school activities.

Participants responded differently with regard to learners who willingly failed to do their homework, failed to write tests, and willingly absented themselves from school without valid reasons. A number of educators mentioned that such learners believed that written work did not contribute to the end of the year mark. They therefore regarded written work as useless and time wasting. Educators added that such learners should be advised of the importance of doing all school work; they believed in giving a learner who did not do school work a fair hearing before administering any disciplinary measures. If the behaviour persisted, educators suggested that the SGB and the parents of the learner should be involved. In extreme cases educators should involve the services of a psychologist. Ntuli (2012:54) states that “if educators are unable to manage a class, they will be unable to teach”. Ntuli (2012:54) is of the opinion that there “is a need for schools to maintain a disciplined environment that is safe and secure for all learners and educators”.

Some educators suggested that the management of the school should suspend a learner who persistently failed to heed warnings to do school work and to attend school regularly. They believed that it would help to deter other learners who were thinking of doing the same. Educators suggested that the same measures should be taken against learners who might sit for tests but persistently failed to submit them to educators for control. However, suspending learners may not be consistent with SASA (Chapter 2) that proposes that no learner should be denied access to education.

It was evident in the interview data that there were educators who were demotivated and had lost their passion for teaching. Educators who went to the class unprepared contributed to learner indiscipline. Gregan-Kaylor (2010) points out that learners may lose focus if faced with an educator who is not sure of his/her subject matter, and may become undisciplined.

Educators should thoroughly prepare themselves on a daily basis before going to class to provide sufficient educational support to learners. Educators should expose learners to opportunities that could enrich them academically and that would help them perform well in their studies. Those who provide adequate educational support to learners may not have difficulty in disciplining the learners.

### 5.2.3. Finding 3: Insufficient or total lack of support from parents

Educators complained about insufficient or total lack of support from learners' parents. In addition to emotional, social and academic challenges experienced by participants; the researcher found that there were still different forms learner misbehaviour that educators faced on a daily basis. According to Van Wyk (2014:99), parents are supposed to be "partners in their children's education", and should share responsibility and accountability with principals. The situation at Bahananwa Circuit did not seem to be in line with the above statement. Apparently parents played a passive role in the education of their own children. As indicated by both principals and educators, most parents did not cooperate with the school; as a result enforcing discipline became very difficult. Parents failed to attend meetings when invited while others did not bother to send apologies.

Principals indicated that it was hard to discipline learners without using a stick because parents seemingly used the stick at home. Children probably grew up knowing that every misbehaviour should be followed by physical harm. Educators indicated that most parents who were summoned to school in relation to their children's transgression would encourage educators to beat up their children. It was reported that some parents would lose their temper in the principal's office and start beating up their children, which confirms that physical punishment was rife at learners' homes. Murray *et al.* (2010:98) believe that "the difference in value systems between the home and the school is an element of the parental/home environment that affects school discipline."

Principals complained about parents who never showed up at meetings when they were called to talk about their ill-disciplined children. Such parents always had an excuse. Kapueja (2014) states that calling parent meetings is difficult because a growing number of parents do not have time or interest in addressing their children's discipline problems at school. It was also reported that some parents sided with their children during hearings, while others would openly announce that they were scared of their own children. Educators found it difficult to discipline learners who scared their own parents. At times the parents would blame educators for the misbehaviour of their children. This confirms what Alsaif (2015:120) underscores, namely that sometimes

parents “shelve their primary responsibility of raising morally sound offspring,” expecting educators to “make up for parents shortcomings in child raising.” It would seem that parents still need guidance to develop parental support skills. Principals in particular complained about learners who did not stay with their parents but with their grannies. Grannies might not come to the parent meetings, and in situations where they came it would be just to honour the invitation because they did not bring any meaningful contributions to the meetings.

Participants generally complained about ill-disciplined learners from child-headed families. Such learners might take advantage of the fact that their parents were far away and no one could be held accountable for their actions. Those learners were alleged not to have respect for other learners and for authority. Kapueja (2014) states that learners who do not get guidance from the parents are likely to be ill disciplined, and may lack basic respect for themselves and for others. Educators might not have the time and means to handle disruptive learners in classes because doing that could steal their quality teaching time. Kapueja (2014) states that the absence of parents in the education of their children contributes to a lack of discipline in rural secondary schools.

Principals indicated the challenge of dealing with pregnant learners and young mothers in schools. It was revealed that there is a high rate of pregnancy in secondary schools. Certain disciplinary measures might not be suitable or applicable to pregnant learners, even if they happened to be involved in acts of misconduct. Lofkvist (2015:49) says, “It is very difficult to deal with learners who are expected to parent their children at home; instead of studying they attend to their children because they are playing the roles of being both learners and parents. Learner performance becomes affected and absenteeism rises”. Both principals and educators are aware that learners have a right to education (SASA. 1996:b5) and therefore such learners cannot be sent home because of pregnancy. Parents should take full responsibility for their pregnant children. In some schools parents are advised to be within the vicinity of the school so that if a pregnant learner should experience some complications the parent will be readily available to assist.

In summary, parents play a pivotal part in the education of their children. They should make sure that they help principals to maintain discipline in schools. Parents should take full responsibility for their own children and support them in all their educational needs. Louis, Murphy and Smylie (2016:97) purport that “the management of a healthy, positive discipline remains the duty and responsibility of the school and its partners.”

#### 5.2.4. Finding 4: ‘Addiction’ as a challenge

It was indicated in the previous chapter that the use of drugs by learners has become a contributing factor in poor learner indiscipline. Educators were worried about learners who took drugs when coming to school and during breaks, especially dagga. It was revealed that dagga can be easily accessed by learners as some parents in the villages sell it and regard it as a source of income. Educators indicated that it is difficult to discipline a learner who is under the influence of dagga. Such learners may refuse to take orders and may fight educators and other learners. They sometimes bring dangerous weapons to school. Educators pointed out that random police searches should be conducted in schools. Ntuli (2012:77) is of the opinion that the incidence of “murder, violence, rape, sexual abuse and assault in schools reported by the media” may be attributed to “the use of drugs by learners.”

Some learners have become addicted to social media. They spend most of their time watching soap operas on television instead of doing their school work. They also spend more quality time on social media than on their books. Some learners bring their cellular phones to school even where school policies do not allow them to. Learners would chat with one another through WhatsApp and Facebook during lessons while educators expect them to do school work; this practice creates conflict between educators and learners. Straus (2010) points out that learners’ interest has shifted from schoolwork to social media. Educators find it hard to discipline such learners.

In short, the use of drugs creates disciplinary problems for educators in schools. Cellular phones that are supposed to assist learners in their studies are unfortunately used to distract learners from their studies. The Department should introduce

measures to control the use of cellular phones in schools for both educators and learners.

#### 5.2.5. Finding 5: Challenges posed by alternative measures to corporal punishment

The Department of Education banned the use of corporal punishment in South African schools in 1996 (SASA: 1996). According to Section 10 of the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) educators are prohibited from using any form of physical punishment in schools. It has emerged that the principals who participated in this study generally still find it difficult to maintain discipline without using a cane. Some educators complained about the banning of corporal punishment. They feel disempowered and helpless to deal with the disruptive behaviour of learners in class. Educators face a challenge in implementing alternative disciplinary measures introduced by the Department of Education. They indicated that they never received any formal training on how to apply the alternative measures to discipline learners. Training by departmental officials focused on curriculum delivery rather than on matters relating to learner disobedience. Workshops presented by the Department rarely concentrated on learner discipline. School visits by departmental officials seemed to be limited to curriculum monitoring with little attention given to how principals and educators manage discipline in the classrooms. Generally educators were convinced that the support they received from the Department regarding learner discipline was minimal.

Both principals and educators indicated that alternative disciplinary measures are ineffective, inadequate, time wasting and actually punish educators. Ntuli (2012:79) is of the opinion that “alternative disciplinary measures are taxing because educators are compelled to leave learners who need their assistance and concentrate on learners with disciplinary problems.” This is linked closely with Mestry’s (2012:320) finding that educators experience situations where learners have “neither fear nor respect for educators and behave as they please.” Mestry (2012:321) adds that the “effectiveness of alternative disciplinary procedures” is largely dependent on “the type of learner, the type of environment where the school is situated and how parents instilled discipline

at home.” The implication is that the Department of Education did not do proper planning when they introduced alternative methods to corporal punishment.

The researcher is convinced that educators regard alternative measures introduced by the department negatively. According to van Wyk (2014:163) educators regard the “new official stipulations” as a matter of “sparing the rod and spoiling the child.” From the deliberations made by principals, the researcher got convinced that corporal punishment is still applied in Bahananwa Circuit secondary schools. Many educators are convinced that the collapse of discipline in schools is to a large extent due to the abolishment of corporal punishment, and that without corporal punishment managing discipline has become very difficult. Some participants felt that instead of banning corporal punishment, the Department of Education should have controlled or regulated it, thereby limiting the number of lashes to be applied and restricting it to certain parts of the body.

Contrary to what most participants believed, Kapueja (2014) maintains that corporal punishment promotes violence in schools. He adds that inflicting pain and bodily harm threatens learners. His view is supported by Gregan-Kaylor (2010:109) who claims that “corporal punishment tends to develop hostility and aggression as opposed to self-discipline.” According to the Bill of Rights, which is a section of the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996) no human being shall be “subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” The study has revealed that educators who no longer apply corporal punishment refrain from doing so not because it is the wrong thing to do, or because it is a violation of learners’ rights but to secure their jobs. This is because applying corporal punishment is according to the Department of Education, a dismissible offence. The argument against corporal punishment, as outlined by Shaiknag (2014:261) is that “it causes serious emotional damage to learners and affects their self-esteem.” It would appear that the Department still needs to do more to win the fight against the use of corporal punishment in schools successfully.

In summary, educators still find it difficult to apply alternative measures to corporal punishment. Some educators want corporal punishment to be reinstated because they



feel disempowered without it. The Department should focus more attention on learner discipline in schools.

### 5.3. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study the researcher makes the following recommendations:

#### 5.3.1. Training educators in emotional and social support

Finding 1 has revealed that there are educators who fail to provide emotional and social support to learners. Participants expressed the opinion that this may be caused by the fact that there are educators who have emotional and social challenges that are caused by family, financial, work-related or health problems. It may not be easy for an educator who him/herself is not emotionally stable to assist learners with emotional challenges. It is therefore advisable for the Department to secure psychologists who will frequently visit schools and provide psychological services. As suggested by Morrel (2011:88), “the aim of discipline should be educative and to nurture values of tolerance, respect and self-discipline in the learner rather than to victimise, seek revenge or belittle him/her.” Learners who experience serious emotional and social challenges should be identified to undergo psychological contact sessions. The Department should introduce subjects in schools that will address learner emotions and how to cope with emotional and social challenges. It should also introduce “intensive training programmes for educators with a view to improving the management of discipline and skill in the handling of learner behaviour,” (Morrel, 2011:89).

#### 5.3.2. Providing academic support

The purpose of any school is to ensure that there is an effective instruction and learning; therefore the right to education (Section 29 of the Constitution) is very important. Learners should regard a school as an establishment where they receive instruction from educators. It is therefore vital that educators thoroughly prepare themselves before going to class. Ntuli (2012) believes that “in schools that produce better results, effective instruction and learning take place due to good discipline, while poor results are the end products of ineffective instruction and learning, resulting from

poor discipline.” The Department should provide induction sessions for newly employed principals. Educators should be constantly workshopped on how to manage discipline effectively when dealing with learners of different intellectual abilities. Educators should expose learners to different career opportunities.

### 5.3.3. Parental Involvement

It has been highlighted that schools encounter problems with parents who are not cooperative. Parent meetings are poorly attended. Lofkivist (2015:50) states that parents have “a tendency of shifting their role of instilling good morals into their children to the educators and this causes problems for educators as they need parental support in dealing with disciplinary problems.” There should be a way to encourage parents to become active members and show interest in the education of their children, in particular matters relating to learner conduct and discipline. The Government should introduce punitive measures against parents who wilfully fail to attend school meetings. The Government should also workshop parents regarding applying non-violent disciplinary measures at their homes. Part of the new School Governing Body’s (SGB) induction should be on how parents should assist the school management in managing discipline. Parents should be made to feel that they own the school and should therefore ensure the safety of educators and learners. Ntuli (2012:81) suggests that “schools should allow parents ample opportunity to voice their opinions, concerns and views in meetings if schools truly want parents to be partners in education.”

### 5.3.4. Curbing learner ‘addiction’ to drugs and social media

Besides the carrying of dangerous weapons, participants alluded to the fact that mischievous learners bring along intoxicating substances to school, such as dagga. It is difficult for educators to deal with learners who are under the influence of dagga. It is difficult to discipline them. It is therefore recommended that the police should make unannounced visits to schools and search all learners. Parents should sign declaration letters to allow the police to search their children. Learners who are found in possession of drugs should face serious disciplinary measures. Nurses and social workers should frequently visit schools to educate learners on the danger of taking drugs at a young age.

Learners are nowadays lured away from educators by social media. Kapueja (2014:29) states that “television and computers can diminish creativity, imagination, and motivation and depress the attention span and the desire to persevere”. Besides being preoccupied with soap operas on television at home, learners spend much of their time on WhatsApp, Twitter, Facebook, video games and Instagram, which capture their attention and deprive them of legitimate learning experiences. Parents should discourage learners from taking their cellular phones to school; they should also monitor the programmes that learners watch on television and control the time spent by learners watching television. Educators should confiscate all cellular phones that are illegally brought to school and return them to learners at the end of the term. Learners should be given more homework to do, so that the time they spend watching television should be minimised.

#### 5.3.5. Training Educators in New Methods of Discipline

It has been revealed during the discussion that educators did not receive training on how to apply alternatives measures to discipline. According to Dupper and Dingu (2008:133) one of the main contributing factors to disciplinary problems in schools is that “educators are not equipped with alternative methods to corporal punishment, even after 1996 when corporal punishment in schools was abolished.” It is therefore recommended that the Department of Education train educators in how to apply alternative disciplinary measures effectively and successfully in schools. The Department should also put mechanisms in place to determine whether the discipline training received is being applied effectively and efficiently. The manual *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment* should be reviewed to address the current types of misbehaviour in secondary schools. The Department should annually organise workshops to help educators on how they can effectively provide emotional and social support to learners. Such workshops should help to improve discipline in schools. Principals as managers of schools should “have firm, co-ordinated and planned actions for the implementation of the general code of conduct for learners and school ethics” in store, (Louis *et al*, 2016:99).

## 5.4. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

### 5.4.1. Primary Research Question: What are educators' perceptions of their relationships with learners and discipline in rural secondary schools?

From the results of this study, it is fair to say that educators feel helpless and incapacitated to maintain discipline in schools. This perception negatively influences how educators relate to learners, hence the decline in discipline in classrooms. Schools do not have functional policies on discipline in place; educators use common sense to discipline learners, resulting in a lack of consistency that promotes indiscipline in schools. However, some educators are able to balance how they relate to learners while at the same time ensuring that learners are disciplined.

### 5.4.2. Secondary Question 1: How do educators describe their role as providers of emotional support to learners?

Based on the findings of the study, one can associate a decline in discipline with the inability of some educators to provide emotional support to learners. A learner's emotions may be disturbed by either the situation at home, at school or by his/her peers. Educators have to know their learners so well that it is easy for them to identify a learner who is emotionally bruised. Educators should be able to talk to such learners in a manner that will not aggravate the situation. They should also know the kind of support that they can give to emotionally bruised learners. A good relationship between educators and learners will make it easier for learners to share their most personal thoughts with educators.

### 5.4.3. Secondary Question 2: How do educators describe their role as providers of social support to learners?

It is evident from the study that learners who do not get adequate social support have a tendency of becoming badly disciplined. Educators find it difficult to deal with social bullies in schools. Learners' social problems might emanate from home, therefore parents should be involved if educators identify a learner who shows indications of some social problem. Schools should opt for psychological services if the situation gets out of hand. A learner who has social problems may lose interest in school, involve him- or herself in drugs and become undisciplined. Such a learner, if not well handled, may become dangerous to other learners and to educators.

5.4.4. Secondary Question 3: How do educators describe their role as providers of academic support to learners?

Educators should thoroughly prepare themselves when going to class. Classes should have classroom rules drawn up by educators and learners collectively. Learners should agree on disciplinary measures to be taken against whoever contravenes classroom rules. Educators should also expose learners to different career opportunities so that they will be motivated to learn. Schools should develop policies on learner discipline that are functional and applicable.

5.4.5. Secondary Question 4: What challenges do educators experience in their relationship with learners?

The study has revealed that some of the challenges that educators face on a daily basis that affect how they relate to learners are learners who do not want to do school work, disrespectful learners, learners who take drugs as well as learners who allow social media to replace their school books. Educators have revealed that it is hard to discipline a learner who is under the influence of drugs. Learners have become lazy to the extent that they always complain when they are given work to do. Educators have indicated the challenge posed by parents who do not want to be actively involved in the education of their own children.

5.4.6. Secondary Question 5: How do educators describe their relationship with learners in rural secondary schools?

The study has revealed that where educator-learner relationships are characterised by trust and respect, learners are disciplined and they enjoy schooling. Educators should be consistent when administering discipline and should appreciate good behaviour when it is due. Learner discipline should be the responsibility of all educators and should not be shifted to only some few educators or the principal. Educators relate well to learners who behave themselves.

## 5.5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study is mainly concerned with educator perceptions of power and discipline in rural secondary schools. The study was limited to five, black rural secondary schools in Bahananwa Circuit Office, Senwabarwana, Limpopo Province and the findings are

therefore applicable only to that area and the schools in the sample. The findings are not generalisable to other areas as the study is based on a small number of participants.

The study concentrated on the views of principals and educators only; it does not include the views of learners, parents, SGB members or the Department of Education.

The findings and the conclusions of the study are based on the interview data supplied by principals and educators. Other data collection methods, such as observation and the collection of documentary evidence could have added to the perception of educators regarding the power to discipline learners in rural secondary schools.

## 5.6. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The area that might need future research is related to the research question in this study. The researcher recommends that a similar study involving more schools and a much larger number of participants be conducted in order to generate generalisable findings.

This study concentrated only on the role played by principals and educators in maintaining discipline in schools. Research should be conducted on the responsibilities of other stakeholders, such as parents, SGB members, learners and the Department of Education in relation to the role that they play in maintaining discipline in rural secondary schools.

Further research is recommended to explore educators' perceptions of power to discipline learners in secondary schools, not only in Bahananwa circuit, but also in other districts in the province.

Much research still needs to be conducted in schools to determine the effect of the document titled *Alternatives to corporal punishment* and whether it indeed serves its purpose as an alternative to the use of corporal punishment. Additional studies on how new principals of rural secondary schools in Bahananwa Circuit are trained in the kind of leadership that will lead to successful management of discipline in schools, and the transformation of education in Limpopo Province, will benefit the education system.

## 5.7. OVERVIEW AND CONCLUSION

As indicated in Chapter 1, the researcher embarked on this research journey to investigate educators' perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural secondary schools. This study was necessitated by the continued decline in discipline in secondary schools, which became evident after the Department of Education banned the use of corporal punishment in schools. The rationale for the study was to find out what principals and educators do, or do not do to cause a decline in learner discipline in schools.

By using a qualitative research approach the researcher was able to focus on the subjective views and experiences of the participants. Participants revealed steps they took in supporting learners who needed emotional, social and academic support in order to promote the smooth running of the school. The above concepts formed the backbone of this study. The researcher used an interpretative case study as his research design to reveal how educators relate to learners and how the relationships impact on discipline in school. Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection strategy. This strategy was preferred because it is flexible and it allowed the researcher to discover how individuals think and feel about the topic in question, and why they hold certain opinions.

Purposive sampling was used to select five principals and ten educators from five secondary schools in the rural Bahananwa circuit, which is in Limpopo province. Principals were sampled because they shape discipline in schools. Out of the two educators sampled from each school one had been teaching for more than five years while the other one has been in the teaching field for less than five years.

The findings confirm that learner discipline is indeed a challenge to educators; that although corporal punishment was suspended in schools, principals and educators with long service of teaching still administer it as a means to discipline learners. Principals acknowledged that some disciplinary measures take much to employ, while other disciplinary measures seem to be ineffective in ensuring that discipline is maintained in schools. The study has revealed that there are educators who do not provide adequate emotional and social support to learners; this negatively influences the relationship of trust that should exist between educators and learners. As a result,

learners become undisciplined. It has also been revealed that learners who do not get proper educational support develop poor performance, lose trust in a school and become unruly. Participants revealed that learners who use drugs as well as those who have become addicted to social media are difficult to discipline. Parents do not do enough to assist principals and educators in the education of their children.

There is a need for the Department of Education to assist educators in managing discipline by training them to ensure that learner discipline is maintained. Educators should receive training on how to provide emotional and social support to learners. Schools should develop effective means to ensure that parents attend meetings and that they play a part in ensuring that their children respect one another and the educators. Parents should honour invitations to attend hearings that relate to their children who have contravened school rules. They should take responsibility for discouraging children from using drugs such as dagga. It is recommended that police should conduct random searches to confiscate drugs that learners might bring to school.

The researcher recommends that further investigation be done in relation to why learner discipline has collapsed in school; future studies should sample a large number of participants to produce results that may be generalised. Further study should involve the part played by other stakeholders in learner discipline, such as learners themselves, the school governing body, parents and the Department of Education.



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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

##### **TITLE: EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF POWER RELATIONS AND DISCIPLINE IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

##### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this study is to explore the perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural schools and how educators use their power to discipline misbehaving learners.

##### **SOURCES OF DATA TO BE COLLECTED**

Data will be collected by conducting semi-structured interviews with at least 5 principals and 10 educators; out of which 5 will be those with less than 5 years teaching experience and the other 5 comprising educators with more than 5 years teaching experience.

##### **ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY**

All participants are assured that their identity as well as their responses will be regarded as completely confidential at all times and will not be made available to any unauthorized user. The participation of individuals in this study is completely voluntary. Should any participants wish to discontinue their participation during the course of the research project, he or she will be free to do so at any stage, up to and including after the completion of the actual interview.

Precautions will be taken to ensure that no participant will be harmed in any way by this research or their participation therein. No participant will be named or identified in any way – should the researcher wish to quote from an interview transcript, a pseudonym will be allocated to that particular participant.

Every participant will be given an opportunity to verify the transcription of the discussion/ his or her interview.

## **DURATION OF INTERVIEW**

This actual interview should take no longer than 50 minutes per participant. Please note that the discussion will be recorded and then transcribed. Every participant will be given the opportunity to validate the transcription as an accurate reflection of the discussion and of their individual part therein.

## APPENDIX B INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do you regard yourself to be emotionally supportive to learners? Please explain.
2. How do you deal with/discipline learners who show sign of emotional instability at this school?
3. According to you, are there educators at this school who do not provide emotional support to learners? What do they do?
4. What do you think could be done (by either the school management or the department) to improve your emotional support to learners?
5. Do you regard yourself to be providing adequate social support to learners at this school? Please explain.
6. How do you discipline learners who do not regard/respect other learners as social beings?
7. What do you think other educators should do to provide social support to learners?
8. What does the school policy say regarding learners who behave in an anti-social way?
9. Which preventive measures do you employ at this school to encourage learners to develop self-control and self-discipline?
10. How do you deal with learners with different intellectual abilities (learning abilities) in your classes?
11. How do you assist learners with leaning barriers (disruptive) in your school so that they may also pass at the end of the terms?
12. How do you discipline learners who fail to do their homework, fail tests or absent themselves from school without valid reason? Please explain.
13. How do you provide academic support to learners at this school?
14. What kind of challenges do you experience in your daily relationship with learners? How do you deal with those challenges?
15. How do you describe your relationship with learners in this school.



APPENDIX C  
INVITATION LETTER FOR PARTICIPANTS

06 March 2017

The Principal  
..... school

Dear Sir/Madam,

**PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY ON EDUCATOR PERCEPTIONS OF POWER  
RELATIONS AND DISCIPLINE IN RURAL SCHOOLS**

I am currently enrolled for a Master's degree in Education, Management and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is ***“Educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural schools.”*** This study is therefore concerned with the investigation into the perceptions of educators of their relationships with learners and how those relationships influence the way in which educators manage learner behaviour.

It is therefore my great honour and privilege to be able to invite you as an individual to become a voluntary participant in this research project.

Please allow me the opportunity to explain the scope and responsibility of your participation, should you choose to participate. It is my intention to gather the information I require for this research project by interviewing the principals and the other two educators at each participating school - of the two educators, one should have more than five years teaching experience, while the other one should be less than five years in the teaching field.

I have included here for your information a schedule of the interview questions I intending using to collect the data I require.

Please understand that the decision for you to participate is entirely voluntary and that permission for your participation will also be secured from the school and the Limpopo Department of Education. Please also be assured that the information obtained during the research study will be treated confidentiality, with not even the school or the Department of Education having access to the raw data obtained from the interviews. At no time will either you as an individual or your school be mentioned by name or indeed be allowed to be identified by any manner or means whatsoever in the research report.

At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. This research study presents a unique opportunity for you and your school to get involved in the process of research aimed at exploring ways and means to improve relationships between educators and learners and therefore discipline and learner behaviour in South African schools. If you decide to participate in this research study, kindly indicate this by completing the consent form at the end of this letter.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in service of education,

Mr TT Tauatswala  
Student researcher  
072 0205 050

Dr. E Eberlein  
Supervisor  
eric.eberlein@up.ac.za

**APPENDIX D**  
**LETTER of INFORMED CONSENT**

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED**  
**Educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural schools.**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, hereby voluntarily and willingly agree to participate as an individual in the above-mentioned study introduced and explained to me by Mr TT Tauatswala, currently a student enrolled for an MEd degree in Management, Leadership and Policy Studies at the University of Pretoria.

I further declare that I understand, as they were explained to me by the researcher, the aim, scope, purpose, possible consequences and benefits and methods of collecting information proposed by the researcher, as well as the means by which the researcher will attempt to ensure the confidentiality and integrity of the information he collects.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Full name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX E  
LETTER TO THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Researcher: TAUATSWALA TT

01 March 2017

The Director  
Limpopo Department of Education

Dear Sir/Madam,

**REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN SCHOOLS  
POLOKWANE DISTRICT, BAHANANWA CIRCUIT**

I am currently enrolled for a master's degree in Educational Leadership at the University of Pretoria. Part of the requirements for the awarding of this degree is the successful completion of a significant research project in the field of education.

The title of my approved research study is "***Educator perceptions of power relations and discipline in rural schools***". This study is therefore concerned with investigating how educators model their relationship with learners and how that relationship influence learner discipline in schools.

The participants in this study will be principals and educators because they are the ones most likely to be able to provide the information required to answer the primary and secondary research questions. These activities will be done after school hours so that there will be no disruption of the smooth running of the school

Participation in this study is voluntary and the individual participants have a right to withdraw at any stage.

The research project will be conducted under the supervision of Dr Eric Eberlein of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria.

At the end of the research study you will be provided with a copy of the research report containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. This research study presents a unique opportunity to the Department to get involved in the process of research aimed at understanding the perceptions and the experiences that educators have in their relationships with learner and how those relationships influence discipline in schools.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in service of education,

Mr Tauatswala Tarch  
Student researcher

Dr Eric Eberlein  
Supervisor

**APPENDIX F  
RESPONSE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Private Bag X 9711  
POLOKWANE  
0700  
Tel.: 015 285 7300  
Fax: 015 285 7499

LIMPOPO

**Provincial Government  
Republic of South Africa  
Department of Education  
Polokwane District  
Confidential**

Ref: 2/2/2  
Enq: Mphaphuli AJ  
Tel No.: 015 285 7410  
Email: MphaphuliAJ@edu.limpopo.gov.za  
Date: 01 March 2017

To Tauatswala TT  
PO Box 1237  
BOCHUM  
0790

University of Pretoria: Faculty of Education

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN  
SCHOOLS; POLOKWANE DISTRICT, BAHANANWA CIRCUIT**

**Title: "Educator-learner relationship and discipline, the  
perceptions and experiences of educators"**

1. The above matter refers.
2. The Department wishes to inform you that your request to conduct a research has been approved

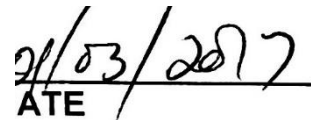
The following conditions should be considered:

3. The following conditions should be considered:

- 3.1 The research should not have any financial implication for Limpopo Department of Education.
  - 3.2 Arrangements should be made with both the circuit offices and schools concerned.
  - 3.3 The conduct of research should not in any way disrupt the academic programs in schools.
  - 3.4 The research should not be conducted during the time of examinations, especially the fourth term
  - 3.5 During the study, research ethics should be practiced, in particular the principle of voluntary participation (the people involved should be respected).
  - 3.6 Upon completion of research study, the researcher shall share the final product of the research with Department.
4. Furthermore, you are expected to produce this letter at Circuit and Schools where you intend to conduct your research as evidence that you are permitted to conduct the research.
  5. The Department appreciates the contribution that you wish to make and wish you success in your research.

Bestwishes

  
R MOTHEMANE KD  
DISTRICT DIRECTOR

  
ATE