# CHAPTER 3

# THE INFLUENCE OF LIVED EXPERIENCES
# ON CURRENT BEHAVIOUR

## 3.1     INTRODUCTION

This chapter gives a conceptual understanding of the influence of lived experiences on current behaviour. Nieuwenhuis and Potvin (2004), claim that we do not learn from our experiences per se, but from our reflection on our experiences. The moment an incident in our lives takes on significance that causes us to reflect on the incident, it enables us to distil from it some important guidelines that we may use to guide our future decisions in similar situations (Nieuwenhuis & Potvin: 2004). In terms of this study, it is argued that significant incidents in the educators' past, related to discipline, may explain current school discipline practices. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature that may shed light on how lived experiences influence behaviour. Lived experiences, however, cannot be divorced from the socio-political realities (context) within which they occurred. This chapter begins with a discussion of the socio-political environment in which educators grew up; it then moves to a consideration of some of the theories that explain how lived-experiences influence current behaviour.

## 3.2     HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

South Africans were significantly shaped by the years of separation and oppression (Leatham 2005, 13). Education became the fulcrum of what happened in the country during the 1976 unrest, and remained at the centre of the liberation struggle thus impacting on the lives of learners and educators in the system.  It goes without saying, that many children were exposed to the multiple traumas of witnessing death, being subjected to indiscriminate arrest and beatings (Rock 1997: 86).  It is also evident that the choices made by people are constrained by the history of their country and how their

lives are formed by it. To show some understanding of the educators' lived experiences, it is vital to take into consideration of how the system of the past shaped their realities of today and the future. Educators experience disciplinary problems daily in their schools, this was confirmed by former Director General of Education, Mr Thami Mseleku, at the launch of Self Defence Training Programme for Learners on 24 May 2002, when he said:

> Our schools, throughout the country, have become notorious for the unacceptable levels of criminal and violent behaviour that plagues them.

Many of us have even come to accept this high level of crime in our schools as inevitable, this is supported by Benjamin (2003, 16) when he states:

> As crime in South Africa spirals out of control, schools as microcosms of communities, manifest similar incidents of crime and violence

Taking South African's social economic and political past into consideration, Hickson and Kriegler (1996, 32) comment that as far as endurance and perseverance are concerned, African children have learnt at an early age in their lives to tolerate the pain of seeing their sisters and brothers being killed in front of them. Participants in the study were no exception. Although South Africa has progressed and grown into new democratic political and socio-economic system, educators in our schools still remember the hardships they faced and how their own educators used corporal punishment to restore order in the classroom. The new democratically elected government has brought about significant changes in our education system, and these have influenced educators' need to become part of the global community while keeping in touch with their traditional value systems as received from their parents, community and their educators. Currently there are parents and educators who still see corporal punishment as an effective method of maintaining discipline in schools. I assume that the fact that the declaration (prior to 1994) of South Africa as a Christian country served to entrench the practice of corporal punishment in schools for years – corporal punishment gained a 'respectable' air and this has made it difficult for some educators to let it go.  The ban on corporal punishment by section 10 of the South African Schools Act resulted in the demise of discipline in many schools.   Some schools have maintained corporal

punishment with some interestingly positive grade results. Reasoma High School being a case in point (Msomi 1999, 12).

Apartheid on the other hand was inherently a violent and alienating system for the majority of South Africans. Its exclusively white parliament passed the Population Registration Act of 1950 and the Group Areas Acts of 1950 and 1966. According to Richter (1997) in Stevens and Lockhart (1997, 251), forced removals and relocation of different "racial" groupings, namely Africans, Coloureds, Indians, and whites, resulted in the destruction of many black communities. Consequently, black people struggled to cope with everyday life; their sense of self- worth and dignity also suffered. The Group Areas Acts had a devastating impact on black families for two reasons. They uprooted black families from communities in which they had been located for many generations, which was in itself an exceedingly traumatic and destabilizing event for the evicted families. Learners in schools were also affected. Secondly, most families who had established proper homes for themselves were relocated to ghettos with poor quality housing without basic services such as water, electricity and ablution facilities.

The above legislation promoted the migrant labour system (which had arisen as early as the nineteenth century) and soon influx control laws were passed to prevent black people from entering the cities. Whole communities were destroyed by mandating programmes of forced removals which were often carried out at gun-point. Apartheid brutally suppressed dissent to the extent of committing cold-blooded slaughter of women and children; it destroyed the lives of countless children through starvation, creation of parentless homes, and inadequate health care. It also deprived millions of black children of a decent education. Another impact that these moves had is that children and their parents suffered a variety of debilitating psychological problems such as anger, anxiety, depression and behavioural problems. Many children were brought up in homes that had insufficient or non-existent financial resources, contributing to stressful daily living and having to struggle to survive through each day, placing them at constant risk. Bradley and Whiteside-Mansell (1997, 16) suggest that families with incomes significantly below the society average frequently experience psychological hardship. The stress of regular

uncertainty and lack of control is psychologically debilitating. Leatham (2005, 74) also says constant psychological strain weakens the individual's ability to cope and adapt to the environment. Learners who lived through the student uprising of 1976 certainly had their education irretrievably damaged and they were emotionally affected.

It is therefore noted that education has been both a casualty of, and a catalyst for conflict in South Africa. The 1976 Soweto student uprising was re-lived by those closely involved in the traumatic events when they testified before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (SASA 1996, 1). Participants in this study did not indicate that they were directly involved in the riots, but my point is that South African children were touched by all the chaos and suffering around them and were affected by what happened in Soweto in 1976. The image of 12 year-old Hector Pieterson being carried through the dusty road of Soweto, is still fresh in the minds of fellow students. Three participants in the study were about the same age as Hector Pieterson in 1976, and every year we celebrate 16 June as a holiday. On this day learners do not attend school. The protests of 1976 were a motivating factor that triggered a movement against minority rule that finally ended in 1994; South Africa is still celebrating the role played by young people in the fight against apartheid. This to me is an indication that what happened in the past can influence what we are or what we do today. The intention in this chapter is to explore how lived experiences can influence current behaviour.

While many black children of 1976 have little understanding of what happened on 16 June 1976, they all understood its consequences and many of them are aware of the factors that led to the protest. For example, the introduction of the Bantu Education Act, Act No. 47 of 1953 made way for a separate and decidedly unequal education system. This system occasioned massive national resistance and remained a cause of deep resentment until it triggered the Soweto uprising in 1976, after the mandatory introduction of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction. This was the climax of years of political oppression which the parents of the children had endured for almost three decades of National Party rule (since 1948). The young learners were already angry

because of the humiliation heaped on their parents by the apartheid system and by their parents' apparent inability to resist (Rock 1997, 9).

Unrest continued to simmer. Anger among the black youth increased and the overt use of physical and psychological violence was the order of the day; gang-related crime increased dramatically (Mathabane 1986, 260). The perceived "total onslaught" by the liberation forces was met by a "total strategy" which included the occupation of the townships by the army, and the promotion of "black-on-black" violence by orchestrating state violence through officially recognised hit squads.

In the aftermath of the Soweto riots, the police plan was to use violence to end the terror in the townships (Mathabane 1986, 260). Many black people began to wonder whether violence was proving as successful as it had been in the past (Gerhart 1978, 309). The government sought to silence political activity by detaining black political leaders. This led to many prominent African National Congress (ANC) leaders being detained or fleeing the country to go into exile (Gerhart 1978, 1). As a result a political vacuum was created which was filled by many youths who stepped into the political arena to occupy those positions vacated by their predecessors. They were ill-equipped for this role and it took their attention away from their school work. Alternative structures were created where small groups of children and adolescents would discuss Marxism, Socialism and the "curriculum of resistance". This gave further impetus to the struggle but meant that the youth, which had previously been exposed to inferior education was henceforth exposed to no education at all (Rock 1997, 14).

During 1976 unrest broke out in our country because learners wanted their voice to be heard; they could not tolerate the political situation in the country any longer. Black education had to be suspended for some time. Hence the popular slogan of the times: "Liberation now, education later". Thirty years later the same learners are now educators. This is confirmed by Mseleku (2002, 2) when he says: "A child born in 1976 came into one of the darkest and most brutal periods of South Africa's apartheid rule". Those who were at schools experienced trauma. Educators and learners in schools were by and large

both victims and products of the struggle. Soudien and Alexander (2003, 257) write that for 50 years (1948-1990), the system of apartheid held most South Africans in a state of mental and physical oppression. During the Soweto riots learners roamed around, they did not attend classes. There was no schooling and educators were not in control. This created a culture of resistance that outlived the liberation gained in 1994. This feeling of not being in control is confirmed by Toby (1998, 77). Current educators face a similar situation; they are unable to control their learners. When they themselves were in school in 1976, their schools were "austere" cold places where pupils learnt with fear (Squelch 2000, 5). As educators they are presently intimidated by learners and maintain that they now feel disarmed and powerless because they are no longer allowed to use corporal punishment (Hardin 2004, 129).

Vandeyer and Killen (2006, 3) note that it has been more than thirteen years since the legal termination of apartheid in 1994 and that various policies and procedures have now been developed. During this period the South African Schools Act, (SASA) has abolished corporal punishment. This means that educators have had to completely change the way they manage classroom discipline; this is in addition to dealing with disruptive schools for which they are ill-prepared.

Scherg (2003, 5) indicates that traumatization involves feelings of helplessness, loss of control, lack of trust and depression. Traumatised learners and educators of the time retain their experiences of violence and loss of life. They tend to dwell on the past rather than looking towards the future.

### 3.2.1 Educators in a changing South African society

In a certain sense, what happened in this country during the years of struggle shaped the future of the South African education system. Bureaucratic schools of the past are different from current democratic schools. The apartheid government alienated learners from their educators and the youth developed an antagonistic attitude towards educators. Parents regarded (and many still do) corporal punishment as the most effective method of maintaining discipline, but this was prohibited in schools. This contrast between home

and school is confusing to educators, who see themselves as acting *in loco parentis*, as well as to the children

Thirteen years of democracy in South Africa has brought about changes for educators; it has in many respects brought a wider exposure to more western and globalised value systems. Currently, educators are exposed to western ideologies, but at the same time they are confronted by the fading African traditional values of community support and are often dependant on these values. This change in the education system is becoming increasingly noticeable. In the school context the involvement of the School Governing Body (SGB), parents, educators, Unions, Representative Council of Learners (RCL) and all stakeholders with an interest in education have to be aligned to the vision of the school on learner discipline, because this will help in promoting the culture of teaching and learning (SASA 1996). The role of these structures mentioned above need to be clarified from time to time and all these parties should plan and strategize together for the benefit of the school and the community. Government rhetoric of "making the education enterprise everybody's business" can only lay claim to being realised when there is re-inculcation of disciplinary values among learners and educators through the enforcement of existing relevant prescripts and the use of a Code of Conduct.

The government has introduced alternatives to corporal punishment in the hope that teaching and learning would become more effective. Unfortunately certain educators claim that alternatives to corporal punishment are impractical. Each school is required to have classroom rules. It is argued that if classroom rules are tight and closely monitored, the learner will behave well in school, but unfortunately very few schools are implementing classroom rules. The official policy also reiterates the importance of each school making learners aware of the Code of Conduct. All schools are governed by the South African Schools' Act which explains clearly how to use the Code. Unfortunately some of the schools do not use this – as I discovered during my visits to the three sample schools.

The stimulus for this study derives from my first-hand experiences which I gained while working with schools where the discipline of learners is a major challenge. The research results will indicate that classroom discipline practices were consistently represented as characteristics of participants' early school years (Bernard 2001, 2). In this regard Zirpoli and Melloy (1993, 447) claim that:

> Educators are the adults most likely to influence the behaviour of adolescents if the adolescent is still in school.

This study will therefore indicate whether or not participants were influenced by their educators. Rowling (2005, 44) indicates that "Educators interactions with learners may trigger the child in the educator". This will mean that whenever a learner misbehaves, an educator instinctively thinks of how he/she was punished; perhaps educators also fear that learners will rise against them just as they resisted apartheid rule in 1976. Current educators tend to perceive it as a sign of disrespect if learners air their own views.

## 3.3    THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Merriam (1998, 46-49), explains that the literature review grounds the validity of data collected once it has been interpreted and presented within thick descriptive empirical findings. This chapter provides a literature review that seeks to support and enhance the understanding of educators' lived experiences. Theories included in this chapter deal with personality development and change in behaviour. These theories supplement one another to provide an explanation of the impact of lived experiences on current behaviour. Swart and Pettipher (2005, 9) see a theory as useful in that it provides a set of organised principles that together with contextual knowledge, generate insight into a specific situation.

### 3.3.1  Psychoanalytic theory

Erikson pursued psychoanalytic teaching far beyond Freud's earlier formulation (Maier 1969, 6). Erikson accepts the Freudian model of the psychosexual energy-laden organism.

This energy exists from birth, and generates all psychological processes. Erikson calls this energy libido. This libido encompasses two diametrically opposed human strivings; these create a fundamental polarity (Maier 1969, 23). According to Erikson, there is the drive to live, to gratify oneself, and to reach out beyond oneself. Erikson is in full agreement with Freud and assumes that the emotional (libidinal) aspect of life permeates all human functions. The nature of emotional content determines the basic core of man's make-up. Erikson and Freud are concerned with the emotional relationship between individuals. Each individual's life – his manner of perceiving, thinking, doing and feeling, depends largely upon the relative balance of the three major affective processes; the id, the ego and the superego (Davenport 1989, 112; Maier 1969, 24).

Davenport (1989, 12) indicates that Freudian psychoanalysis theory provides an explanation for the relationship between the childhood experiences and later personality characteristics. Freud's theory is a stage and ages approach; it links physiological maturation with psychological changes. It is argued that children do not just grow up quite independent of others, they respond to the things which are close and important to them. Hence parents could acquire a better understanding of their children's feelings and problems by playing a major role in their development

Freud's impact on the study of human development is diverse. His theories about the influence of infantile experiences on later behaviour led psychologists to study infants and young children intensively (Biehler and Hudson 1976, 59). Freud suggested that behaviour was often controlled by unconscious memories and his description of defence mechanisms contributed to understanding types of child and adult behaviour. Despite the differences in Erikson's and Freud's approaches, they are both concerned with social, moral and emotional development.

### 3.3.2 Learning theory

Learning theorists have shown little interest in the stages of development. According to them it is possible and profitable to interpret human development in terms of learning theory principles; this is done by concentrating on how behaviour is changed by

experiences (Biehler and Hudson 1976, 77). Ivan Pavlov, John B. Watson and B.F Skinner are all proponents of learning theory. For the purposes of this section, I will focus on Watson and Skinner's contributions. Watson studied infants. He exposed each baby in the nursery to the same series of experiences, holding their arms at their sides or tickling their feet and describing their overt physical reactions. As he was collecting data, Watson began to speculate how one experience comes to be associated with another. According to Skinner, when an organism emits behaviour, certain actions are reinforced and strengthened; therefore the behaving organism is controlled by reinforcing experiences. Skinner claims that parents and educators emulate the fictional child-rearing specialists of Walden Two by assuming that all behaviour is determined by experiences and by doing everything possible to shape the behaviour of children systematically (Biehler and Hudson 1976, 83).

### 3.3.3 Social-learning theory

Psychologists who endorsed the behaviourist position were dissatisfied with aspects of Skinner's view of learning and behaviour. Social learning theory is used in this chapter to look at how the interaction of participants in the study with their educators and their particular environments affected their behaviour. Bergan and Dunn (1976, 163) defined social development as that branch of developmental psychology concerned with development changes in the manner in which individuals interact with one another. Two theoretical positions were presented concerning the issue of how social development occurs. The trait-state view asserts that stable personality characteristics evolve as a result of hereditary and environmental factors. In contrast, socio-learning holds that stimulus conditions (rather than personality characteristics) influence behaviour in a social situation. I preferred to use social learning theory in my particular research because it looks at the system and settings within which an individual develops and functions. Dollard and Miller in Bergan and Dunn (1976, 136) suggest that social learning occurs when an individual is rewarded for matching the behaviour of another person. Bandura quoted in Bergan and Dunn (1976) also mentions that social learning occurs simply as a result of observing what others do – people imitating others. Bandura, in Biehler and Hudson (1976, 87) concludes that behaviourists overemphasised manipulative control

because they assumed that reinforcement influences behaviour without the conscious involvement of the individual. Bandura further suggests that human beings are capable of choosing how they will respond to many situations because many types of human behaviour are under **anticipatory control,** which implies that children and adults are capable of observing the effects of their actions, and they are also able to anticipate what will happen under certain conditions.

Within the social learning viewpoint, the primary role of innate factors is to govern the manner in which the environment affects behaviour (Bergan and Dunn 1976, 139). Educators interact on a daily basis with learners from a particular socio-economic environment. For teaching and learning to take place, learners are the recipients of education, and teachers should provide knowledge. Parents also play a major role in the education of their children; they are expected to co-operate with the educators and play an active role in school matters.

Social learning theorists acknowledge the validity of principles of operant conditioning, but they also stress the significance of observation and imitation. Robert Sears, a pioneer in social learning theory, quoted in Biehler and Hudson (1976, 85), began with the assumption that child behaviour is learned. He then reasoned that parents have control over many factors that influence childhood learning and that they have the primary responsibility for helping children move from dependency to independence. Sears, in Biehler and Hudson (1976), hoped to discover how associations established when a child was dependent on the parent might influence later behaviour. Sears goes on to say that the term **social learning theory** was chosen to refer to learning but that much of this learning is social in that it occurs when children interact with educators, parents and peers. What the child learns is also social in the sense that acquired forms of behaviour make it possible for one individual to interact in satisfying ways with others.

### 3.3.4  Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of human development

This ecological perspective stresses the importance of understanding the relationship between the organism and various environmental systems (Hetherington and Parker

1993, 19). Children are seen as active participants in creating their own environment. Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is multi-dimensional and it suggests that the level of interacting systems such as biological, psychological, social and cultural result in growth development and change (Smith *et al.* 2003, 9). Individuals and groups may be understood more clearly within different social contexts, as well as in terms of the way changes in the macro structures of the system influence those in the micro-systems (Swart and Pettipher 2005, 10).

The importance of Bronfenbrenner's ecological model is the premise that the ecology of the child is never static. Thus development involves the interaction of a changing child with a changing matrix of ecological systems (Hetherington and Parker 1993, 22). Bronfenbrenner is of the opinion that the ecological environment is a set of four nested systems. The most familiar is micro-system, that is what an individual experiences in a given setting. For a young child, a micro-system may consist of the school's environment with educators and learners; another micro-system may be the home environment with parents and siblings. The meso-system is the next level which is a link among settings in which the individual directly participates. A home environment for example might affect the child in its school performance or confidence with its peers. The exo-system is the third level. It forms a link to settings in which the individual does not participate directly. It does however affect the work environment and may influence learners. A parent's work environment can affect his children's behaviour. Brofenbrenner claims that we view human development as the process of understanding our ecological environment. The child firstly understands his caregiver, then his home and later the school environment. .

The ecosystems perspective as a meta-theory explains the interrelation of the organism with the physical environment which strives to maintain a balance. Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana (2002, 44-50) mentioned that eco-systematic perspective is concerned with how the individual and groups on different levels of the social context function within dynamic interdependent and interactive relationship.

### 3.3.5  Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory

None of the theories I have discussed thus far address the impact of the children's social and cultural worlds on their cognitive development. One theory that places a great deal of emphasis on culture is Lev Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory. The theory identifies an interaction between the child's social world and his cognitive development. Vygotsky places emphasis on culture in which the child develops. According to him development is as a product of social interaction between people who solve their problems together (Hetherington and Parkerr 1993, 332).

One form of instruction that is inspired by Vygotskian thinking that has received attention in recent years is termed scaffolding. Scaffolding is an instructional process by which the educator adjusts the amount and type of support offered to the child that is best suited to his level of development. According to Smith *et al*. (2003, 55), the norms of one culture can differ extensively from those of another and radically affect the ways in which children learn. One culture may place a high value on an individual achievement, while another may stress the achievement of the group.

### 3.3.6  Theories of moral development

Theories of moral development are relevant to this study because moral issues are related to human behaviour. Young children are highly dependent on adults for their ideas of right and wrong because they are particularly susceptible to basic moral principles such as honesty, trustworthiness and integrity..

Kohlberg submits that moral development goes beyond the process wherein a learner internalises society rules. Moral development is more than a process of social learning. . As learners learn to think more abstractly, so does their moral reasoning... Piaget as quoted in Kohleberg (1987  276)  believes that it is by means of experiences of role-taking in the peer group that the child gradually transforms the basis for moral jugdgement from authoritarian commands to internal principles.. Kohlberg  describes three main levels of moral development with each stage having two levels in the following table**:**

**Table: 4 Kohlberg Six Moral Stages**

| Level and and stage | What is Right | Reasons for Doing Right | Social Perspective of stage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Level I: Preconventional<br>Stage 1-Heteronomous morality | To avoid breaking rules backed by punishment, obedience for its own sake and avoiding physical damage to persons and property | Avoidance of punishment and the superior power of authorities. | *Egocentric point of view.*<br>Does not consider the interest of others or recognize that they differ from the actor's; does not relate two points of view. Action are considered physically rather than in terms of psychological interests of others. Confusion of authority's perspective with one's own. |
| Stage 2-Individualism<br>Instrumental,<br>Purpose, and Exchange | Following rules only when it is to someone's immediate interest, acting to meet one's own interests and needs and letting others do the same. | To serve one's own needs or interests in a world where you have to recognize other people have their interest too. | *Concrete*<br>*individualistic perspective.*<br>Aware that everybody has his own interest to pursue and these conflict, so that right is relative-(In the concrete individualistic sense) |
| Level II: Conventional<br>Stage 3-Mutual<br>Interpersonal<br>Expectations<br>Relationships, and Interpersonal Conformity | Living up to what is expected by people close to you or what people generally expect of people in your role brother, friend etc. | The need to be a good person in your own eyes and those others. Your caring of others. | *Perspective of the individual relationship with other individuals.*<br>Aware of shared feelings, agreements, and expectations which take primacy over individual interest |
| Stage 4-Social System and Conscience | Fulfilling the actual duties to which you have agreed. Right is also contributing to society, the group or institution. | To keep the institution going as a whole, to avoid the breakdown in system "If everyone did it" or the imperative of conscience to meet one's defined obligations | *Differentiates societal point of view from interpersonal agreement or motives*<br>Takes the point of views of the system that defines roles and rules |
| Level III: Postconventional, or Principled<br>Stage 5-Social Contract or Utility And Individual Rights | Some nonrelative values and rights like life and liberty must be upheld in any society and regardless of majority opinion | Concern that laws and duties be based on rational calculation of overall utility. | *Prior-to-society perspective*<br>Considers moral and legal points of view, recognizes that they sometimes conflict and finds difficult to intergrate them |
| Stage 6- Universal<br>Ethical Principles | Principles are universal principles of justice;the equality of human rights and respect for the dignity of human being as individual persons | Thebelief as a Rational person in the validity of universal moral principles and a sense of personal commitment to them | Perspective is that of any rational individual recognizing the nature of morality or the fact that persons are ends in themselves |

(Source: Kohlberg 1984, 174-177)

For youngsters at Kohlberg's pre-conventional level, punishment and obedience still determines what is wrong and right. As their abstract abilities increase, youngsters begin to understand that if I do A, I will be punished, while B will bring something pleasant. At

this stage they are not concerned with moral correctness; they want to avoid the consequences of inappropriate behaviour (Travers *et al.* 1993, 109). At second level or stage two, learners' behaviour is influenced by external factors (Niewman & Niewman 1997, 469). Learners define right and wrong in terms of what authority figures say and they attempt to avoid punishment.

Davenport (1989, 180) also provides an assessment of Freudian theory with regard to his views on moral development. Despite the fact that he indicates that Freud's views are controversial in certain respects, Davenport feels they have merit and lists them as follows:

(a) Freud offered one of the first and most complete explanations of moral development in children when he claimed that one of the three parts of personality, the superego, developed to guide the moral behaviour of children.

(b) Freud claimed that three to four year-old children would be more likely to imitate the moral, attitudes and behaviour of the parent with whom they are identifying than anyone else.

(c) That the children learn their moral values from the same sex parent.

Smith *et al.* (2003, 257) distinguish moral reasoning from moral behaviour. They describe moral reasoning as the way we reason, or judge, whether an action is right or wrong. It is different from moral behaviour because often we might reason that it is right to give money to charity but never actually do so. Piaget (1932), quoted by Smith *et al.* (2003, 257), identifies three stages of children's awareness of rules: in the early years (4 to 5 years) rules are understood while in the second stage (9 to 10 years), rules were seen as coming from a higher authority, for example from parents and educators and could not be changed. In the third stage (10 years and upward), rules were mutually agreed by the players and were seen as open to change. Smith *et al.* (2003, 258) deduced from Piaget's study (1932) that "as the child's conception of rules changes, from being absolutely fixed to their being mutually agreed, so a unilateral respect for adult or higher authority changes towards an equality with peers". Smith *et al.* conclude that this explains the increasing independence from parents and the growing interaction with same-aged peers.

In conclusion it is worth noting that school offers a rich social experience for learners and educators, it provides opportunities for activities that aid moral development. When educators show by example how discipline is to be maintained, this is one instance of promoting moral development.

## 3. 4   HOW LIVED EXPERIENCES IMPACT ON CURRENT BEHAVIOUR

Levy (2001, 333) points out that while learners are young, their relationship with their parents in terms of understanding where the source of authority comes from is uncomplicated. But as learners enter adolescence and their logical and abstract reasoning skills increase, they begin to test the limits of new adolescent-adult roles. They are in daily confrontation with decisions that challenge the standing rules and provoke authority, for example by experimenting with drugs, sex and alcohol; challenging household chores; and defying decisions pertaining to personal appearance (Frankel 1998, 28; Levy 2001, 333).

Frankel (1998, 28) points out that this challenge on the part of the adolescent is an attempt to discover their own meanings, a search for someone worthy of authority, someone who will enrich their sense of being alive. But, at the same time, culture transmits forceful messages, both spoken and unspoken, to adolescents regarding their place in society and a willingness to tolerate their developing struggle to form an identity.

According to Plug *et al*. (1989, 93), experience refers to undergoing an activity and accumulating knowledge based on learning in authentic activities; in totality it refers to the direct observed content of the conscious mind at a specific and given time. Within the context of this study, this implies that the participants have shared their knowledge and meaning of their lived experiences. It is argued that as individuals we learn from our reflection on behaviour and from the examples modelled in our lives. We also tend to emulate the behaviour of significant others in our lives although we can decide either to choose or not to choose the behaviour modelled for us. Some experiences are significant

emotional events that we reflect upon and we take from them principles that will guide our behaviour in future.

If participants in this study were severely punished for something in a particular way, they may reflect on it as unjust, and decide never to act in the way the behaviour was modelled by the significant adult. Similarly, if they were punished in a way that they regarded as a positive experience, they will reflect on it and accommodate it in the way they behave in the future. Educators are active constructors of their own theory on how to deal with discipline in school. The wider the array of disciplinary methods to which they are exposed, the better equipped they will be to reflect on a range of measures to assist them in the development of a range of strategies to deal with different contingencies.

### 3.4.1 The impact of cultural influences

Many countries around the world have diverse cultures within their citizenry. This has come about as a result of people that have emigrated from their countries to settle elsewhere in the world. Various cultures brought together in such a manner inevitably influence one another, hence the processes of acculturation and enculturation (Baldauf, 1981, 3). The school is one such place where an encounter may play itself out, and in most cases with negative effects on learners who belong to a minority cultures. In order to highlight the impact of cultural influences in schools, an exposition of the problems experienced by the children of the Aborigines of Australia and the Afro-American and African-Caribbean children living in the USA, Britain and Canada is provided below.

In a study conducted by researchers in Australian schools that were known to be performing well, a number of learners, educators and parents were interviewed (http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/hpw/documents/sanderson-discipline.doc). The focus of the study was to determine the influence of diversity on the implementation of discipline at school. The researchers wanted to investigate the causes of the over-representation of Aboriginal learners in suspension and /or expulsion figures, time-out and principal's office referrals. This concern was also raised by Munn *et al*. (1998, 11) who claims that expulsion can cause problems for indigenous children, including the

irritation and inconvenience that goes with it. In their report, the researchers documented serious inequalities and inconsistencies that were revealed by parent groups, educators and learners, regarding the punishment of learners from different cultural backgrounds. Aboriginal parents revealed that their children were the ones who were frequently locked out of the formal education system; institutional racism existed in schools; that there were differences in aboriginal parenting that caused conflict in the management of behaviour of aboriginal learners, that their children were over-represented in suspension statistics and office referrals, and that there was limited inclusion of aboriginal culture in the curriculum. Educators raised issues on culturally appropriate teaching practices and pedagogies. The indications are that there are many cultural differences; other cultures had different views on punishment and the effectiveness of suspension.

Furthermore, the researchers noted that the home and the school were two different worlds that were kept apart by race, poverty and gender. They also observed that although parents and learners made serious attempts to fit into a bi-cultural world, the school remained a mono-cultural institution which excluded the minority cultures. Some schools do not understand the world of indigenous learners and their parents and they make no attempt to come to terms with its complexities and practices. Finally, they indicate that unless such schools become culturally inclusive, their indigenous learners will continue to develop oppositional identities which are in conflict with mainstream educational practices. This implies that disciplinary problems will persist with no end in sight. This view is supported by Beresford and Omaji (1996, 54). The researchers highlighted the importance of the incorporation of aboriginal culture into the school curriculum by citing the work of Alfie Konn (1994; 1996; 1999; compare also Morrison 2002), who argues for a curriculum that should be developed originally from real life interests and concerns of the students. This view is supported by Dewey (1934), available online at

(http://www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/hpw/documents/sanderson-discipline.doc).

Dewey contends that skilled teaching allows learners to grapple with real life situations and this brings the cultural content and implications into classroom. If day-to-day

experiences are allowed to be reflected in the classroom, they will promote culture circles, dialogue and peer interaction which will promote synergy in many other things. This will promote enculturation and the much needed understanding and tolerance of each others' culture.

Konn (1994 www.unisa.edu.au/hawkeinstitute/hpw/documents/sanderson-discipline.doc) emphasised the fact that culture is embodied in a people's language and a few customary practices which include particular ways of thinking about the world and how it is constructed. It is inevitable that children of every culture will bring with them to school particular sets of skills, knowledge and understanding. They in turn will take home a variety of information and meanings. The two sets of skills, knowledge and meanings may either converge, meet partially or may diverge. This may cause cognitive dissonance in the individual learner. Unfortunately schools are mainly mono-cultural and do not accommodate the smaller cultures, hence the disciplinary problems. The researchers contend that the relationship problems that exist between aboriginal children and schooling are a result of a range of issues and not only because of cultural differences. These issues include racism, gender, pedagogies, stereotyping as well as government policies and government agencies such as the police.

The researchers identified that one of the main cultural issues that affects school discipline is parenting practices. For example when there is death in the family, Aborigines take a week or longer to grieve. This practice negatively affects class attendance and leads to poor performance. Another problem is caused by the way the aboriginal community relate to their children. The moment their children are able to walk and talk they are involved in family discussions, problem-solving and decision-making processes. These children care for their siblings and are given responsibilities around the home. Aboriginal children feel that they are infantilised when they go to school and are treated like small children. Aborigines also accord great respect to first-born sons in their culture, whereas this is not acknowledged in the school culture. In bridging this divide between home and school, the researchers recommend that structured ways of dealing with racism; consultation with the families; support of the aboriginal identity;

acknowledgement of poverty-driven life-styles; the design of appropriate curricula and the creation of a warm and conducive learning environment, all receive attention.

Solomon and Palmer (2004, 1-14) provide a comprehensive overview of the problems the British, USA and Canadian education systems experience in dealing with the black youth. The problem arose as a result of the influence of African, Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean nations who settled in these countries in search of better economic prospects. The children of these new settlers had to be socialised into the norms, values, traditions, and languages of the dominant cultures (Owens 1976). As this new culture was forced on the black immigrants, schools became central institutions in a culture of oppression that dominated the socio-economic, political, legal and cultural life of the oppressed. Thus the school became both the agent and the agency of oppression; a place of struggle and contestation between school management and learners. The main thrust of Solomon and Palmer's research (2004, 1-14) focuses on how educational structures in the above-mentioned countries respond to black males in particular as a group constructed to be feared, monitored and pushed into restrictive learning environments. The researchers cite work done by scholars such as Carby (1982), Furlong (1984), Gillborn (1995) and Sewell (1997), who document continued negative attitudes and punitive behaviour of school administrators towards black males. The idea that black youth was characterised as oppressive, violent, disruptive and deviant grew out of fear as described by Sewell's study (1997). In support of this idea he indicates that the presence of fear and social distancing between white teachers and black youths creates a climate that is not conducive to teaching and learning. The power struggle between management and learners which is caused by mistrust and fear, and which is based on racism, is also well documented by Ferguson (2000), Hopkins (1997) and Kreisberg (1992).

Most of these researchers describe a black male culture of resistance and the system's coercive responses to it. As the black youth become alienated from school they begin to perceive it as not representing their interest. They develop a dynamic counter-school culture that is threatening existing authority structures. Zero tolerance policies implemented in the USA and Canada have not proved successful in producing safer

schools (Ayers *et al.* 2001, quoted in Solomon and Palmer 2004). Solomon and Palmer 2004, 4) have shown that emerging research indicates that the Zero Tolerance policy discriminates against blacks more than any other racial group.

Solomon and Palmer (2004, 4) discuss a study conducted in 1995-1996 at Hopeful Village Youth Centre (a pseudonym) where they interviewed 15 male African-Caribbean learners. The study provides valuable insight into the learner's lived-experiences in schools and communities and follows their incarceration in the centre. An important finding of this study is that the participants believed in the official's achievement ideology and upward mobility in Canadian society through schooling, but according to them, racial discrimination and negative authority relations hindered their academic achievement. The authors conclude that Western democratic societies have to turn schools into socialising, liberating and empowering institutions. According to Nonguera (2003), schools need to invest in youth and create a caring trusting environment that provides a feeling of belonging.

Pifer (2000) describes the lived experiences of three learners who attended an alternative school because they were labelled as "problem" learners in their previous schools. All participants accepted the idea that education is important but they all had equally negative feelings about school in general. This article describes their good and bad experiences; the unfairness they experienced including the relationships they had with their educators and learners. In summary, none of them had any experiences they valued at school; they found school boring and a waste of time. They could not effectively relate to other learners or their educators. They went to school to please others rather than for their own sake. They had a low self-esteem and did not aspire to achieve great heights in their academic careers. They were regarded by their educators as problem learners and lived up to this expectation (Pifer 20001, 2). Pifer goes on to indicate that several studies have looked at the ways in which and reasons why learners become estranged from school (Bryk & Thum 1989; Elliot & Voss 1974; Firestone, Rosenbaum & Webb 1987). The research confirms that dropping out, absenteeism, truancy, disruptive behaviour and delinquency may all be seen as the results of an earlier pattern of suspensions from class.

Furthermore the author points out that many researchers suggest that schools actually play a major role in learners feeling alienated (Calabrese 1987) and (Firestone *et al*. 1987).

Mussen *et al*. (1984, 521-522) cite a study by Simpson (1962) showing that boys from lower-class homes have higher educational and vocational aspirations they associate frequently with middle-class boys. They contend that this interaction with middle-class peers appears to foster "anticipatory socialization" into middle-class values. They go on to contend that upwardly mobile lower-class parents often choose their neighbourhood for its middle-class schools. This trend can also be observed in South Africa where the emerging black middle class increasingly buys homes in middle to high income neighbourhoods for social, economic and educational reasons.

Smith *et al*. (2003, 186-189) also discuss examples of sex roles as described by studies in the UK and USA done with children in non-Western countries such as Kenya, Japan, India and Mexico. In Western countries studies by Golombok and Holmes (2002) and Maccoby (1998; 2000) indicate that during infancy (up to 2 years) there are only slight differences in attitude between boys and girls. As the children grew older, the girls spoke much earlier than boys; preferred toys and engaged more in domestic play, while boys engaged more with kicking balls and other rough and tumble games than did the girls. At school-age the children tended to have same sex partners for play. Boys preferred outdoor and team games, while girls engaged more in indoor and sedentary activities (Smith *et al*. (2003, 189). From studies done by Whiting and Edwards (1973) and Whiting and Whiting (1975) in Kenya, Japan, India , the Philippines, Mexico and USA it was found that in the majority of these societies, girls were more nurturing, and tended to make more physical contact, while boys were inclined to be more aggressive and dominant. According to the study conducted by Smith *et al*. (2003, 189), girls were trained to be obedient and compliant while boys were generally urged to be more self-reliant and to focus on achievement.

The above findings relate to the study (as mentioned in chapter 5) that generally speaking boys are more difficult to discipline than girls. I also mentioned in chapter 5 (see content analysis) that boys who returned from the initiation school experience were reluctant to obey the rules – they saw themselves as men and they did not want to take instructions from female educators or male educators who had not undergone initiation. Their disobedience contributes to poor classroom discipline practices.

## 3.4.2 AFRICAN CULTURAL PRACTICES AND AFRICAN SELF

A number of social and cultural factors have a bearing on the self of Africans. Many young people give up their own education to take up jobs for sole purpose of being afraid of being punished at school or they want to assist their siblings. In polygamous home, children have different mothers but common father. Once the mother pass away, children face discrimination from remaining wife, this results in children running away from home and leaving school. Another factor is interdependence among Africans transcends death, while death terminates a person 's visible physical presence in given space of time, many Africans subscribe to the belief that it is still possible to communicate with those have passed on. This cultural practice affect school, learners will stay away from school claiming that they where talking to their forefathers. As an African educators you cannot question that.

As in many other cultures, the problem of discipline in African schools is not new. African learners often defy their educators' authority thus creating a plate of tension and hostility. Mwamwenda (2004, 275) contends that misbehaviour in school and the classroom may originate in the child him/herself, the school, society, parents and educators. He continues to indicate that learners may have been raised to behave in ways that are not congruent with the behaviour expected of them at school. He further points out that children who do not receive love and good care from their parents, they learn to disrespect their parents and then extend this perception of adults to other authority figures at school (Mwamwenda 2004, 275).

Society also has an influence on the level of discipline. What is happening at school is a reflection of what is going on in the society. In the African culture it was not essential to educate a girl child, those who go to school is for the sole purpose of securing good jobs. They view cultural practices such as circumcision and "Domba" the largest school of initiation for girls among the Venda with strong personal and cultural pride as compared to education.

In African culture there are parents who provide an autocratic family environment and those who provide protective interdependent family environment. Children coming from autocratic family environment are punished whenever they disobey the rules because they are expected to be totally obedient, according to their culture they are not allowed to question their parents. Children reared by such parents may develop obsessive compulsive behaviour and this may lead to behavioural problems and poor performance in school work. Children from protective interdependent family environment, parents wish that their children to achieve independently, they are afraid that they may fail, as a result they intervene thereby impeding their children from developing individuality. The children depend on their parents, this relationship extends to other situation, including learning. These learners are likely to be timid and quite in the classroom. It is therefore important that participants to understand African children if they are to succeed in their classroom discipline practices. They must understand the child as he/she exists in the home environment so that what he/she expereinces at home can be linked with what he/she does and studies at school. Duroijaye 1976, as quoted by Mwamwenda (2004, 399) states that the childrearing practices of African are of educational values given the manner in which a child is received when he/she is born. Knowledge of African childrearing practice can make educators of African children sensitive to and aware of some of the values they have to shape children.

Gyekye (1997  8) asserts that philosophical activity is universal  and is common to all cultures of the world. He further indicates that every culture produces a philosophy and adopts a particular world view. He contends that to deny African peoples philosophical thought is to imply that they are unable to reflect on or to conceptualise their experience. He supports this view by indicating that African philosophical ideas and proverbs are the result of reflection on their experience in the world.

However, some other culture, notably those of Africa have not had the same exposure and treatment because they were not written. As a result they have remain part of the oral tradition which is captures in proverbs, aphorisms, or pithy philosophical sayings, myths, folk tales, folk songs, works of art, rituals, belief, customs and tradition of the people. These vehicles mirror rather accurately the ideas of people and their general outlook upon life.  They also represent abstract thought and present ideason destiny, free choice and the Supreme Being.

Gyekye (1997  24-25), strongly feels that the description of African philosophical thought as a collective is misnomer. Every thought has an originator. He states that what has become "collective" thought is nothing but the ideas of individual wise people that have become part of the pool of communal thought. The author asserts that we cannot divorce the philosophy of an individual from the beliefs and culture of his own people. This is because philosophy has its roots in the culture of the people where it originates.
Also, he states that some philosophers have come to realise that as language communicates concepts that contain, a philosophical point of view they influence philosophical thought.

Coetzee and Roux (1998  275-290 intertain two views, namely, community in relation to ethnicity, race, gender, culture and language as against its morality. They contend that morality is related to a person's intellect. A human being is a  rational being endowed with huma nature and human understanding. They contend that African philosophy is culture specific and it is a product of continuous cultural reconstruction. They further indicate that the moral domain admits a number of moral orders; no single moral order.

Finally they view culture as a resource of a social meanings used to manage our daily lives. For example, the elders in a community intervene in times of family conflict by using accepted moral principles adopted in the community.

Olusegun(1995  26-39) addresses the issue of self definition in Africa and how best Africans can achieve freedom and development without compromising their own identity. He argues against a European discourse which underestimates and despises African culture and identity. He wants to correct the myth that was designed to promote colonialism which states that Africans where inferior to the white race intellectually and morally. The author acknowledges African cultural peculiarities but indicates that this should not prevent them from interacting and communicating with the other cultures as this will promote dialogue and mutual understanding across cultures. He maintains that a culture can get rid of some of its characteristics and adopt new ones. What  Africans need to do is to adopts those aspects that define their self identity while they avail themselves to other cultures especially in fields such as philosophy and science. This is the only they can ensure that their intellectual future is not decided by other cultures and also is a way to ensure their effective participation in the quest for development alongside other nation of the world. They therefore urge that the problem of African identity in the modern world does not lie in cultural traditionalism but in critical and reconstructive self-evaluation.

## 3.5     CONCLUSION

It is my assumption that today's educators are more emotionally troubled when having to deal with classroom discipline. The overriding question that needs to be answered is whether or not the discovery of participants' lived experiences was painful (Bernard 2001, 35). To show some degree of understanding of the educators' lived, emotional experiences, it is important to take into consideration how the systems of the past have shaped their realities of today and the future (Leatham 2005, 68). The research findings will indicate whether the range of emotions and feelings that educators were faced with

encompasses anxiety, depression and sadness (Bernard 2001, 35). It is very likely that the emotions evoked by what they went through will be similar for all educators. A key question is how they coped with the painful and emotional moments of the past.

There is also a link from what I have presented above. Pifer (2000) mentioned that learners avoided being labelled and sometimes even changed schools to avoid this. In the interviews conducted in my study one participant admitted that he was labelled and called by nicknames – he confessed that he still thinks of these names and currently he discourages educators to call learners "fools". What I have presented above will be confirmed by my research findings – whether life experiences affect current behaviour. A clear understanding of what to expect from our current educators and insight into why they behave in the manner they do when dealing with problematic learners, will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

From the literature presented it has emerged that school discipline presents a challenge to our educators and administrators and that currently our schools are facing uncertainty on how to proceed in the future as far as classroom discipline practices are concerned. I argue that unless we know what causes educators to behave they way they do, we will continue to experience disciplinary problems in our schools. I fully agree that this research cannot be the only solution but I feel it can certainly add to existing knowledge. The participants in this study experienced traumatic events that have affected them and the way they are currently managing classroom discipline. The way participants were disciplined by their parents and educators could also have an effect on their current behaviour. Of particular interest is whether participants have adopted methods of disciplining learners which are based on the discipline they themselves were subjected to by their parents or by their educators.