

Secondary school teachers' experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline

by

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I, Danielle Coetzee (Student nr: 1 8 2 3 1 2 9 3), declare that this dissertation entitled: “***Secondary school teachers’ experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.***” which is submitted in accordance with the requirements for the Master of Education degree at the University of Pretoria is my own original work and has not previously been submitted in any form for any degree or diploma to any tertiary institution. Where the work of others has been used, sources have been identified and acknowledged by means of concise and complete in-text references and in the list of references.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this research to:

My dear and loving husband, Christiaan Smit. Thank you for always believing in me and for inspiring me to be the best possible version of myself. Thank you for all your patience, kindness and love on this journey. I love you more than words can say.

My father, Dirk Coetzee, mother, Hester Coetzee, brother Wikus Coetzee who have always been my support network for every accomplishment. Especially to my mother and father thank you for always being an admirable example of working hard for success. I love you.

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ABSTRACT

One of the most important characteristics of a high functioning educational institution is effective discipline. Discipline is an integral part of every aspect of a school, and successful teaching and learning is impossible without sound discipline. The effectiveness of the disciplinary systems is often determined by the approach that a school takes in implementing disciplinary procedures. This study explored how secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline in two secondary schools in the Gauteng province. A qualitative case study was conducted and semi-structured interviews were used to gather data. The theoretical framework that underpinned in this study was one where policy implementation is a collaborative process amongst all stakeholders. The participants were thirteen secondary school teachers from two public schools that have adopted a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The schools were purposefully selected to participate in the study. Teachers who participated in the study were from post level one to post level four. The findings of the study show that a zero-tolerance approach is conceptualised as a militaristic time-consuming approach on disciplinary transgressions without exemption and without taking any external circumstances into consideration. Over emphasis on human rights is also a challenge to a zero-tolerance approach as learners often do not acknowledge the responsibility that accompanies the right. In conclusion, the zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline is viable in the sense that all transgressions are addressed firmly and cautiously not to de-humanise teacher-learner interpersonal relationships, reduce social engagement and the duty of care.

Key Terms: zero-tolerance approach, safety on school grounds, learner discipline, policy, suspension, expulsion

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

	PAGE NO.:
Figure 1.1: Top-down bottom up theoretical framework	8
Figure 3.1: Research Procedure 1	43
Table 4.1: Biographical Information	50
Table 4.2: Research questions and interview questions	52
Table 4.3: Relevance between the research questions and the identified themes	53

ABBREVIATIONS

PAM	Personnel Administrative Measures
SASA	South African Schools Act
SMT	School Management Team
DBE	Department of Basic Education
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
HoD	Head of Department
SGB	School Governing Body

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	i
EDITING CERTIFICATE	ii
DECLARATION	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
ABSTRACT	vi
LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES	vii
ABBREVIATIONS.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
CHAPTER ONE	1
INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION	1
TO THE STUDY	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND	1
1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM	5
1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	7
1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	10
1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS	10
1.6 PROCEDURES	11
1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	12
1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS	13
1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY	14
1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER	15
CHAPTER TWO.....	16
LITERATURE REVIEW ON ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE	16
2.1 INTRODUCTION	16
2.2. UNDERSTANDING OF A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH	16
2.2.1 History of a zero-tolerance approach	16
2.2.2 Definition of a zero-tolerance approach	17
2.3 POLICIES AND STRATEGIES RELATING TO A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH	21
2.3.1 International policies.....	21
2.3.2 National policies	23

2.4 UTILISATION OF A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL POLICIES	25
2.5 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH.....	29
2.5.1 Disproportionate suspension and expulsion.....	29
2.5.2 The school to prison pipeline	30
2.5.3 Lack of legislative knowledge.....	32
2.5.4 Poorer school climate	32
2.6 MANAGEMENT OF A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO LEARNER DISCIPLINE	33
2.7 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY	Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.8 GAPS IN LITERATURE.....	33
2.9 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	34
CHAPTER THREE	35
RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY.....	35
3.1 INTRODUCTION	35
3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM	35
3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH	37
3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN	37
3.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	38
3.6.1 Sampling.....	38
3.6.2 Research methods.....	40
3.6.3 Research Procedures.....	41
3.7 DATA ANALYSIS.....	43
3.8 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER	45
3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES	45
3.10 ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE RESEACH.....	47
3.11 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	49
CHAPTER FOUR.....	51
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	51
4.1 INTRODUCTION	51
4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS.....	51
4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	54
4.4 RESEARCH, QUESTIONS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES	55
4.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS	56

4.5.1	Theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach	56
4.5.1.1	<i>Sub-theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach.....</i>	56
4.5.1.2	<i>Effect of a zero-tolerance approach in creating an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning.....</i>	59
4.5.2	Theme 2: Challenges with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach	62
4.5.2.1	<i>Sub-theme 1: Challenges experienced by teachers with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach.....</i>	62
4.5.2.2	<i>Sub-theme 2: Effect of challenges associated with a zero-tolerance approach on effective teaching and learning</i>	67
4.5.3	Theme 3: Addressing challenges identified by the teachers	70
4.5.3.1	<i>Sub-theme 1: Methods used to address the challenges associated with a zero-tolerance approach.....</i>	70
4.5.3.2	<i>Sub-theme 2: Aspects that teachers would like to change about a zero-tolerance approach</i>	73
4.5.4	Theme 4: How teachers manage a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline	76
4.5.4.1	<i>Sub-theme 1: Implementation of the disciplinary policy through the use of a zero-tolerance approach.....</i>	76
4.5.4.2	<i>Sub-theme 2: Behaviour management through the use of a zero-tolerance approach</i>	79
4.6	SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER.....	81
CHAPTER FIVE		83
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ..83		
5.1	INTRODUCTION	83
5.2	REFLECTIONS OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY	83
5.3	SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	85
5.3.1	Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach	85
5.3.2	Challenges with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach.....	86
5.3.3	Addressing challenges identified by teachers	87
5.3.4	How teachers manage a zero-tolerance approach to discipline.....	87
5.4	DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY	87
5.5	LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	88
5.6	RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS.....	88
5.6.1	Recommendations from understanding of a zero-tolerance policy	89

5.6.2 Recommendations made from challenges experienced by teachers utilising a zero-tolerance approach	89
5.6.3 Recommendations from the identified challenges experienced by the teachers in a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline	90
5.6.4 Recommendations for managing a zero-tolerance approach to discipline	92
5.6.5 Recommendations for future research.....	92
5.7 CONCLUSION	93
5.8 A FINAL WORD	93
REFERENCE LIST	94
ANNEXURE A: LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION	101
ANNEXURE B: CONSENT LETTER TO SCHOOL	103
ANNEXURE C: CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPANT	105
ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE	107
ANNEXURE E: DATA ANALYSIS SAMPLE	108
ANNEXURE F: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION.....	123
ANNEXURE G: TURNITIN REPORT	132

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Society as well as key stakeholders in education expect schools to implement and maintain a high level of discipline that will ensure the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds and limit the disruption of learning and teaching to a bare minimum (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2008 and Bray, 2015). Effective discipline can be regarded as one of the key features of an effective educational institution. Discipline forms part of every single aspect of a school and without effective disciplinary procedures effective teaching and learning cannot take place. The specific approach that a school chooses to adopt with regards to implementing disciplinary policies will often determine the effectiveness of teaching and learning. For a number of years there has been an intense debate between educational stakeholders about the use of a zero-tolerance approach to implement disciplinary policies.

Zero-tolerance can be described as an approach to implement a specific policy. When a zero-tolerance approach is used to implement a disciplinary policy, it requires the use of pre-determined consequences for transgressions from the policy (Mestry, Moloji & Mohamed, 2008). The consequences are punitive in nature and are required to be applied regardless of context or external circumstances (Teske, 2011). The utilisation of a zero-tolerance approach in education originally came into the spotlight when it was first utilised in the USA for the purpose of implementing the Guns Free Act of 1994. The aim of the Guns-Free Schools Act of 1994 was to address serious offences such as violence, drug use and possession and weapon possession on school grounds in order to promote the safety of teachers and learners (Skiba, 2014; McNeal & Dunbar, 2010). The Gun-Free schools Act 1994 was

implemented as part of improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Cerrone, 1999).

In South Africa, it is mandatory that all disciplinary approaches and procedures in schools are framed against the Bill of Rights which is contained in Chapter 2 of the South African Constitution. The Bill of Rights outlines the basic rights of all South Africans; this includes the right to dignity, freedom and security. In addition, the Bill of Rights also states the limitation of rights. As part of implementing disciplinary policies all schools in South Africa are required to formulate a school code of conduct. This code of conduct should be formulated against the Bill of Rights and the South African Schools Act of 1996. A key objective of any school's code of conduct must be to communicate acceptable behaviour on school grounds as well as set out the consequences for transgressions from the specific code of conduct. It is of critical importance that a code of conduct promotes everyone's right to dignity and promote respect for oneself and others. When consequences for transgressions from the school code of conduct are determined, specific care should be taken not to infringe these rights (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2008 and Bray, 2015). Calling learner's names, forcing learners to do humiliating gestures or applying corporal punishment are examples of how learner's right to dignity can be infringed.

Section 12 of the Constitution also provides for the right to freedom and security and entails that everyone has the right to freedom and security as well as the right to bodily and psychological integrity (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2008 and Bray, 2015). Section 12 of the South African Constitution also mandates that any form of punishment in a school may not be cruel, inhuman or degrading. When punishment is executed it is important to take into consideration the educational duty of *in loco parentis*. All punishment and disciplinary procedures should be in accordance with what a reasonable parent would do under the same circumstances. The right to privacy should also be a key principle of a school's code of conduct. The right to privacy should be weighed against the right to a safe learning environment. When drug

and weapon searches are conducted the possibility exist that a learners' right to dignity and privacy may be affected, therefore careful consideration should be given to ensure that searches are done when there is reasonable suspicion as set out in the Schools Act and the search must be conducted in an appropriate manner by an appropriate person (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2008 and Bray, 2015). For example, bodily searches on a female learner can only be conducted by a female educator.

It can be concluded that schools in South Africa are expected to have a zero-tolerance approach with regards to the implementation of the codes of conduct because Sub-section 8(4) of the South African Schools Act clearly states that: "Nothing contained in this Act exempts a learner from the obligation to comply with the code of conduct of the school attended by such learner."

Martinez (2010) notes that the use of a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies often have two fundamental negative outcomes. Firstly, the punishment is not necessarily appropriate for the offence as no external factors are considered when punishment is dispensed. Secondly; the approach is often misused by teachers to implement disciplinary policies as a method to get rid of learners through suspension and expulsion instead of finding alternative methods of addressing transgressions. In addition, there is a shortage of evidence that a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline is successful in improving the general school climate (Walsh, 2015).

Studies conducted in the United States have proven that a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline is not always effective in reducing school violence or other disciplinary transgressions. Instead it was found that a zero-tolerance approach often resulted in a high number of learners leaving school before graduating with a high school diploma (Winton, 2012). In 2005, Ontario's Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in Canada found that a zero-tolerance approach to implementing the Safe Schools Act resulted in a number

of negative consequences. It was found that implementing a zero-tolerance approach had a disproportional impact on black students as well as students with behavioural disabilities. Following an extensive investigation it was found that racial minority students were far more likely to experience discriminatory treatment (Winton, 2012). Mestry, Moloi and Mohammed (2008) conducted a study on zero-tolerance in South Africa and teachers in the study reported a deep concern about how disciplinary problems in schools are affecting the everyday functioning of the school. The teachers also reported that they find it difficult to apply the democratic principles of the constitution to effectively address disciplinary problems. It was also found that teachers in South Africa see a zero-tolerance approach as a viable option to implement disciplinary policies and address transgressions.

For any disciplinary policy, procedure or intervention strategy to be effective, it should be implemented consistently and without deviation (Skiba, 2014). However, this is not always the case. In another study, Walsh (2015) found controversy within the educational sector between the obligation to consistently implement disciplinary policies without deviation in order to promote a safe learning environment and the need for learners to have the opportunity to make mistakes and learn how to conduct their behaviour in relation to others. This indicates that there are different views in which the implementation of disciplinary policies is perceived. Similarly, different views also exist with regards to the impact of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline, how the approach should be implemented and the viability of this type of approach to learner discipline to address school violence and other related transgressions (McNeal & Dunbar, 2010).

Effective disciplinary measures are one of the key characteristics of a highly functioning school and can also be considered as one of the necessary conditions for teaching and learning to take place effectively. Mestry et al. (2008) comment that in South Africa a number of approaches have been imposed in schools to address disciplinary challenges. One of these

approaches is a zero-tolerance approach where suspension and expulsion are key features. A zero-tolerance approach advocates that the punishment for transgressions should be pre-determined and that these punishments should be adhered to continuously and without deviation. No mitigating circumstances should be taken into account when addressing both severe and less severe transgressions (Mestry et al., 2008).

A zero-tolerance approach is adopted with the main aim of implementing discipline policies to enhance the safety of all relevant stakeholders as well as create an environment that is free from disruption and conducive to teaching and learning. When a zero-tolerance approach is utilised the creation of an effective teaching and learning environment is achieved through consistently addressing the same transgression in the same manner without taking any external circumstances into consideration (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2010).

In many cases teachers advocate for the use of a zero-tolerance approach when implementing disciplinary policies, because the use of this approach tends to be more comprehensive and detailed (Mongan and Walker, 2012). On the contrary, this approach is often stigmatised as a one size fits all approach where one solution is used to address a number of different problems (Martinez, 2010).

In this study, the researcher argues that despite the fact that a zero-tolerance approach has been reported to be ineffective in a number of studies in America (American Psychologist, 2008), it is still viewed by many teachers in South Africa as a constructive approach to address learner discipline and it is ultimately required by the South African Schools Act (Teske, 2011). This study intended to explore secondary school teacher's experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM

Sub-section 8(4) of the Schools Act states that no learner is exempted from the code of conduct of the school that he or she chooses to attend. This indicates that there must be no deviation from pre-set consequences for transgressions as pertained in the code of conduct. It can be argued from this statement that every school in South Africa is expected to have a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies and practices.

A zero-tolerance approach is often described as a drastic approach that limits the opportunity for learners to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes (Gage, Sugai, Lunde, DeLoreto, 2013). Within the framework of school discipline and school management, a zero-tolerance approach is adopted from the stance that when learners who transgress the school code of conduct are removed or severely punished it will prevent other learners from displaying the same unacceptable or unsafe behaviour (Teske, 2011). In a comprehensive study by Teske (2011) it was found that a zero-tolerance approach to disciplinary transgressions have not achieved this primary goal of ensuring a school climate that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning. Instead, it was concluded that the approach makes schools less safe and might be harmful to the wellbeing of learners.

To make informed decisions, teachers must have a clear understanding of what an approach entails and have a comprehensive understanding of what the disciplinary policy aims to achieve (Teske, 2011). The problem that the study aimed to address is that a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies have shown to be ineffective in a number of studies conducted in South Africa and the USA, yet school administrators continue to promote this approach to implementing disciplinary policies. Together with this SASA mandates the use of a zero-tolerance approach. This study aims to explore how teachers in South Africa experience a zero-tolerance approach. There is numerous literature available about the effect of a zero-tolerance approach on learners and the general school climate but very limited knowledge regarding how teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach.

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is an abstract tool used to analyse the data as well as guide the researcher with the theoretical aspects of the specific study. Together with this the theoretical framework will serve as a guide to explore, interpret and report on variables related to the specific phenomena (Vivar & Canga, 2007).

The theoretical framework of this study aligns with the co-construction perspective. The co-construction perspective on policy implementation suggests that the implementation of policies, in the case of this study a disciplinary policy, is a mutual process between various stakeholders on various levels. These stakeholders include those who make the policy and those who implement a policy (Curran, 2019). In South Africa specifically the first level of implementation of policies will be national and provincial legislators, for example the Bill of Rights which is implemented on a national scale. The Bill of rights will then be used to compile a code of conduct for a school, which will be implemented on an internal level by the SMT and teachers. Thus, the same policy is used – the bill of rights - but as it is used on different level it is adapted to fit the needs of the institution.

A number of contextual factors also affect the implementation of a policy as well as the approach to implement the policy. One distinct feature of the co-construction perspective is the emphasis on the complex nature of schools as organisations which are embedded within various social and political structures. The context in which a policy is implemented will have a noticeable effect on the implementation approach utilised by the policy makers and implementers (Curran, 2019). For example, classroom discipline is embodied in whole school discipline and whole school discipline is drafted in line with the South African Schools Act and the South African Constitution. The school

governing bodies and the teachers follow the policies and guidelines from the Department of Basic Education and other stakeholders. Curran (2019) asserts the importance of understanding the changing roles of educational stakeholders in order to understand the variations and deviations in policy implementation. Having such a holistic perspective from where one can analyse the findings, in this study, the researcher envisaged to gain understanding on the challenges that teachers experience when implementing a zero-tolerance approach to discipline.

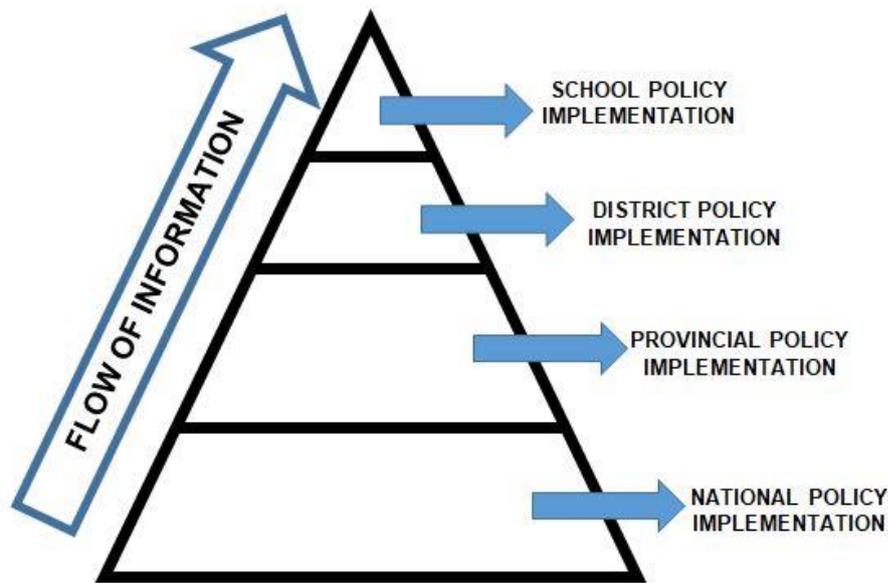


Figure 1.1: Top-down bottom up theoretical framework

The utilisation of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline can be viewed in essence as the implementation of a disciplinary policy. From the co-construction perspective, differences in policy implementation on different levels of implementation can be expected. These differences can be ascribed to the fact that information must flow from one stakeholder to the next and also that the policy will be adapted at every level to fit the needs of the specific institution. Hoffman (2014) comments on his observation of the differences in policy implementation in the USA where the disciplinary policies were applied

inconsistently from one state to the next. Although all states implement the same policy and are supposed to use the same approach – a zero-tolerance approach - differences can still be observed because the implementation of the policy will be adapted to fit the needs of the specific state or institution. Thus, it is my assumption in this study that the implementers' understanding of a zero-tolerance approach may determine how the approach is utilised to implement disciplinary policies.

The co-construction perspective argues that policies are adapted as implementation moves through various levels of governance (Curran, 2019). In a school setting in South Africa, these levels of governance include: The Department of Basic Education, the school governing body, the principal, the SMT and teachers. An example of this would be where governing body members whom are from a non-teaching background, impose corrective action differently than SMT's or teachers that are from a teaching background. It thus stands to argue that at each level of governance the individuals' frame of reference will depict how they perceive a situation and what mitigating factors to take into consideration.

In essence, the infringement will still be addressed under the same policy but differently by different stakeholders because the interpretation of the approach and the policy will be different. The implementation of a policy poses various challenges on various levels of governance and this is also the case with “a zero-tolerance approach to discipline”, the challenges that teachers experience with implementing a zero-tolerance approach will be researched as well as how teachers manage a zero-tolerance approach to discipline.

Curran (2019) notes that policy implementation is underpinned by two critical components. Firstly, the local environment in which the policy must be implemented and secondly, “the higher level of governance in which the implementer is nested.” For example, two schools can both adopt a zero-tolerance approach, but their decisions on how to address transgressions

might differ. In this study, the researcher explored different school contexts where a zero-tolerance approach to disciplinary policies are used and how those teachers conceptualise zero-tolerance.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to explore how secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies. The study aimed to establish how secondary school teachers understand the concept of zero-tolerance. The objective was to gain a better understanding of the extent of the systematic challenges that educators experience when they utilise a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline. In addition, the researcher also examined how teachers manage a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Primary research question

- What are the experiences of secondary school teacher's on the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline?

Secondary research questions

- How do secondary school teachers understand the concept "zero-tolerance" approach to discipline?
- What challenges do teachers experience with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline?
- How do teachers manage a "zero-tolerance approach to school discipline?

1.6 PROCEDURES

Research was conducted in schools in the Gauteng province. Firstly, these are schools with high rates of suspension and expulsion. Suspension and expulsion are two of the key features of a zero-tolerance approach. In South Africa, only the HOD of a province can expel a learner from a school, however it is the responsibility of the school to have sufficient evidence to indicate that the learner should be permanently removed from the school setting. Secondly, the schools involved in this study are those who pride themselves in the community of having a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies. Thirdly, a number of relevant stakeholders such as parents and teachers have said that they have experienced that the schools adopt a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.

The selection of participants was informed by the main research question and the sub-research questions. For the purpose of this study, a purposive sampling approach was utilised together with snowball sampling. Purposive sampling was used to identify and select fifteen teachers at two chosen secondary schools.

Teachers were from post level one to four. One of the primary requirements was that the participants must have more than five years teaching experience to ensure that they have sufficient experience of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline at the specific school. The researcher approached the SGB Chairperson first to ask for consent to conduct research at the school. Once the SGB provided permission to conduct research at the school, the researcher approached the principal for consent. The principal was interviewed first and followed by deputy principals. The participants were asked for suggestions of teachers who would be willing to participate in the study – snowball sampling. The researcher requested for teachers who are discipline masters, teachers with a high number of classroom discipline cases and teachers who are actively involved with the maintenance and implementation

of the discipline system. The selected participants were interviewed to generate data which was analysed to answer the research questions.

1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Currently all schools in South Africa are mandated by the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 to adopt a disciplinary policy to address learner transgressions as well as guide learner behaviour. One of the core duties of any school is to use all possible measures to ensure an environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning (American Psychological Association, 2008). It is impossible to ensure effective teaching and learning in an environment characterised by disruption. The responsibility of implementing disciplinary policies are firstly the responsibility of school management teams and secondly teachers who should be trained by the school management team.

For the purpose of this study, an effective teaching and learning environment refers to an environment where disruption is limited to the bare minimum (Segalo, 2015). How teachers manage a zero-tolerance approach will be investigated to determine whether the disciplinary policy is fairly and justly administered. Mestry et al. (2008) explain that teachers have to make sure that the correct procedures and structures are in place so that any disciplinary challenges can be addressed in accordance with the schools disciplinary policy that should be set up within the framework of the South African Schools Act. The measures taken to implement a zero-tolerance approach should be fairly and justly administered as this is two of the key characteristics of a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies.

Continuous policy implementation is one of the most important challenges facing school management today. According to Mongan and Walker (2012) teachers have the responsibility of ensuring a safe environment that is

conducive to teaching and learning as well as care for learners' well-being. These tasks are made even more difficult when one learner threatens the safety of other learners or disrupts the learning environment. In this collective case study, the researcher was interested in observing how some teachers implement a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline with a high success rate, while their colleagues struggle to do the same.

The general aim of the study was to determine how teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline. The researcher hoped that the findings of this study contributes to the existing body of educational knowledge on managing learner discipline. Furthermore, the researcher aspired for the study to be helpful to both educators as well as school administrators in developing a more comprehensive model on how to implement and maintain disciplinary policies through the use of a zero-tolerance approach. The researcher believes that the study may help to develop systems aligned with a zero-tolerance approach where disciplinary policies are not only imposed to punish learners but are also used to ensure a safe learning environment whilst also preventing other learners from displaying unacceptable behaviour.

1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

The proposed key concepts for the study are: school discipline, zero-tolerance, suspension and expulsion.

School Discipline - School discipline refers to structures and procedures put in place to prevent disruptive behaviour or measures put in place to address disruptive behaviour should it occur. Discipline structures are put in place to create an environment where teaching and learning can take place effectively and without any disruption (Mestry and Khumalo, 2012). In this study, the concept school discipline will refer to any course of action or mechanism utilised to ensure that learning can take place optimally as well as prevent disruptive behaviour and transgressions from the school code of conduct.

Zero-tolerance approach - A zero-tolerance approach refers to a disciplinary approach that requires pre-determined consequences to be imposed on disciplinary transgressions, when punishment for consequences is imposed; no mitigating factors are considered (Tseke, 2011). In this study, a zero-tolerance policy refers to an approach where there is no deviation from the pre-determined consequences for transgressions, regardless of contextual factors.

Suspension and expulsion - The concept suspension refers to the act of removing a learner from the school setting for a period of time, as a form of punishment, for a specific transgression. When a learner is suspended the learner is only removed temporarily and when a learner is expelled he/she is removed permanently from the specific school where the transgression took place (Skiba, 2014, South African Schools Act 84 of 1996). In South Africa, only the HOD of a province can expel a learner if a school can provide sufficient evidence. Suspension can be implemented by the SGB of a school. In this study, the concept of expulsion and suspension refers to learners being removed from the school environment as a method of creating a safer environment that is more conducive to effective teaching and learning and beneficial to the other learners.

1.9 ORGANISATION OF THE STUDY

The research report is organised as follows:

Chapter 1: Orientation of the study

Chapter 1 provides the topic, introduction and background, research problem, theoretical framework, purpose of the study, primary and sub-research questions, procedures, significance of the study, limitations and delimitations of the study as well as terms and definitions used in the study.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive discussion of both national and international literature on the use of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. All relevant systems and procedures will also be explored and discussed in detail.

Chapter 3: Research approach, design and methodology

Chapter 3 discusses the approach, design and methodology. This chapter will also explain the data collection and data analysis methods.

Chapter 4: Research findings and discussion

Chapter 4 provides the findings of the research, analysis of findings as well as a detailed discussion on how the findings relate to current literature in the field.

Chapter 5: Summary of findings, conclusion and recommendations

Chapter 5 presents a summary of the research findings, as well as a conclusion and provides a number of recommendations for future research and literature.

1.10 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 1 introduced the study and provided the background on a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The research problem, significance of the study and the research questions are also included in this study. The conceptual framework of the study will be discussed in detail. Chapter 2 provides the literature discussion of both national and international issues relating to a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO DISCIPLINE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 provided an in-depth discussion on the background of the study as well as the research problem, theoretical framework, purpose of the study, research questions, procedures, and significance of the study. In Chapter 2, the researcher provided a comprehensive literature discussion on the understanding of the concept zero-tolerance as well as structures utilised in the application of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline.

2.2. UNDERSTANDING OF A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH

2.2.1 History of a zero-tolerance approach

The term zero-tolerance originated from the field of criminal justice where the approach was first utilised to implement various policies aimed at addressing drug and weapon possession (Skiba & Knesting, 2001). The field of education began to use the term zero-tolerance to refer to several punitive and excessive rules utilised to implement various Acts through the formulation of policies. A zero-tolerance approach originally came into the educational research spotlight when it was used as an approach to implement the Guns Free Act of 1994 in the USA. The aim of the Guns free Act of 1994 is to enhance the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds (McNeal & Dunbar, 2010). The Guns Free Act of 1994 was promulgated because of a number of fatal shootings on school grounds in the USA. With the occurrence of these shootings the public as well as the broader school community increased pressure on the national government to intervene.

The Guns Free Act of 1994 required each state in the USA that received public funding for education to formulate and implement disciplinary policies that required immediate action against any learner who threatens the safety of any stakeholder on school grounds. According to the Guns Free Act of 1994, any learner with a weapon, potential weapon or an object representing a weapon must be expelled from public education for at least one school year. In addition, schools that receive public funding are required to develop policies in conjunction with the department of criminal justice. The formulation of these policies entailed that, besides being expelled for one year for bringing a weapon, possible weapon or an object representing a weapon to school, the learner should also be referred to the criminal justice system and the juvenile delinquent system for severe intervention to address potentially dangerous behaviour before it escalated into more serious matters (Cerrone, 1999). By 1993, several schools across the USA adopted a zero-tolerance approach to implement the disciplinary policies although it was only required by law in 1994. These policies were often adapted to not only address drug and weapon possession but any behaviour that endangers the safety of stakeholders on school grounds such as assault and tobacco possession (Skiba and Peterson, 1999).

2.2.2 Definition of a zero-tolerance approach

It is of critical importance to distinguish between an approach to a policy and the policy itself. A policy can be defined as a document compiled by relevant stakeholders on various levels where several acceptable outcomes are listed together with the punishment for not complying with the specific policy. For example, in a school code of conduct, acceptable behaviour on school grounds is set out for learners, while an approach to a policy can be defined as the method chosen to implement a specific policy. Thus, zero-tolerance can be described as an approach to implement a specific policy.

Mestry *et al* (2008), define a zero-tolerance approach as a set of punitive measures taken to address disciplinary problems. These are punitive measures that are applied regardless of context and circumstances. The American Psychological Association (2008) elaborates on the definition and explains that a zero-tolerance approach requires the application of pre-determined consequences for transgressions. These are usually punitive in nature and do not take the gravity of behaviour and situational context into consideration.

A zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline firstly aims at creating a safer school environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Secondly, the approach aims to address both severe and minor misconduct with no deviation from the pre-determined consequences for the transgressions. These consequences are usually set out in a code of conduct. Thirdly, a zero-tolerance approach acts as a mitigation strategy as the misconduct can be addressed immediately to prevent other learners from displaying the same unacceptable behaviour (Gage et al., 2013).

The implementation of a zero-tolerance approach in education can be attributed to the “Broken Windows” theory of crime. This theory makes the analogy of a few broken windows in a deserted building. If these windows go unrepaired, it will eventually attract unwanted elements to the building that will break even more windows. Eventually the building will be occupied by squatters who will damage the building even more and they might even destroy the building completely. The broken windows theory argues that minor offences in schools should be addressed immediately and excessively to prevent serious transgressions that might endanger the lives of stakeholders or infringe on the rights of stakeholder (Teske, 2011).

One of the key elements of a zero-tolerance approach is the removal of learners from an academic setting if they do not comply with the rules. The premise for these actions is that ill-disciplined learners should be removed

from the academic setting to avoid other learners displaying the same unacceptable behaviour or to protect the safety of stakeholders on school grounds (Skiba & Knesting, 2001). The concepts suspension and expulsion refer to the act of removing a learner from the school setting for a period, as a form of punishment for a specific transgression or a series of transgressions. When a learner is suspended, the learner is only removed temporarily and when a learner is expelled, he/she is removed permanently from the specific school where the transgression took place. In South Africa the School Governing Body can suspend a learner for a number of days, depending on the severity of the transgressions but in the case of expulsion only the Department of Basic Education can approve the expulsion (Skiba, 2014 & South African Schools Act 84 of 1996). Teske (2011) makes note of the negative impact of suspension and expulsion and explains that a high number of learners who are suspended often do not return to school because they feel embarrassed, learners who are expelled often do not look for another school because of the negative attitude that they have towards schooling. The high rate of suspension and expulsion results in large number of learners leaving school before graduating with a high school certificate.

The main reasons for implementing a zero-tolerance approach is to ensure the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds, protect and promote the rights of stakeholders in the process of teaching and learning as well as maintain a disciplined environment where teaching and learning can effectively take place. Section 24 of the Constitution of South Africa 1996 states clearly that it is a basic right of any human being to be free from a harmful environment, this is also applicable to any school environment (de Waal, 2011). Ensuring the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds is a critical part of creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Learners' concern for their safety will have a direct impact on their personal, social, and academic development. Together with ensuring the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds disciplinary policies should be developed and implemented in such a

manner as to guide learners to become productive and responsible members of society.

In a study conducted by the American Psychological Association in 2008, media accounts and surveys indicated that some parents are in favour of a zero-tolerance approach. They are furthermore, in favour of the implementation of increased punitive disciplinary measures as they believe that these punitive measures increase safety and security in schools. On the contrary, other parents have reported that they are not in favour of a zero-tolerance approach because through using suspension and expulsion, a learner's right to education is taken away or limited for a specific period of time. Parents who participated in this study have also reported that a zero-tolerance approach creates a negative school climate as learners will then experience any disciplinary action as negative or punitive. It was evident from the findings that as a result of being removed from the school setting, learners can become involved with illegal or dangerous activities. Parents are often away working and learners are left alone at home or cared for by illiterate and ill-equipped family members (American Psychological Association, 2008). In addition, suspension and expulsion can also negatively affect learner commitment as well as the academic performance of learners because suspension and expulsion directly decreases a learner's access to educational and social activities in the school (Konishi et al., 2010). It is clear that there is a great misunderstanding between educational stakeholders about the utilisation of a zero-tolerance approach and the efficacy thereof.

Various school districts in the USA have amended their policies and approaches for these policies to allow for more case sensitivity when addressing transgressions. On the contrary, several school districts refuse to change their approach to learner discipline stating that their hands are tied by state and federal law. Stakeholders who are in favour of using a zero-tolerance approach continue to claim that a zero-tolerance approach will prevent random violence on school grounds and prevent learners from transgressing the school

code of conduct. In addition, school stakeholders claim that a zero-tolerance approach is conducive for effective teaching and learning because rules and consequences are clearly laid out and communicated (Skiba et al., 2002 and Skiba and Noam, 2001).

In this study, a zero-tolerance approach is defined as an approach to implement the disciplinary policy of the school without deviation from the school code of conduct and without taking any mitigating circumstance into consideration.

2.3 POLICIES AND STRATEGIES RELATING TO A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH

2.3.1 International policies

International human rights agreements and policies specify that education must firstly, be accessible to all children and secondly that education is a basic right of all learners. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights states that everyone has the right to education and that education in the elementary and fundamental stages shall be free. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also notes that the education received by learners must be administered and managed in such a manner to ensure the full development of the human personality. Content must be taught and discipline must be imposed in such a manner as to create sensitivity among learners for different nations, races, and religious groups (Sanneh & Jacobs, 2008). International human rights law requires that any disciplinary approach such as a zero-tolerance approach and related practices implemented at a school must protect firstly the right to dignity of a learner and secondly the learners right to education (Sanneh & Jacobs, 2008). Article 20(2) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) mandates all stakeholders involved in the disciplinary process to take every necessary measure to ensure a learner's human dignity is protected through the whole disciplinary process.

The implementation of a zero-tolerance approach is criticised by educational stakeholders because the approach often limits a learner's right to education using suspension and expulsion. Together with limiting a learner's right to education, a zero-tolerance approach often does not promote the goal of the full development of the human personality because instead of guiding a learner to display more acceptable behaviour, the learner is removed from the educational setting or severely punished for transgressing from the disciplinary policy (Skiba, 2010). A zero-tolerance approach is often also characterised by harsh punishment and the punishment is often not fit for the transgression as no mitigating circumstances are taken into account and this often limits the possibility for intervention.

Both international and domestic sources of law make note of proportionality of punishment. This entails that the punishment for any offence must adhere to two crucial conditions. Firstly, punishment must be suitable for the learners' age and cognitive ability and secondly, the seriousness of the offence must be taken into consideration. Zero-tolerance often fails in this regard as punishment is often disproportionate for a learner's age or disproportionate in relation to the transgression. Cerrone (1999) uses the example of a fifth grade learner in the USA who was suspended in Wisconsin for bringing a toy gun on the school bus. It is evident that proportionality of punishment was not applied in this case as the punishment did not fit the transgression nor the learner's age.

Proportionality of punishment plays a vital role in the rehabilitation and intervention aspect of punishment. The goal of punishment for any transgression should be to intervene, rehabilitate or encourage modification of unacceptable behaviour. Suspension and expulsion by means of a zero-tolerance approach are often not conducive to the modification of unacceptable behaviour because instead of guiding learners to display more acceptable behaviour the learner is removed from the educational setting

(Sanneh and Jacobs, 2008). Article 40(1) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child mandates that the primary goal of sentencing a juvenile offender must be rehabilitation. On a smaller scale this can be made applicable in a school setting where the goal of any punishment should be to encourage a learner to display more acceptable behaviour.

2.3.2 National policies

Poor learner discipline is regarded as one of the major challenges in the South African education system. These disciplinary challenges in South Africa can be ascribed to a number of factors such as the moral decay of communities and social economic issues. In South Africa, it is mandatory that every school should have a disciplinary policy in the form of a code of conduct in place to address the disciplinary needs of the institution (Mestry et al., 2008). This code of conduct of a school should be framed against the South African constitution as set out in the South African Schools Act. The code of conduct and disciplinary related processes should be implemented with the primary goal of ensuring the safety of stakeholders and thus creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. It is important to take into consideration that the efficacy of a policy does not lie in the formulation of the policy but rather how consistent the policy is implemented (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2008 and Bray, 2015).

In a comprehensive study conducted by Mestry et al. (2008) in South Africa, it was found that one of the major reasons for the challenges with learner discipline in South Africa is due to the inconsistent implementation of the school code of conduct. Teachers often do not address transgressions as set out in the school code of conduct. In the same study, it was reported that teachers believe a zero-tolerance approach would be best to address learner discipline because a zero-tolerance approach when implemented correctly ensures consistency and there is very little possibility for deviation. Teachers in

the study also mentioned that with the use of a zero-tolerance approach there should be effective communication between various stakeholders about how the systems and processes is utilised within the approach (Mestry et al., 2008).

Section 12 of the Constitution notes the right to freedom and security together with the right of every to person to be free from psychological and bodily harm (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2015 and Bray, 2015). This right thus demands that any form of consequences and punishment in a school may not be cruel, inhuman, or degrading. Another key consideration in the compilation of the school code of conduct should be a learner's right to privacy. This right to privacy will be of key importance when searches for drug and weapon possession are conducted. A zero-tolerance approach is often characterised by regular drug and weapon searches as this assist in ensuring the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds. The right to privacy should be weighed against the right to a safe learning environment. When searches are conducted for drugs and weapons, a learner's right to dignity and privacy may be affected. Therefore, careful consideration should be given to ensure that searches are done when there is reasonable suspicion as set out in the Schools Act and the search must be conducted in an appropriate manner by an appropriate person (Joubert, 2008; Davies, 2015 and Bray, 2015).

One of the primary goals of the South African Education system is social inclusion and a zero-tolerance approach is the direct opposite of social inclusion. Social inclusion is an approach that encourages an interventionist approach in education. This approach involves that learners have increased engagement at school to modify behaviour rather than removing a learner to modify behaviour. A zero-tolerance approach on the other hand is an approach that is based on exclusion of vulnerable learners from a school environment (Bleakley & Bleakley, 2018). The Education White Paper 6: Inclusion Special Needs Education states that the South African education system must make provision for several learner needs. This includes learners that present with behavioural and disciplinary challenges.

According to the White Paper 6, inclusion must be aimed at overcoming barriers that make it difficult for learners to fit into the mainstream education system. Henceforth, a school's disciplinary approach should take into consideration a wide range of learner needs. The focus should be on the adaption and provision of various support systems. This approach of taking learners needs into consideration directly opposes a zero-tolerance approach as it is focused on consistency of application with no regard for personal circumstances or needs of learners.

The National Disability Strategy of South Africa was developed to encourage the inclusion of people with disabilities in mainstream society. This is also applicable for learners in the education system. This strategy of inclusion emphasises the need for inclusion of people or in the case of education learners with disabilities, whether these disabilities are behavioural or physical. The creation of an inclusive education system can be regarded as one of the cornerstones of creating a caring and moral society (White Paper Six, 2001). With the adaption of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline, a school can often fail to include learners with behavioural issues as one of the key features of a zero-tolerance approach is to firstly gather evidence of transgressions through various hearings and then removing a learner from the school setting if no change is observed in his/her behaviour. Thus, a zero-tolerance approach is often not focused on inclusion of learners with disabilities but rather removal of learners with behavioural issues.

2.4 UTILISATION OF A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTING EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

The justification for the use of a zero-tolerance approach to implement disciplinary policies lies in the school's primary responsibility to ensure the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds and create an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning (Cerrone, 1999). The reason for striving to

ensure school safety is that schools play a vital role in the social and academic development of learners (Bleakley and Bleakley, 2018). Like any other policy or process, the processes implemented to ensure school safety should be managed by the school management team. Makungo (2012) notes that any process that is regarded as being effectively managed and implemented will be characterised by a set of pre-determined objectives and preferred outcomes. In South Africa, a school code of conduct will be used to lay out all the preferred outcomes and consequences with regards to behaviour on school grounds. The code of conduct will be utilised firstly to intervene where a learner will have various hearings to remedy his/her behaviour and lastly the policy will be utilised to remove a learner should the behaviour not improve. In the case where a learner endangers the safety of other learners and educators or infringe on rights of any stakeholder he or she will be immediately removed for a set period as outline in the SASA. Learners cannot be removed indefinitely immediately but can be removed until they have a formal disciplinary hearing where a suitable punishment will be decided upon.

It is the main function of any educational institution to create a learning environment that is safe for all relevant stakeholders and free of disruption to ensure optimal teaching and learning can take place. Taking Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of human needs theory into consideration, a learner's need to feel safe and secure on school grounds must be met to promote personal, academic and social growth (Maslow & Lowery, 1998). Maslow points out that in a school environment a learner's need for safety will include the need for structure in his or her routine, consistency, security, and predictability. All of the aforementioned will be absent or partially lacking in an unsafe and disruptive learning environment (McNeal and Dunbar, 2010). Excessive disciplinary measures such as the use of a zero-tolerance approach can possibly create the opposite environment as these excessive disciplinary measures such as removing a learner from a class or suspending a learner, leave no room for making mistakes because mistakes are immediately and excessively punished.

The studies conducted by the American Psychological Association in 2008 have concluded that the enforcement of a zero-tolerance approach is less conducive to learning because learners experience almost all disciplinary actions as punitive. Creating a positive learning environment is of critical importance as a negative school climate will directly impact on a learners' social and physical well-being. There is very limited evidence to indicate that a zero-tolerance approach improves student behaviour. On the contrary, the enforcement of a zero-tolerance approach has shown higher numbers of misbehaviour of learners and a more negative school climate. In addition, a large portion of the school day is spent on discipline related issues, together with teachers reporting that the systems utilised to implement a zero-tolerance approach increases their already heavy administrative workload (American Psychological Association, 2008). Borgwald and Theixos (2013) concluded that a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline is often not only ineffective but also counterproductive. It was noted in the same article titled "*Bullying the bully: Why zero-tolerance policies get a failing grade*" (2013) that incidents of bullying and violence in schools that adopt a zero-tolerance approach have increased.

Kajs (2006) points out that the positive side of utilising a zero-tolerance approach is that it often improved teacher-learner relationships because discipline is applied fairly and consistently. Together with the consistent implementation of a zero-tolerance approach, it can also create an atmosphere that is conducive to teaching and learning because all disciplinary transgressions are addressed. No disciplinary transgression will be overseen because all transgressions will be addressed as set out in the code of conduct. One of the key features of a zero-tolerance approach is that discipline should be applied fairly, consequently and justly. When discipline is applied fairly and justly, learners experience disciplinary action as a mitigation approach rather than a punitive approach. A mitigating approach entails that small and severe transgressions should be addressed, but learners should firstly be given a

chance the rectify behaviour before they are removed. Examples of mitigating approach as part of a zero-tolerance approach includes various levels of disciplinary hearings.

In South African schools, a code of conduct will be the primary tool used for discipline management in a school. All relevant legislation will be used to compile a code of conduct. Every school in South Africa is required by the South African Schools Act 1996 to compile and adopt a school code of conduct. The SASA (1996) also states that no learner is exempted from the school code of conduct that he or she chooses to attend. The main aim of a code of conduct is to create an environment that is favourable for effective teaching and learning by communicating expected behaviour with all relevant stakeholders such as learner and parents as well as communicate the consequences for not complying with the rules. Expectations are communicated through rules set out in the code of conduct (Sebisha, 2015). Parents, educators and learners should all take responsibility in an effort to implement the code of conduct through clear limitations and guidelines. Although the implementation of a code of conduct is a communal effort between various stakeholders the biggest responsibility lies with the SMT. The SMT will choose the approach as well as determine the consistency of enforcement. The principal together with the SMT is responsible for the day to day implementation of systems (De Waal, 2011; Sebisha, 2015).

Van Wyk & Pelsler (2014) asserts the vital role of effective leadership in the utilisation of educational policies. It is noted that the compilation of effective disciplinary policies and effective leadership are interrelated. Through the compilation of effective disciplinary policies, principals and educational leaders have a better sense of control because clear guidelines are communicated and continually enforced. To utilise a zero-tolerance approach effectively, effective communication among staff is necessary. Collaboration between staff and management will ensure consistency. It is the responsibility of the principal together with the SMT to ensure that all the necessary resources are available

to utilise the policy effectively. If teachers need to capture negative marks a computer should be made available to do this and the management should ensure that all the relevant staff is familiar with the processes to follow. If the policy states that there will be specific consequences for transgressions, resources should be allocated to ensure that it is implemented.

2.5 CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH

2.5.1 Disproportionate suspension and expulsion

Teske (2011) found that black students are 2.6 times more likely to be expelled from public schools compared to white students in the United States of America in schools where a zero-tolerance approach is utilised. According to the American Psychological Association (2008) there is no evidence to indicate that the disparity is due to poverty or the fact that black students are more prone to violence. It was speculated that the disparity is due to the overrepresentation of Black students and bias on the part of school stakeholders. Hoffman (2014) continues on this statement by commenting on the inconsistent implementation of disciplinary policies in the USA even though it is said that a zero-tolerance approach is utilised. If a policy is not consistently implemented without deviation it cannot be said that that a zero-tolerance approach is utilised because a distinct feature of a zero-tolerance approach is continuous implementation without deviation from the pre-determined consequences. The inconsistent application of disciplinary policies can be observed in the number of black students recommended for suspension versus the number of white students recommended for suspension in schools in the United States. Data presented by Hoffman (2014) suggested that in the United States of America in the 2008/2009 school year, 2.26% of black students who transgressed were recommended for expulsion in comparison with white students where only 0.31% students were recommended for expulsion for the same transgressions.

These disproportionate expulsions and suspensions indicate that the zero-tolerance approach imposed in schools in the United States of America is not applied fairly and consistently, thus making the approach ineffective as one of the main aims of the approach is to address misconduct fairly and without deviation from the disciplinary policy. If the disciplinary policy is not applied consistently it will not reach the aim of addressing serious offences on school grounds. McNeal and Dunbar (2010) reported that high school students in the USA did not feel an increased sense of safety on school grounds even though a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies were utilised. This was ascribed to the fact that the disciplinary policy was inconsistently enforced by school stakeholders, which undermined student's confidence in the school's ability to ensure the safety of learners and teachers.

2.5.2 The school to prison pipeline

A number of negative outcomes can be associated with the use of a zero-tolerance approach. These outcomes include: a zero-tolerance approach often has a "one size fits all" approach and sometimes excessively punish minor transgressions. When learners are suspended or expelled they are often at greater risk to drop out of school and become involved with illegal activities or learners who are already performing poorly academically fall behind even further (Gage et al., 2013). Learners who get involved in illegal activities often contribute vastly to the school to prison pipeline.

Heitzeg (2009) explains that the school to prison pipeline are several punitive rules, policies and systems that push young people, especially African American male students with disabilities as well as learners with behavioural and psychological challenges out of the educational system and into the juvenile justice system. Pigott et al. (2018, p.121) elaborates on this definition and states that the school to prison pipeline refers to "the growing pattern of tracking students out of educational institutions and tracking them directly into the juvenile and adult criminal justice system." The school to prison pipeline

phenomena is a result of mass suspensions and expulsions from public schools using a zero-tolerance approach. The result of a high number of school dropouts is that these learners often get involved with illegal activities during the time that they are away from school and thus contribute to expanding the school to prison pipeline (Teske, 2011). Although a number of factors contribute to expanding the school to prison pipeline, the use of a zero-tolerance approach has been found to be one of the most prominent contributors (Heitzeg, 2009).

A lack of discretion from educators and disciplinary committees in schools is also a contributing factor to increasing the school to prison pipeline (Pigott et al., 2018). Heitzeg (2009) points out even though the school to prison pipeline is directly connected to the use of a zero-tolerance approach there are a number of other contributing factors such as a moral decline within society, overcrowding of schools, academic failure, limited parental involvement, inadequately resourced schools and larger social and political trends within modern society.

In a South African context there is very limited literature available on the school to prison pipeline but various literature is available on school drop-outs. The Department of Basic Education in South Africa defines a school-drop out as leaving school before completing a specific grade in a specific school year. Research about school drop-out has indicated that learners who drop out of school are often at greater risk for social and economic challenges as well as behavioural and mental disorders (Wegner, Flisher, Chikobvu, Lombard & King, 2008). In a study conducted by Kyei and Nemaorani (2014) in the Limpopo province, it was found that very few school drop-outs in South Africa is due to the disciplinary policy or related systems. It was found in the study that the most common causes for school drop-outs is: socio-economic status of the parents, distance to the nearest school, learners academic progress, age and recent report card.

2.5.3 Lack of legislative knowledge

It is of vital importance that teachers and school management teams have extensive knowledge about educational law in order to ensure that policies and procedures are correctly implemented. If teachers and school management teams lack the necessary legislative knowledge, policies and procedures might not be aligned with relevant legislation making disciplinary procedures difficult or policies completely ineffective. In order to create a safe environment for a learner that promotes effective learning, teachers need to have sufficient knowledge about educational law.

In a study conducted by Pillay (2014) it was found that teachers from both rural and non-rural schools had little to no formal exposure to educational law. Numerous teachers in the study reported that the only knowledge and exposure they had to educational law was through job experience. Knowledge about educational law is only acquired when they encounter situations where the application of specific laws is required. The finding that teachers have limited knowledge about educational laws poses a specific challenge with the implementation of disciplinary policies through the use of a zero-tolerance approach. This may result in policies not being implemented continuously and without deviation because teachers do not necessarily know what is allowed according to the law. It can also create a situation where disciplinary procedures become ineffective because educational leaders such as principals and the school management team are not aware of the procedures required by law with discipline-related challenges (Pillay, 2014).

2.5.4 Poorer school climate

Hoffman (2014) explains that a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies often result in a poorer general school climate, lower academic performance, and higher rates of school drop-outs as a result of continuous suspension and expulsion. Borgwald and Theixos (2013) affirms

that numerous studies about a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline found that a zero-tolerance approach is in many cases ineffective in reducing school violence, indicating that a zero-tolerance approach do not necessarily succeed in achieving its primary objective of ensuring the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds. In another study conducted by Gage et al. (2013) the results indicated that a zero-tolerance approach did not reduce school violence but instead resulted in high numbers of absenteeism of learners who were already performing poorly academically. The American Psychological Association (2008) found that the use of a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline often results in unjust and excessive consequences for learners who need help to display more socially acceptable behaviour.

2.6 MANAGEMENT OF A ZERO-TOLERANCE APPROACH TO LEARNER DISCIPLINE

In cases where the policy is consistently implemented and transgressions are consistently addressed as set out in the code of conduct, communication between key stakeholders can be improved and a communal effort can be made to guide learners to display more socially acceptable behaviour. A zero-tolerance approach therefore becomes the first method of intervention and rehabilitation of learners that presents with disciplinary issues or socially unacceptable behaviour.

2.7 GAPS IN LITERATURE

Based on the literature reviewed it can be concluded that school management teams and educators continue to enforce disciplinary policies using a zero-tolerance approach even though there is little evidence that this approach addresses disciplinary infringements effectively or creates an environment that is effective for teaching and learning (Gage et al., 2013). Educators and school

management rely on the perceptions that this approach to implementing disciplinary policies is conducive and effective to teaching and learning, because in a well-formulated code of conduct this approach looks comprehensive (Martinez, 2010). The studies that have shown effective use of zero-tolerance policies also show an increased number of reported suspensions and expulsions (American Psychological Association, 2008). Limited research was available on how teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. Given the noticeable gap in literature regarding teachers' experiences on a zero-tolerance approach in South African schools, research on how teachers experience a zero-tolerance policy as well as how they implement and maintain the policy is needed.

The proposed study aims to explore the experiences of teachers on the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline policies in a South African school and the perceptions of secondary school teacher's on the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline. The study will also identify the challenges teachers experience in the implementation of these policies and how these challenges are addressed.

2.8 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter relevant literature on a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline was examined. The chapter further explored how the policy is utilised as well as challenges experienced with a zero-tolerance approach. The management of a zero-tolerance approach was also discussed. In Chapter 3, the research approach, design and methodology used in this study is outlined. Data collection and analysis methods are explained as well as the methods used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness and ethical principles of the study.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, the researcher presented literature on a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline as well as the implementation of disciplinary policies in schools. The challenges with a zero-tolerance approach are explained as well as the management of various policies and the implementation of disciplinary policies from both an international as well as a national context. In this chapter, the researcher discusses the research paradigm, approach, design, and methodology. The measures taken to enhance trustworthiness of this study as well as the ethical considerations related to this study are also discussed.

3.2 RESEARCH PARADIGM

Krauss (2005) describes a paradigm as “the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation.” The paradigm that the researcher chooses to work from plays a critical role in providing insight and understanding into the perspective from which research was conducted. All paradigms are based on four basic elements: ontology, epistemology, methodology and methods (Krauss, 2005, p. 795). Sefoto (2018) explains that ontology can be referred to as “a paradigmatic and philosophical stance that a researcher declares in relation to his/her perception of reality”. The researcher needs to take a stand about their views and perceptions of how things work. The researcher believes in multiple realities meaning that in the proposed study, the reality of the experiences on the application of a zero-tolerance approach among secondary school teachers was multiple as data was collected from various participants. Epistemology according to Sefoto (2018) refers to “the science of how knowledge about reality is acquired.” My epistemological stance is that

knowledge is produced through the interpretation of experience and influenced by the interaction of various participants. A qualitative approach will thus enable me to make sense of the rich experiences of the participants. Krauss (2005) affirms that the epistemological nature of qualitative data analysis is often a rich and complex process. The research was therefore allocated within an interpretivist paradigm. Researchers who adopt an interpretivist paradigm work from the assumption that reality is constructed through an individual's subjective experiences of the real world thus, it can be concluded that reality is socially formulated (Scotland, 2012). In this study the researchers' intention was to explore, understand and interpret teachers' understanding of a zero-tolerance approach, related challenges and systems. The perspective of the researcher can therefore be described as interpretive in nature. The interpretivist paradigm allows the researcher to see the data gathered from participants as their own personal experience of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The interpretivist paradigm enables the researcher to gain and understanding into participants' experiences.

Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) explain that methodology in educational research can be defined as a variety of possible techniques and approaches to gather data about a specific phenomenon being researched. This data will be used to answer the main research question of the study and to make recommendations for further studies. The aim of methodology is to provide a comprehensive description of the techniques and types of data gathering, as well as the paradigm of the specific research study. Thus, it can be said that the aim of explaining the methodology is not to answer the main research question but rather to provide an in-depth insight into the process of answering the main research question. With the aim of answering the main research question, a study was conducted whilst making use of the interpretivist paradigm. The participants' responses were analysed through the interpretivist paradigm to gain understanding into the participant's perspective about secondary school teacher's experience of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

In this study, a qualitative approach was utilised imbedded in an interpretivist paradigm as the study aimed at constructing meaning on how secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. Kallio (2016) explains that the primary objective of qualitative data is to provide an in-depth description of the participants' experience related to the specific phenomena being investigated. A qualitative approach was appropriate in this study because the researcher wanted to investigate and conduct research on secondary school teachers experiences of the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The researcher was interested in understanding and reporting the voices, opinions, and experiences of participants. The researcher also intended to explore the perceptions of participants and how they construct meaning about the specific phenomena.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

Hernon and Schwartz (2009) describe a research design as a plan of action to conduct research. Aspects that should be considered before selecting a research design include: the sample that was used, the time frame for data collection and analysis, data collection methods as well as validity and reliability. The research design should be structured in a manner that will assist in answering the main research question as well as the sub-research questions. In this study, the research design was aligned and aimed at revealing how secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. In this study, a qualitative case study was utilised. Case study research can be defined as research done with the main objective of providing a comprehensive, detailed, and holistic description of the case. Case study research aims to provide understanding into the specific phenomena (Ylikoski & Zahle, 2019). Similarly, Cousin (2005) states that case

study research intends to study and explore a specific occurrence with the main aim of providing in depth understanding into the situation.

The use of case study as a research design poses several advantages. Firstly, the potential to model a real-life situation or case and generate meaning through analysing collected data whilst also considering non-written contextual factors (Cousin, 2005). Secondly, the researcher can follow up on questions should the participants response be vague and unclear (Kallio et al., 2016). Lastly, because interviews are very personal interaction it enables the researcher to take non-verbal cues into consideration when analysing data. Utilising case study research can be disadvantageous as it is difficult to generalise the research findings because research is often conducted in a bound system. Although findings are not generalisable, it can provide insight into the specific case being researched. Large amounts of data often make the task of identifying commonalities and deviations exceedingly difficult. Because the researcher is directly involved in the context, objectivity is a possible challenge (Cousin, 2005).

Despite the identified weaknesses of case study research, the case study approach used because it was relevant to the intended research. Through conducting a collective case study, the researcher was able to explore differences within and between various cases namely, how different teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to discipline and how zero-tolerance to discipline manifest in the different schools. Maree (2016) notes that through the utilisation of collective case studies the researcher is able to analyse each case study within each setting as well as across various settings.

3.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.6.1 Sampling

The schools where the research was conducted were selected based on the following aspects. Firstly, one of the schools has the highest suspension and expulsion rates in Gauteng. This was one of the main factors because suspension and expulsion are key features of a zero-tolerance approach. The second criteria was schools that pride themselves in having a zero-tolerance approach to implementing disciplinary policies. The third criteria are schools in which a number of relevant stakeholders such as parents and teachers have said that they have experienced that the school adopts a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.

The selection of participants was informed by the main research questions and the sub-research questions. A purposive approach to sampling was utilised together with snowball sampling. When purposive sampling is used the researcher often intentionally selects the cases or participants to be used in the sample since they are often regarded as “information rich.” The chosen sample often has specific characteristics or have specific knowledge that the researcher is in search of to answer the main research question. When snowball sampling is utilised the researcher identifies a small group of participants that have specific characteristics and information necessary to answer the main the research question. These participants will then be used as informants to guide the researcher to other participants that have similar characteristics (Cohen et al., 2007).

Purposive sampling was used to identify and select teachers at two secondary schools in Gauteng where a zero-tolerance approach to discipline is enforced. The research will include fifteen teachers from two secondary schools in Gauteng. Teachers were from post level one to four. Participants needed to have more than two years teaching experience to ensure that they have effective experience of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The researcher approached the principal of the school first to ask for consent to use the school for the study. The principal was the first to be interviewed, followed by the two deputy principals. These participants were asked for to

recommend teachers who would be willing to participate in the study. This is known as snowball sampling.

I asked for recommendations of teachers who are discipline masters, teachers with a high number of classroom discipline cases and teachers who are actively involved with the maintenance and implementation of the discipline system.

The participants were asked consent to share their experiences on a zero-tolerance approach to discipline. Although representativeness is not searched for specifically it is advisable to use teachers of different ages, gender, post level and years of experience, as this will contribute to the understanding of the subject of inquiry (Crowe, Inder and Porter, 2015). Additionally, the researcher also made use of convenience sampling. All the schools were within a 10 km radius from the researcher and are schools within the local community.

3.6.2 Research methods

The primary way of gathering data for this study was with semi structured in-depth interviews. Knox and Burkard (2008) point out that one of the most prominent aspects of utilising interviews in qualitative research is the interviewer-participant relationship. It is by means of this relationship that rich and descriptive data is obtained. The more familiar the participant is with the interviewer the more he or she will be willing to share information that forms the data. Qualitative interviews enable the researcher to gain perspective into how the participant constructs reality and how they see the world (Maree, 2016). In this study, the researcher conducted interviews with pre-determined questions using semi-structured interviews. In-depth semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to gain perspective on how secondary school teachers experience the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline.

It is important to be flexible when conducting the interviews to allow for dialogue to happen fluently (Kallio et al., 2016). In this study, the researcher

was flexible with regards to the COVID-19 pandemic. Firstly, all alternative measures such as social distancing, masks and hand sanitising was adhered to when in person interviews were conducted.

Teachers were given the option of electronic interviews via a Google meet or ZOOM should they not feel comfortable with in person interviews. Electronic interviews pose a number of advantages over telephonic interviews: Firstly, this allowed the researcher to record the interview, secondly non-verbal cues could have also been taken into account as the researcher can see the participant and thirdly, participants could have been asked to elaborate answers.

Field notes were also recorded and this enabled the researcher to reflect on the data at a later stage. Whilst reflecting on the data, the researcher was able to identify possible gaps that could have been addressed in follow up interviews and it also enabled me to ask for more clarification of responses if necessary (Maree, 2016).

Taking field notes also enabled the researcher to record non-verbal communications (Cresswell and Miller, 2000). Field notes were used to add to the data received from interviews to ensure that thick descriptive data was used when conducting the data analysis. In addition, fields note enabled the researcher to ask additional questions or ask participants to elaborate on a response if necessary.

3.6.3 Research Procedures

Figure 3.1 clearly indicates how the research procedures were undertaken. Following these procedures enabled me to engage in the research in a systematic way. The figure highlights the various phases in research starting with the development of the research topic; formulating the research questions that will be addressed; the rationale, and aims of the study. Thereafter, the

researcher focused on the research design, data collection methods followed by the analysis and interpretation of the gathered data. The last phases was offering recommendations and conclusions to the study.

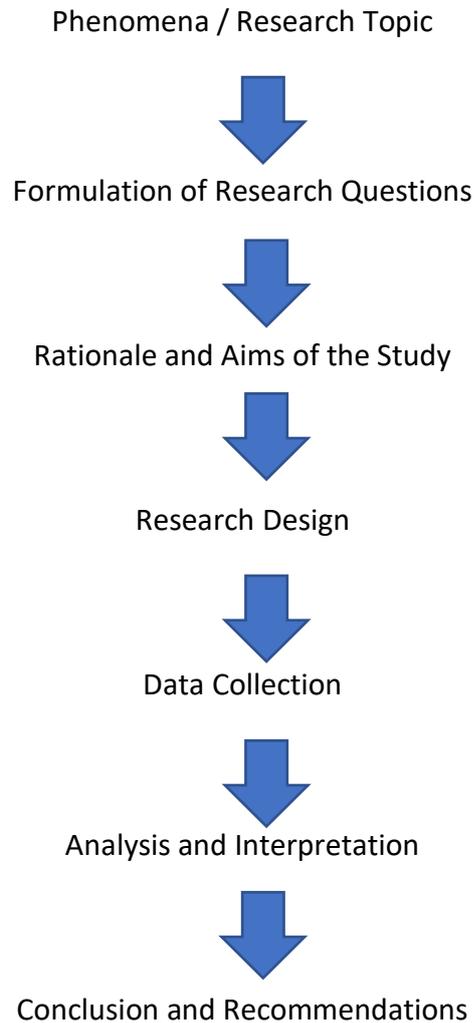


Figure 3.1: Research Procedure

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis in qualitative research refers to the process of organising, explaining and discussing the gathered data. In essence, data analysis aims to make sense of the data through identifying patterns, similarities and differences (Maree, 2013). The purpose of qualitative data analysis is to identify the main analytic findings and in many cases these findings involve

interpretation and contextualisation (O'Brien et al., 2014). In this study, the researcher made use of thematic analysis to analyse the gathered data.

Crowe, Inder and Porter (2015) explain that thematic analysis is a technique that qualitative researchers use to assign meaning to the data for the purpose of answering the main research question. Thematic analysis is used to organise and interpret qualitative data for the purpose of identifying commonalities and differences from participants' responses. When all relevant data is organised, themes and codes are identified. During this process of identifying codes and themes all irrelevant information was disregarded (Mabuza et al., 2014).

The researcher recorded all interviews, and the recordings were transcribed and tabulated. The responses of individual participants were grouped together. Data segments that relate to the interview questions were identified. The key to every answer was identified as participants often provided long answer but only a limited amount of data was relevant to the study. A code was assigned to each segment of usable data.

The coding of data is an important and useful technique in the process of converting raw qualitative data into useful parts to show to the reader and answer the main research question and involves the process of assigning a word or phrase to a specific data segment. Coding is an approach that requires the researcher to have a deep and comprehensive insight into the data that was gathered during the interview process. By utilising the process of coding, it can be ensured that the participants answer the question that has been asked and enables the researcher to identify questions that were not answered sufficiently and arrange for follow-up interviews (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Once coding was done themes and sub-themes were identified by the researcher. The process of identifying themes and sub-themes involves identifying commonalities and differences. Themes and patterns in the data

were discussed in detail. In this study, the data from the different participants was triangulated in the discussion of the research findings.

3.8 THE ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER

The researcher had the responsibility of reporting findings that are accurate, true, and representative of the field of inquiry. Findings were validated and checked as far as possible for the purpose of ensuring transparency. The researcher validated the data by using follow up questions in cases where it was necessary, to ensure that the data is a true reflection of the participants views and opinions about a zero-tolerance approach to discipline. Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) warns that the possibility exist that the researcher may so closely relate to the participants views that it becomes difficult to maintain a professional barrier between personal views and the views of the participant. In this case the researcher did not have a close relationship with any of the participants, thus it was easier to maintain a professional barrier. The researcher does not teach at any of the schools in the study and has never been involved at these schools in a professional or a personal capacity, thus there is no relationship with the participants.

3.9 ETHICAL ISSUES

Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) explain that before a researcher can conduct research, he or she needs to determine how this research will contribute to enhancing the situation of participants or how this research will contribute to the specific field of study. In this study, the researcher first applied for ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria for the purpose of undertaking field work. After obtaining the ethical clearance, the researcher needed to obtain permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct research in schools located in the Gauteng East District and Tswane North District. The ethical considerations that were addressed included, informed consent, confidentiality, consequences of participation in the research and role of the researcher.

The researcher obtained informed consent which refers to informing the participants of the study about the purpose of the study as well as the main characteristics of the study. Participants should also be informed about the risks and benefits of taking part in the specific study. Informed consent entails that participants should voluntarily participate in the study (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Participants should be informed about their right to stop participating in the study at any stage without penalisation should they choose to do so. Emails were sent to all participants explaining what the research entails and what the research aims to achieve. This enabled the researcher to have traceable communication that is easily accessible.

Confidentiality in research entails that the identity of the participants will not be made available at any point during the study. Data was reported in such a manner that the participants' identity is anonymous. Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) warns that in a qualitative interview where participants' views and statements can be made public, additional precautions should be put in place to ensure confidentiality. The researcher clearly explained the confidentiality issues to participants via email before conducting the interview.

The consequences of a study refer to the possible harm it can cause as well as the possible benefits that the study holds. Willig and Stainton-Rogers (2008) notes that "the ethical principle of beneficence means that the risk of harm to the participant should be the least possible". This poses a responsibility on me as the researcher to consider the possible consequences, not only for the participants, but also for the larger group that the participants represent (Willig & Stainton-Rogers, 2008). Participants were informed that the researcher would not ask inappropriate or sensitive questions that might psychologically harm them.

3.10 ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF THE RESEARCH

Baxter and Jack (2008) propose several strategies to enhance the trustworthiness of qualitative data. These strategies include ensuring that research questions are well-formulated, an appropriate case study design should be selected, relevant sampling methods should be utilised and lastly the data collected should be managed effectively and analysed correctly.

Credibility involves establishing whether the findings of a study are credible or not. Baxter and Jack (2008) advise that triangulation is the most prominent method of ensuring credibility in qualitative research. Triangulation means that the research problem is explored from multiple views and perspectives. The collection and comparison of collected data will enhance the credibility as the findings was confirmed from various sources. Additional methods to enhance the credibility of qualitative studies include field notes. To ensure credibility in this study, member checking was used. Transcribed interviews were e-mailed back to participants to confirm that the correct opinions and feelings of members were reflected in the data.

Another strategy of ensuring trustworthiness is transferability. Transferability can be referred to as the possibility to generalise the findings of a study. In this study, various themes were assigned to the data in the process of organising data. Rich descriptive explanations of the various themes promoted transferability. The knowledge and experience of the supervisor was used to check the transcribed interviews. The researcher used this knowledge and experience to be guided through the process of interpreting the data and making sense of the data.

Dependability of the research findings was ensured in this study. Dependability refers to the consistency of the research findings (Baxter & Jack, 2008). To ensure dependability relevant research procedures were used. The research process that was utilised includes informed consent, voluntarily participation

and anonymity. This was explained to participants. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw at any stage should they choose to, and they could refuse to answer questions should they feel uncomfortable. The research process is kept on record and is accessible at any stage of the research process. This includes audio recordings of interviews, transcribed interviews, ethical clearance, and data analysis procedures. Lastly, participants received a copy of their transcribed interview as well as the findings and discussion of the research.

The researcher strived for confirmability of the research findings. Confirmability relates to my ability to be neutral while conducting the research and analysing the data. Confirmability also involves the degree to which the findings were guided by the participants' responses and not my personal views and perceptions. The main aim of confirmability is to limit research bias as much as possible (Maree, 2016). The closer the relationship with participants the lower the level of confirmability will be because the researcher might see what they want to see instead of the true meaning or participants might give responses that he or she thinks the researcher wants to hear instead of the truth. Follow-up questions were asked to get a true understanding into the views and perspectives of teachers about a zero-tolerance approach to discipline. Lastly, triangulation was utilised. Triangulation refers to the process of collecting data from various sources about the same occurrence and comparing the data collected. In the case of this study, various teachers were interviewed about their experience of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline and their experiences were compared to identify commonalities as well as unique experiences.

3.11 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted at two different secondary schools in Gauteng. Both these schools utilise a zero-tolerance approach to implement disciplinary policies.

School A is a quintile five public school and is situated in the countryside outside Johannesburg, Gauteng. The SMT consists of the principal, two deputy principals, one male, one female and HOD's for various subjects. The school has approximately one thousand learners, both male and female. The school is one of two high schools in the town. The language of learning is both English and Afrikaans with two Afrikaans classes and one English class per grade, depending on the number of learners. The school accommodates any religion and is predominantly a mixed race school. Socio-economic conditions of learners vary but most learners come from middle to high income households. Learner standard of living is generally high with regards to access to technology as the school continued online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. In cases where learners were unable to attend online classes, the school assisted financially. Limited technology is available in the classrooms; teachers mostly work on white boards. The infrastructure and school grounds are well maintained.

School B is also a quintile five school situated in an urban area in Pretoria, Gauteng. The SMT consist of the principal and four deputy principals, two internally appointed and two appointed by the DBE and HOD's for various subjects. The school has approximately 1400 learners, both male and female. The LOLT is only Afrikaans. The school prides itself on having Christian values. The standards of living of learners vary, but most learners come from middle to high income households. The principal did mention in an interview that they often experience problems with family structures where learners often only live with one parent or a grandparent. The latest technology is available for teaching and learning in classrooms. The infrastructure and school grounds are well maintained.

3.12 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

Chapter 3 provided a layout of the research paradigm, approach, design, and data collection method of the study. This is a qualitative case study grounded

in an interpretivist paradigm. Purposive sampling and snowball sampling was used to select participants for the semi-structured interviews. The ethical principles that were applicable to this study was explained as well as strategies followed to ensure trustworthiness of the study. In Chapter 4, the findings of the interviews are discussed and compared with the reviewed literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, a detailed explanation of the methodology of the study is provided which includes the methods used for data collection and data analysis. In this chapter, the data collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers from two separate secondary schools are analysed by means of thematic analysis and the findings are presented and discussed. A discussion on how the findings relate to relevant literature on the topic of zero-tolerance together with a summary of every theme are included in this chapter. The relevance of the theoretical framework of the study in relation to the data collected is also discussed.

The purpose of this study was to explore how secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to discipline. The primary research question that guided the study was “How does secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to discipline? The secondary research questions that guided the study included:

- How do secondary school teachers understand the concept “zero-tolerance” approach to discipline?
- What challenges do teachers experience with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to school discipline?
- How do teachers address the identified challenges?
- How do teachers manage a “zero-tolerance” approach to school discipline?

4.2 BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The biographical information of participants are provided in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1: Biographical Information

School	Participant	Gender	Age	Position in the school	Years of Experience
School A	Participant A	Male	59	Principal	37
School A	Participant B	Female	59	Deputy Principal	36
School A	Participant C	Male	53	Deputy Principal	30
School A	Participant D	Female	35	Grade head Grade 12	11
School A	Participant E	Female	56	Post level 1 Teacher	18
School A	Participant F	Female	41	Head of Department	21
School A	Participant G	Female	59	Post level 1 Teacher	33
School B	Participant H	Female	28	HOD Mathematics and Grade 9 Grade Head	7

School B	Participant I	Male	58	HOD and Grade 11 Grade Head	35
School B	Participant J	Female	57	HOD Afrikaans and Grade 11 Grade Head	34
School B	Participant K	Female	48	Deputy Principal	27
School B	Participant L	Male	43	Deputy Principal	21
School B	Participant M	Male	50	Principal	26

4.3 RESEARCH QUESTION AND INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Table 4.2: Research questions and interview questions

	Interview questions
Demographic questions	<p>Please state your age.</p> <p>Please state your gender.</p> <p>Please state the number of years that you have been teaching.</p> <p>Please state your position in the school (Principal, HOD, grade head etc.)</p>
Biographical questions	<p>How long have you been teaching at this specific school?</p> <p>Please tell me about the demographics of the school (teacher learner ratio, gender of learners)</p> <p>Please tell me about your involvement in the schools' discipline activities.</p>
<p>Main research question:</p> <p>What are the experiences of secondary school teachers on the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”</p>	
<p>Sub-research question 1:</p> <p>How do secondary school teachers understand the concept “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”</p>	<p>What do you understand by a zero-tolerance approach to discipline? Please explain.</p> <p>What can you say about zero-tolerance approach and creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning? Please explain.</p>
Sub-research question 2	What are the challenges you face in

What challenges do teachers experience with the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”:	implementing a zero-tolerance approach to discipline? What can you say about the identified challenges in relation to the quality of teaching and learning at your school, please elaborate?
Sub-research question 3 How do teachers address the identified challenges?	How does the school address these challenges? Which aspect of the zero-tolerance approach would you like to change and why?
Sub-research question 4: How do teachers manage a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”	Please explain to me how zero-tolerance approach to discipline work in this school Tell me about how the policy is implemented. How do you manage the behaviour of learner using zero-tolerance approach?
	Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about zero-tolerance approach to discipline?

4.4 RESEARCH, QUESTIONS, THEMES AND SUB-THEMES

Table 4.3: Relevance between the research questions and the identified themes

Research question	Themes and sub-themes
What are the experiences of secondary school teachers on the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”	
How do secondary school teachers understand the concept “zero-tolerance	Theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach.

approach to discipline?”	
What challenges do teachers experience with the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”	Theme 2: Challenges with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach.
How do the teachers address the identified challenges?	Theme 3: How teachers address the identified challenges.
How do teachers manage a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”	Theme 4: Management of a zero-tolerance approach.

4.5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research findings of the study are presented in themes and sub-themes. The findings are aligned with the main research question together with the sub-research questions. A detailed explanation of the themes identified are provided below.

4.5.1 Theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach

Participants in the study were interviewed about their understanding of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The participants also reported on their views about a zero-tolerance approach, how it should be implemented and the main attributes of the approach to learner discipline. In this section, the research question “How do secondary school teachers understand the concept “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?” is presented.

4.5.1.1 *Sub-theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach*

The first findings of the study indicate that teachers understand a zero-tolerance approach as a disciplinary approach where educators are required to act consistently on disciplinary transgressions as set out in the code of conduct. The following are some of the participants responses.

...when the transgression happens, you need to act as described in the code of conduct follow the rule and the administration process must be in place (Participant A).

I think it is important that you must be strict according to the code of conduct (Participant C).

I act according to it (code of conduct), if they tell me now you do this according to this misdemeanour, then one follows the steps (Participant D).

I would say zero-tolerance is, what is in the policy of your school, what the rules are of your school it is non-negotiable (Participant H).

It seems that some of the teachers who participated in the study understand a zero-tolerance approach as a disciplinary approach where the code of conduct should be utilised as the primary tool to address any transgressions. It means that transgressions of the same kind could be addressed in the same way using standard school code of conduct. It also appears that the participants believe a zero-tolerance approach is characterised by the consistent implementation of school rules. The fact that one participant mentioned the “the rules are non-negotiable” also indicates that according to the participant no mitigating circumstances should be considered.

Other teachers in the study reported that according to their understanding of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline, action for transgressions should be taken without exemption, meaning that no mitigating circumstances should be considered when punishment for transgressions is executed. These were some of the responses from the participants.

According to me that is if you will not make exceptions (Participant B).

*...any disciplinary issue must be dealt with and cannot be tolerated.
(Participant M).*

The findings suggest that teachers believe that consequences for transgressions should be implemented without any exceptions. The statement implies fairness and consistency for both severe and minor transgressions in managing learner discipline.

Apart from no exemption, a zero-tolerance approach was described by other participants as an approach where educators have no compassion for learners and as a militaristic and inhuman approach to learner discipline.

That you have no compassion or that there is no leeway for any child to be a child. I found it very inhuman, and I found it very harsh (Participant E).

Zero-tolerance it means it should be almost like a bit militaristic. And I'm not going to ever be able to fit into that role because then I have to change my whole being. I am not a militaristic enforcer of authority (Participant J).

Zero-tolerance with being militaristic would work but there is a fine line (Participant B).

The finding of a zero-tolerance approach being militaristic implies that this approach guided by rules and consequences is inhuman. It takes away pastoral care relationship that a teacher would establish with the learners.

Literature (Mestry, Moloï & Mohamed, 2008 and Teske, 2011) described a zero-tolerance approach as a disciplinary approach where pre-set consequences for transgressions should have been established and rules should be clearly laid out to all relevant participants. Throughout all the

sources it was highlighted that consequences to transgressions should have been implemented regardless of underlying factors, intent or any previous records (Losiniski et al., 2014 and McNeal and Dunbar, 2010). In this study, a zero-tolerance approach is conceptualised as a disciplinary approach where the teacher needs to fulfil a role as set out in the code of conduct. This is done without taking any mitigating circumstances into consideration. The responses of participants were similar to literature (Losiniski et al., 2014 and McNeal and Dunbar, 2010). This comparison between the literature and the findings suggest that teachers mostly perceive a zero-tolerance approach as an approach where one should act only within the set boundaries and the code of conduct and that no mitigating circumstances should be considered.

4.5.1.2 Effect of a zero-tolerance approach in creating an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning

The findings of the study indicate that some teachers believe that a zero-tolerance approach is highly conducive to teaching and learning as rules are utilised to create order and make learners feel safe.

...the rules of the school are only there to address the few which is not in line so one could say that a zero-tolerance can promote that environment in you school (Participant A).

...it creates order. I think that if there are no rules and regulations there will be no order, even in a classroom. You do not need a lot of rules, but learners must know where they stand with you. And if they reach a certain line, they must know that now they have gone too far and there will be consequences but without rules there will not be order (Participant H).

A child is someone who is growing up and he should definitely know where his boundaries are and what he may and may not do ... he feels

safer if there are clear boundaries within which he must function (Participant K).

Although most of the participants acknowledge that the environment created by the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach is one where rules are seldom broken, some of the participants also mention that this might be too severe. The extent to which rules within the classroom is required seems not to be in line with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach. The difference in opinions of the teachers regarding the implementation of zero-tolerance implies that there is no common understanding on the need of such an approach and how the implementation should be done.

Teachers in the study also reported that they believe the excessive use of rules can be counter-productive for teaching and learning because learners are scared and anxious of possibly transgressing and facing the consequences.

...kids might be so scared that they don't want to ask you if they don't understand we all know when you are stressed you can't really take in new concepts (Participant B).

I do not think it works because children should not be scared of you (Participant E).

Then you have to be rigid and shout the whole time and learners will be too scared to take something out of their bags ... they cannot do anything. They are too scared to look left or right and they will be very anxious. If learners are anxious then no learning can take place (Participant F).

It would seem from the responses above that the educators feel that in order to fully connect with the learners in class there should be some form of social engagement with them. These participants reported that the milieu created by

a zero-tolerance approach is counterproductive to the very need of social engagement. The teachers further expressed that in order to maintain an environment characterised by strictness, which is a prerequisite of a zero-tolerance approach, they have to display a façade which makes them act out of character, and as a result they become unhappy. It would seem that the teachers inherently know that in order to educate a child, one needs to develop them holistically, of which the emotional developmental and social interaction aspect is significant.

One principal in this study noted that a zero-tolerance approach can be conducive to teaching and learning but that the process of implementing discipline should be a collective approach between educators and the school management team and teachers should be guided on how to implement the approach. Together with this, the approach should be based on intervention and not condemnation.

I think it is conducive, but you need to handle it correctly and guide your staff that they keep their empathy. Remind them that they must still be the educator and built relationships and still show this child that they have the best interest of the child at heart and not be cold and heartless (Participant M).

The above findings indicate that teachers should be adequately trained and informed about what the zero-tolerance approach entails. It is clearly evident that the approach can, if not handled correctly take the human factor out of imposing discipline. This finding is in line with an earlier study by the American Psychological Association Zero-Tolerance Task Force (2008). Skiba (2014) and Walsh (2015) reported that a zero-tolerance approach was not necessarily conducive in creating an environment favourable for effective teaching and learning. This was because a zero-tolerance approach was often associated with high numbers of suspension and expulsions, which could be seen as depriving learners of the opportunity to learn and effectively engage in the

school activities. In cases where a learner was not suspended or expelled, severe punishments were often implemented and the result of an increase in severe punishment was that of creating a school climate which was even worse than having poor discipline (Skiba, 2014; Walsh, 2015). The findings of this study suggest that the excessive use of rules; through the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach is often counterproductive in addressing disciplinary problems. This is in line with Skiba (2006) who found that there is very little evidence to indicate that a zero-tolerance approach decreased disruptions or improved the general school climate for effective teaching and learning. This correlation suggests that teachers do not perceive a zero-tolerance approach as having the desired effect of absolute discipline or being conducive to effective teaching and learning.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Challenges with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach

This theme explores the challenges that teachers experience with a zero-tolerance approach. The data below show the findings related to the research question: What challenges do teachers experience with the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”

4.5.2.1 Sub-theme 1: Challenges experienced by teachers with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach

One of the most prominent challenges mentioned by teachers is a lack of parental support in the implementation of disciplinary measures and procedures. Parents are either absent from their child’s life or they are reluctant to co-operate with teachers in discipline related matters.

The only challenge is that percentage of parents that you will never have on a parents meeting, you will never get them to sit face to face and discuss the problem of their child (Participant A).

When parents do not have the same regards for the rules as the school does then it is very difficult. And often the parents are very rebellious and that makes it exceedingly difficult for the school. Because then you have no support to support that learner because parent is non-co-operative (Participant H).

Parents. Often times when you address a learner about a transgression the parents will not be co-operative (Participant I).

The responses clearly suggest that if parents do not hold a high enough regard for the school's disciplinary policy, learners may also have no regard for the policy. It also makes the task of managing learner behaviour difficult as learner intervention with regards to poor discipline is the responsibility of both parents and teachers alike. For a learner to receive the necessary help and intervention to rectify his/her behaviour, they first need to realise that there is a problem. This task of getting a learner to realise that his/her behaviour is unacceptable or destructive is made even more difficult as revealed in this study, if parents are not co-operative in the disciplinary process.

One teacher mentioned that the over emphasis on human rights makes the implementation of discipline exceedingly difficult:

The issue of human rights. You see in the time that we live human rights are emphasised but what they forget is human rights also have responsibilities. They put so much emphasis on the rights of children, but they forget that together with that right comes responsibilities (Participant I).

This finding suggests that learners often claim their rights but do not acknowledge the responsibility that is accompanied along with the specific right. This can create a situation where learners become arrogant or non-co-operative because they feel protected by their rights. The ability of the teacher

to manage learner discipline seems to be threaten by the learners' assumed perception of their rights. The teacher seems aware of infringement of learners' rights. This could presumably make it exceedingly difficult for the teacher to maintain a zero-tolerance approach to discipline within a school.

Before one imposes disciplinary procedures, mitigating circumstances must be considered. This can be regarded as a challenge because without taking mitigating circumstances into account, the possibility for intervention in a disciplinary matter is often limited.

I think if you really implement that very strictly you are disregarding the human factor. Cause kids sometimes have bad days they have terrible circumstances (Participant B).

Now you cannot punish a child that was unable to do homework because he working two jobs and he contributes towards the household and things like that. And now they expect that he needs to get the same punishment. But it is not his fault, therefore you are punishing the circumstances, and that is the huge problem. Children don't always comprehend that there are exceptions (Participant D).

...everything went well but there was no human factor. And that was wrong for me because that is not what we are in the business for (Participant C).

The responses above imply that mitigating circumstances are important when implementing disciplinary procedures because learners often do not have control over external circumstances that may affect their behaviour and performance at school. Learners are often bound to personal circumstances out of their control that directly impacts their academic performance and behaviour. Taking the human factor into account can refer to having compassion for learners particularly because they are still in a stage of developing emotionally

and psychologically. This finding implies that in order to implement discipline with compassion it requires that teachers take into consideration the factors that cause ill-behaviour of the learner. This approach is directly to a zero-tolerance mind-set. Discipline with compassion can imply that discipline transgressions are examined by taking a child's emotional state, feelings, and external setting into consideration when imposing discipline. One of the primary phases of any intervention with regards to discipline is pastoral care, it evident from the findings that a zero-tolerance approach makes it difficult for teachers to attend to their duty of pastoral care because no mitigating circumstances are considered, thus the school or the teacher cannot reach a point where intervention can take place.

Lastly, teachers in the study reported that a zero-tolerance approach often makes learners un-co-operative and that it has the opposite effect on disciplinary issues. Instead of decreasing disciplinary infringements the number of incidents increases. Teachers reported the following:

It gets the kids backs up they do not want to bend basically. They do not want to do what you are trying to get them to do. They will move in a different direction. I believe in a school where there is zero-tolerance and the children's backs are up they are not going to give their co-operation. You must be tolerant (Participant E).

I think it worsens the discipline in the school. I cannot see that it works. The learners are not robots where they just need to sit still and you... (Participant F).

In a school where a zero-tolerance approach is implemented, it seems that the learners might end up feeling as if the primary purpose of the disciplinary system is to punish them. This finding suggests that the learners may experience any disciplinary action as punitive or negative. This may result in the learners becoming defensive and rebellious towards the educators and all

other figures of authority. The notion that compassion is not considered and mitigating circumstances not taken into consideration may create a hostile relationship between the teacher and the learners.

Van Velsor and Orozco (2007) posed a number of reasons for limited parental involvement in both the disciplinary procedures and academic attainment of learners. These reasons included: school climate, socio-economic issues, teacher attitudes, literacy levels of parents, psychological and demographic barriers. A possibility exists that parents were often not involved in the process of discipline due to reasons beyond simply being unwilling. Parents might have perceived themselves as not being able to help their children or not being able to help their child because of other responsibilities.

This study also revealed that a challenge associated with a zero-tolerance approach is that this approach often makes learners un-co-operative as all disciplinary actions are experienced as punitive. From the findings of this study it is clearly evident that a lack of parental support makes the implementation of disciplinary procedures difficult. This finding was also reported by the American Bar Association (2001) who found that a zero-tolerance has resulted in higher numbers of transgressions and student misbehaviour and a more negative school climate. These findings indicate that the excessive use of rules might not only have been counter-productive in decreasing transgressions, but might also have created a school climate which was not conducive for teaching and learning. Instead of intervening and providing learners with the help they need to rectify their behaviour, they are removed from the educational setting. This finding indicates that teachers perceive a zero-tolerance approach as having the result of making learners rebellious and having the opposite effect as that which was desired.

4.5.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Effect of challenges associated with a zero-tolerance approach on effective teaching and learning

A principal in the study reported that parental involvement as a challenge can influence the quality of teaching and learning because learners who often transgress are often learners with limited parental support.

Parental involvement in a child's life will of course either encourage or discourage. It depends on the parents' approach. So, if a parent is involved in a positive way towards his child's life and he shows interest and he support and he assists and he push even if there is money or not just being there will help. We have the guys who are habitual problems with these absent parents. They often fail the grade (Participant A).

This statement implies that parental involvement may have a direct impact on learner performance both socially and academically and could also affect the behaviour of a learner. It means that a learner with limited parental support is likely to act out of line at school because of the lack of behaviour management. The misbehaviour of the learners may have a negative influence on teaching and learning and educational achievement. One of the main characteristics of a zero-tolerance approach is communication and co-operation between various stakeholders, within an educational system. The stakeholders include learners, parents and educators. Without parental involvement, the flow of communication and the possibility for intervention between the different stakeholders breaks down. Limited communication and co-operation between various stakeholders may also have a direct negative impact on effective teaching and learning which ultimately affects the academic performance of the learner. The participants said:

The support we get from parents is not so good all the time and that is a huge problem in our school regarding the discipline (Participant E).

One teacher in the study noted that the excessive disciplinary processes are time consuming and also increase their administrative responsibilities. This results in less teaching time which will eventually have a direct impact on the quality of teaching and learning.

Because you see what happens in a class one child who causes trouble often takes up half a period because the teacher has to address that child where the rest of the children then sit and do nothing in that case it has a direct impact (Participant I).

If you spend too much time with disciplining learners you lose teaching time so then having more tolerance will save teaching time (Participant B).

I think staff find it time consuming because you get your staff to commit themselves to keep note and every day to communicate with the child be that communicator. And then also to go on and record and do the recordings and show all your interventions and show that you have had the conversation. Show that you have warned him, show that you have phoned the parents (Participant M).

From the statements above, one can derive that the perpetual maintenance of a zero-tolerance approach is a process which is expensive in both time and in administrative responsibilities. It implies that teachers experience an increased workload due to the heightened administrative responsibilities caused by the process of maintaining a zero-tolerance approach. The added-on responsibility can cause feelings of being overwhelmed, resulting in the teachers being less productive. It means that instead of using their allocated administrative periods for the purposes of teaching and learning related aspects, these periods are used for logging learner misconduct incidents into the system.

On the contrary, another teacher in the study mentioned that the challenges experienced when applying a zero-tolerance policy does not affect the quality of teaching and learning because parents are consistently informed about what is expected of them.

I do not think it affects the quality of our teaching and learning because we have procedures in place. So, if a parent does not adhere to the rules because if they enrol their child in our school, they adopt the rules in the code of conduct, and we discipline the parents as well if it is necessary (Participant C).

It is evident from the response above that when relevant disciplinary processes and systems are in place and these systems are consistently implemented, the disruption of effective teaching and learning can be limited. One can assume that this may be because learners know what is expected of them and parents are also informed of the consequences so parents take responsibility for their child.

In this study research found that learners who frequently transgress are often learners with inadequate parental support. A principal in the study noted that parental participation influences learner performance at academic and social level. Msila et al. (2004) and Sugawara, Hermoso, Delale, Hoffman and Lupšić (2012) have done extensive research on parental involvement in South Africa and internationally and concluded that if parents were actively involved in their child's life both academically and socially, they were better equipped to undergo school activities. Parental support has also proved to have a distinct positive effect on learners' academic performance. These findings indicate that parental involvement is a critical part of learner success. When parents are involved in the process of discipline it makes intervention more effective as parents and teachers will work together to ensure the best possible outcome for the learner. This association signifies that teachers perceive good parental

support as being one of the key cornerstones in effective teaching and learning.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Addressing challenges identified by the teachers

In this theme, the researcher presents the strategies that the participants in this study used in addressing the challenges they experienced in the process of implementing a zero-tolerance approach to learner misbehaviour.

4.5.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Methods used to address the challenges associated with a zero-tolerance approach

One method mentioned by teachers who participated in the study of dealing with challenges associated with implementing a zero-tolerance approach was intervention by senior management. This includes intervention through teacher training as well as escalating the handling of the disciplinary matter to other stakeholders in the school.

Have conversations with the teacher and see if you can equip them to handle the situation in the class better. Also have a conversation with the kids in that class to say this is the process we have instructed the teacher to do the following things (Participant M).

We have a grade hearing and if the behaviour continues it will be escalated to a top management hearing or a School Governing Body hearing and then it will go to the Department of Education (Participant I).

I must say out principal is involved. He sees the parents; he communicates with learners. Any learner that presents with sever disciplinary problems will have a session with the principal and he explains to the learner and the parents that the following processes will now be followed (Participant H).

From the above responses, it appears that the communication and the involvement of line function management play an integral role in implementing disciplinary procedures. Different stakeholders are involved and they perform different functions in the process of discipline. With every step the learner is given an opportunity to improve his behaviour before it is escalated to the next level. When learners transgress and the first step of the process is implemented, learners need to know that they are now entering a process, if they do not rectify their mistakes they will move through the various disciplinary steps very quickly. This shows that there is due process in implementing disciplinary matters. It is also a reflection that the process gives the learner time to reflect on their behaviour and possibly change.

Teachers in the study also mentioned that most challenges are addressed through communication between various stakeholders. This includes consistent communication of expectations to parents and learners as well as reminding stakeholders of relevant rules and policies on a regular basis.

In cases like this we often refer to the school policy. Any parent who is rebellious and says “it doesn’t work like this” and they are not going to do this, we refer to the policy because this is the only grounds we have to stand on to say that this is how it is going to work (Participant H).

I think the principal plays a very big role there. At the beginning of every year, we have a grade meeting that the parents and the children are supposed to attend. Also have a newsletter that the principal co-ordinated that goes out every week and we mention crisis situations in these letters. If something somewhere becomes a problem, it is communicated to the parents on a weekly basis. It is sent via email (Participant I).

From the above responses, it is evident that the consistent implementation of policies is a critical part of ensuring the success of any disciplinary system. It

seems that it is also important that policies are well formulated and that they are in line with relevant legislation. Policies are used as guidelines and also justification for the disciplinary action taken. Policies appear to be used as a primary tool in addressing any disciplinary transgressions and also to ensure order and discipline within a school. One can derive from the findings of this study that the first step to creating order in a school is to ensure that policies are well formulated. Secondly, these policies must be communicated regularly. Lastly, policies should be implemented without deviation. The findings of this study imply that these three aspects are adhered to for the purpose of consistency and fairness.

This study revealed that challenges related to a zero-tolerance approach are addressed through the intervention of the school management team. These interventions include amongst other measures taken to ensure the consistent communication between various stakeholders involved. These stakeholders comprise of members of the school, parents and learners. Parental partnerships, consisting of parents and teachers, should have been utilised as a method of intervention in disciplinary processes (Mbokodi and Singh, 2001). The management and implementation of disciplinary procedures should be a collaborative effort of intervention between different stakeholders.

According to the co-construction perspective on policy implementation the implementation of policies, is a mutual process between various stakeholders. In the case of this study policy implementation is a mutual process between national education departments, provincial education departments, various districts and schools. The context as well as cohesion amongst various stakeholders will have a noticeable effect on the efficacy of the implementation of the disciplinary policy (Curran, 2019). According to SASA, all schools are mandated to implement a zero-tolerance approach as no learner should be excluded from following the code of conduct of the school that he/she chooses to attend. In this study, the findings indicate that teachers believe a zero-tolerance approach should only be implemented for transgressions that infringe

on human rights of stakeholders or action that endanger the safety of these stakeholders.

4.5.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Aspects that teachers would like to change about a zero-tolerance approach

The findings of this study indicate that teachers believe that the main aim of any disciplinary process or system should be regarded as an intervention to guide learners to rectify their mistakes. Teachers reported that this is an aspect that zero-tolerance fails to do and it is an aspect that they do not agree with when implementing a zero-tolerance policy.

And a zero-tolerance means there is not a second chance, and I don't agree to that because we work with kids they make mistakes and we must try to help them to correct their mistakes and don't do that in the future again (Participant C).

I know that children make mistakes and you need to help and guide them and they should know what they can and cannot do (Participant F).

It is evident from the statements that teachers believe the aim of a disciplinary process should not be exclusively to punish learners but rather to give learners the opportunity to improve their behaviour and/or rectify their mistakes. It is clear from the findings that the teachers are of the opinion that a disciplinary approach should aim at guiding learners - rather than to punish learners for mistakes. Hence, the objective of disciplinary actions should be corrective in nature and not punitive. The quotations suggest disciplinary approach that includes elements of caring and nurturing the learners.

The responses from teachers suggested that any disciplinary process should make provision for taking mitigating circumstances into consideration and that teachers should not lose empathy in the process of discipline.

You must take the situation into consideration. And you must consider all the circumstances because the circumstances are not the same in every child's life so you must consider that. So, your approach must be to help this child to improve. If there is a transgression, there must be punishment but there must be another chance (Participant C).

We need to be mindful that we do not take the caring out of zero-tolerance (Participant H).

...so that they do not become insensitive to their role that they still have as educators. To try and nurture a child back to being on the straight and narrow if I can put it like that and not just condemn a child (Participant M).

The findings above imply that teachers primarily have the responsibility to be a parental figure. One can refer to the responsibility as outlined in the *in loco parentis* phrase. As part of this responsibility, teachers are required to always act in the best interest of the learner, thus any discipline imposed should be to guide the learner to display better behaviour rather than just to condemn the learner and remove the learner from a specific setting.

One teacher in the study reported that she believes a zero-tolerance approach should only be implemented for so called “serious transgressions.” These would refer to section two violations according to the SASA. These include violations that endanger the lives of stakeholders on school grounds or violate basic human rights such as sexual harassment.

I would like to shift that the focus is on more serious offenses, not on minor offenses that one can correct within a school community, and remedy by working with a child... Serious offense if you hit another child at school until the blood runs, it's a very serious offense for me. Violation of human rights, children no longer feeling safe at school or sexual offenses. This is a serious offense; these are minors we work with. Serious transgressions I am very rigid about I do not have conversation with you less serious transgressions I try to take the circumstances into account (Participant K).

The findings suggest that a clear distinction between serious and lesser transgressions should be made. Legislation and policy framework should guide the seriousness of transgressions. One of the main reasons for implementing a zero-tolerance approach is to ensure the safety of all stakeholders on school grounds, thus any transgressions that endanger the safety of any stakeholder or violate any stakeholder's human rights should be addressed through a zero-tolerance approach. This implies that no mitigating circumstances are considered and the learner who transgressed may be removed from the educational institution. Less serious transgressions can be regarded as transgressions that do not endanger the safety of any stakeholder or violate any human right, but is still in contradiction of the school code of conduct. In circumstances such as these, a more accommodating approach should be utilised. All transgressions should still be addressed, but the severity of addressing these transgressions should be guided by the seriousness of the transgression.

Schools are required to implement a zero-tolerance approach according to the SASA (1996). The SASA clearly states that no learner is exempted from complying with the rules of a school. In the case of serious misconduct, the school governing body is required to suspend a learner accused of serious wrongdoing as a preventive measure. Only on reasonable suspicion and after the learner has been given an opportunity to make representations on the topic

may this be done. The findings of this study suggest that teachers believe a zero-tolerance approach should only be implemented for serious misconduct that infringe on the human rights of stakeholders, endangers the safety of stakeholders or is considered as illegal. In addition, teachers' experiences indicate that any disciplinary approach should have the primary aim of intervention not condemnation. The findings of this study are in line with legislation.

4.5.4 Theme 4: How teachers manage a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline

In this theme the participants indicated the different ways in which they managed learner misconduct with regards to the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach to discipline.

4.5.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Implementation of the disciplinary policy through the use of a zero-tolerance approach

Teachers in the study reported that a zero-tolerance approach is implemented through effective recording of both transgressions and interventions. This allows for a complete picture of learner behaviour to be recorded should more severe steps be necessary.

There must be a record of the smallest type of incident in the school so that if it happens again you can apply more strain to that or more pressure (Participant A).

We have one of those disciplinary points systems at the school where teachers give disciplinary points for transgressions. The number of points is determined by the type of transgression. He will receive only one point for not doing homework and receive ten points for smoking on school grounds (Participant I).

One of the most prominent characteristics of a zero-tolerance approach is so called “case building”. This entails that there must be enough evidence to justify more severe punishments. From the above quotations, it seems that an operative recording system enables a school to effectively implement more severe punishment because this punishment can be justified through proof of intervention and in severe cases that the learner has no interest in modifying his/her behaviour. The recording of smaller transgressions such as repeatedly not doing homework, enables the school and educators to identify possible opportunities for intervention. Aspects such as academic difficulty or external circumstances at home can be revealed. The records could also be a way of having a point of reference for teachers in the process of managing behaviour of learners.

Participants in the study also noted that the disciplinary policy is implemented by following the processes as set out in the code of conduct. These processes often involve intervention by different levels of the school management team.

...when it is the second or third time then we have a level 1 hearing. Then it is an informal hearing and then we approach the parents as well, the parents must be present and the head of the grade and someone who will be the scribe. And then there will be a punishment. And if it is serious we have a disciplinary committee the chair is one of our governing body parents he is a lawyer (Participant C).

Then we also have a form that the child and the parent fills in that they say that he or she promises not to make themselves guilty in breaking the school rules again, and if they make themselves guilty in breaking the rule again it will lead to further disciplinary processes (Participant L).

From the findings above, it is evident that the code of conduct should be used as the primary tool to implement disciplinary procedures. It implies that a

school's code of conduct should be corrective in nature thus through implementing the code of conduct learners are provided with the opportunity to rectify behaviour and the code also provides opportunity for intervention to take place. Disciplinary hearings can be seen as a progressive method of addressing unacceptable behaviour.

The responses of participants further showed that communication between various stakeholders should be utilised to implement a zero-tolerance approach. This involves the communication of expectations to learners and parents, communication of intervention or disciplinary processes implemented for transgressions and communication among staff about the implementation of these processes.

...so the system in place currently is, if a child gets to a certain number of points they get detention, so they sit Monday detention. Then already it goes out with a notification to the parents and the child receives a written notification. Every second Friday we have a meeting with the staff, grade meetings with the staff where those teachers who have experienced that they are having difficulty with children where they report it. HOD meetings are held and we identify the kids that are now appearing in the radar for class disruption, for bunking class and we start booking grade head disciplinary hearings for them (Participant M).

All the rules and regulations are on our website. All our policies are in line. In the beginning of the year we address every rule and we go through them in our register classes. Then repeatedly in assembly we will address certain matters like coming late, highlighting again coming in on time, what is your responsibilities, what is your work ethic what should happen and what is the correct value (Participant L).

It is send to the parents via SMS. The parents also need to sign the transgression letter (Participant I).

The findings of this sub-theme suggest that when all stakeholders know what is expected of them, it creates a sense of accountability in the school among stakeholders. Parents, teachers and learners are then likely to take responsibility for their actions. The assumption could be that when expectations are continually communicated the excuse of ignorance is not valid. Thus a learner or his/her parents cannot say that they transgressed because they did not know. This finding also implies that it is the responsibility of the school management team to ensure that all stakeholders clearly understand their roles and responsibilities with regards to implementing disciplinary processes.

According to the Personnel Administrative Measures (2006) document, communication is one of the primary responsibilities of an educator. It is clearly stated *“To meet parents and discuss with them the progress and conduct of their children.”* In this study, teachers report that the management of a zero-tolerance approach is done through effective recording of both interventions and misconduct. A zero-tolerance approach is used to implement the code of conduct through effective communication with various stakeholders. Communication and record keeping are interrelated. In order to communicate effectively with parents and give them a correct version of their child’s progress, it is necessary to keep record. The findings of this study is in line with the national policy which states that communication and record keeping are integral components of the zero-tolerance approach.

4.5.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Behaviour management through the use of a zero-tolerance approach

Demanding respect from learners and showing respect to learners was mentioned as one of the most prominent methods of behaviour management. This includes respect from and for one another, educators and the disciplinary processes and systems utilised.

I show respect, because that is what they want. And I speak to them like I would like to be spoken to. So then their behaviour and all of those things that come along with it will be in place. Because respect isn't earned, you show respect because you yourself also have respect (Participant D).

...they must get respect for you, they must respect your authority right there and then... (Participant E).

How I manage the behaviour of learner is by demanding respect. When I talk, I talk alone, stand up straight and you look neat. The way you want to be treated is the way you will treat me. If a learner does not have respect for himself and how he acts he will not have respect for me either (Participant H).

The above quotations focus on the value of respect as experienced by the participants. There is an understanding that respect works two-ways, you give to receive and it influences the behaviour as well as the relationship between the different stakeholders. Respect as a value is also perceived in this finding as a foundation for building the character and behaviour of the learner and the authority of the teacher in managing learner discipline. When working from the premise of respect to guide learner behaviour, one will give special attention to relationship building among stakeholders.

Apart from respect from and to the role players, the participants also stated that behaviour can be managed and modified through clearly defined rules; these rules should be known to all stakeholders. Together with these clearly defined rules, the transgressions for not adhering to the rules should be clearly set out and also implemented continually.

Well first of all the rules must be clear, and then the actions as well. You need to get everybody on the same page and say this is the rule, this is

how we'll implement it, and this is the actions, so that we can follow it through (Participant L).

By not allowing learners to get away when they transgress and to immediately address the transgression (Participant I).

It is evident from the findings that participants believe it is important that all stakeholders should know what is expected of them with regards to the implementation of discipline. It seems that school rules should be communicated and compiled in a way that prevents confusion. These rules should also be implemented continuously and without deviation.

In a study conducted by Serekwane (2007), it was found that teachers believe that respect is central to effective discipline. Teachers who showed respect for learners through talking in a polite manner, being prepared and on time, appeared to be respected by learners as well. This included respect for educators, respect for fellow learners and respect for each other's property. In this study, it is evident that teachers manage learner behaviour through respect and clearly defined rules. This means that effective teaching and learning can be seen as a mutual relationship where respect is a corner stone. If learners feel respected and valued, they will also value the educational process and educators. These findings are in line with literature and it shows that teachers perceive respect as being a fundamental prerequisite for effective discipline.

4.6 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTER

In this chapter the research findings were presented in themes and sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes are aligned with the research questions. Direct quotations were used to support the findings. The discussion of the findings includes giving meaning to the findings as well as comparing the findings of this study with literature on a zero-tolerance approach to managing

learner behaviour. In the next chapter, findings are summarised, limitations and delimitations are discussed, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made from the findings. The researcher concluded the chapter with concluding comments.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the researcher presented the research findings and the discussion. In this chapter, the researcher presents a summary of the research findings which are aligned with the research questions. The researcher also draws conclusions and make recommendations that are based on the findings of this study. This dissertation has been an academic journey in my career. In the following section, I briefly share my experiences of this journey and who I am as a researcher with the reader before I conclude this last chapter.

5.2 REFLECTIONS OF THE RESEARCH JOURNEY

Conducting research can be a fearsome experience for a first time researcher, but it can also be a very rewarding experience. Engaging in my Master's Degree was my first real experience with academic research and despite this it was largely a pleasurable experience. I did make a number of mistakes along the way and also learnt a number of valuable lessons.

During my fieldwork I increasingly realised the importance of cohesion among staff in the process of implementing discipline. I also noticed that teachers impose discipline subjective to their own personal views. Personality also plays a critical part in how teachers impose discipline. I concluded that it is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of a disciplinary approach because a number of factors will influence how teachers implement an approach, even though there is a clearly defined framework for the specific approach. My own personal view of imposing discipline also changed as I realised that discipline

should not be absolute and this is reflected in a quote by one teacher, “we work with children and we work with young humans who are still teachable, use the system to teach them rather than condemn them.”

In my experience when the conversation with participants is not handled correctly it can be used as a platform to complain about systems in the school that they do not agree with or it can be used as a platform to promote the school image. In both these instances, I realised the importance of well formulated research questions to keep participants on the topic. It was a challenging experience to get schools to participate in research. I realised that schools in general, and principals in particular, are often reluctant to participate in research because they find it time-consuming. Personally, I think principals are often afraid to expose their schools and they are afraid of what the research might reveal. In my experience, schools also do not value new research as they feel it does not really bring about any change.

Whilst conducting my research, I came to the realisation that neither the SMT nor the teachers in any school fully applied a zero-tolerance approach. To some extent this might be attributable to the teachers’ lack of a concept of what a zero- tolerance approach is. However, I found that it was due to all teachers and/or management allowing some mitigating factors to be taken into consideration when disciplinary practices are being applied. It made me realise that even though the framework expects us to act without deviance and without deviation, the human factor always triumphs.

Overall, the research process was challenging and I realised that research is not a linear process, often times things do not go according to plan and there is always room for improvement in any part of your study. Together with this, I also realised the importance of being flexible and teachable in the process of research. Upon reflection, I really enjoyed the research and I would like to pursue a career in educational research and lecturing someday.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The primary research question for this study was: What are the experiences of secondary school teachers on the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?” The following secondary research questions were informed by the main research question:

- How do secondary school teachers understand the concept “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”
- What challenges do teachers experience with the implementation of a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline”?
- How do teachers address the identified challenges?
- How do teachers manage a “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”

5.3.1 Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach

In this study, teachers’ understanding of a zero-tolerance approach is firstly, that it is an approach that requires teachers to implement the school code of conduct regardless of external circumstances. Secondly, some of the teachers in this study reported that they understand a zero-tolerance approach as an approach where teachers are required to act on disciplinary transgressions without exemption and without taking any external circumstances into consideration. Thirdly, the findings suggest that teachers understand this approach as a very militaristic approach with little compassion for mitigating circumstances. Teachers in this study reported opposing views about the use of a zero-tolerance approach to impose discipline. Some teachers believed a zero-tolerance approach is highly effective as it creates order, whereas other teachers believe that this approach creates an environment where learners feel anxious and compelled to observing and obeying rules than concentrating

on learning. There were also concerns that a zero-tolerance policy limits the social engagement between the teacher and the learner.

It is evident that various understandings of a zero-tolerance approach exist among teachers. This understanding will have a direct impact on how the policy is implemented and how the approach is utilised. Thus, changes to the implementation will exist as the policy moves through various levels and are implemented by various teachers as explained by the co-construction theory that is used as a theoretical framework for this study.

5.3.2 Challenges with the implementation of a zero-tolerance approach

The study revealed that parental support is one of the most prominent challenges that teachers experience when implementing disciplinary procedures. Parents are often reluctant to co-operate with the school and educators. Additionally, the over emphasis of human rights makes learners uncooperative as learners often claim their rights but do not acknowledge the responsibility that accompanies the right. The study also revealed that teachers believe not taking mitigating circumstance into account when imposing discipline and only following the rules often makes learners uncooperative because learners experience all disciplinary interventions as punitive. The experiences of teachers indicate that the use of a zero-tolerance approach is often time-consuming. The result being that teachers often use a great amount contact time to follow and implement the disciplinary procedures, reducing the time to attend to their pedagogical responsibilities. Lastly, the one teacher in the study mentioned that in their experience the use of a zero-tolerance approach has no effect on teaching and learning because rules and procedures are clearly laid out and all stakeholders in the process of discipline knows what is expected of them.

5.3.3 Addressing challenges identified by teachers

It is evident from the data collected that the challenges associated with a zero-tolerance approach can be addressed effectively through the intervention of the school management team and consistent communication of rules and procedures to learners and parents. It is evident that teachers believe any disciplinary systems should be characterised by intervention and guidance, rather than condemnation and that mitigating circumstances should be considered when learners are addressed about transgressions. One teacher in the study noted that a zero-tolerance approach should only be utilised for serious transgressions where stakeholders' safety is at risk or human rights are infringed.

5.3.4 How teachers manage a zero-tolerance approach to discipline

Participants reported that a zero-tolerance approach can be managed effectively by recording of both transgressions and interventions, following all procedures as set out in the code of conduct and also through effective communication between various stakeholders. The participants in this study were also of the opinion that the behaviour of learners can be managed through the promotion of values like respect and trust in relationships. This implies that the process of establishing the relationship between educators and learners should be grounded on clearly defined rules. Having clearly defined rules ensures that all stakeholders know what is expected of them in the process of managing learner discipline.

5.4 DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study was focused specifically on two secondary schools in different districts in the Gauteng province. The study aimed to determine secondary school teachers' experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. The selection of schools was limited to schools that utilise a zero-

tolerance approach to learner discipline. The selection of participants was limited to teachers teaching at these schools. As the research was limited to secondary schools, primary schools were not used in the study.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researcher used a qualitative approach with interviews as the source of data collection. The number of participants was limited due to the time consuming nature of a qualitative study. The study was limited to only two secondary schools as time did not allow for more interviews to be conducted. If a quantitative approach was used, questionnaires could have been used a source of data collection but this was not suitable as the aim was to collect rich data that provide explanations about teachers' experience of a zero-tolerance approach. The findings of this study are not generalizable to all schools as discipline in primary and secondary schools differ and the study is about the interpretation of a disciplinary approach to implement a disciplinary policy. Various stakeholders may interpret the approach and the disciplinary policy of their schools in different ways. It was possible also exist that the researcher could have unintentionally not picked up some aspects of the data or the interpretation of the findings, hence the knowledge of the supervisor was used to limit such possibilities. Lastly, it is possible that participants could have withheld some information from the researcher or did not give a full response to a question because they did not want to harm the image of the school. This is beyond the control of the researcher.

5.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE FINDINGS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made regarding teachers experience of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.

5.6.1 Recommendations from understanding of a zero-tolerance policy

With regards to teachers understanding of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline, the recommendation of the researcher in this study is that:

- Internal and external policy makers should draft policies clearly and concisely to be accessible to all relevant stakeholders. All the stakeholders, namely teachers, SMT members as well as district officials, who are involved in the process of discipline should be capacitated by those who formulated the policies regarding the implementation of the policy and related systems.
- Educational stakeholders, both internal (school management teams) and external (Department of Basic Education) should develop a structure or framework from which they intend to train educators in understanding a zero-tolerance approach as required by the SASA. Together with this, teachers should be capacitated through effective training on how to effectively implement disciplinary systems and processes.

5.6.2 Recommendations made from challenges experienced by teachers utilising a zero-tolerance approach

- Parents should be requested personally via phone call or e-mail to attend meetings to discuss learner discipline issues. If communication is conveyed through learners, letters often do not reach the parents and they have no knowledge of any meetings arranged because in this study communication and involvement of parents in disciplinary related matters was mentioned as a challenge with a zero-tolerance approach. A recommendation is therefore for schools to collect parent contact information when the parents come to enrol their child at the beginning of the year, to ensure that they have the correct contact details. Schools should offer incentives for the learners whose parents attend

parent meetings, these incentives could include positive (merit) points on the school's demerit system. Parents should sign attendance on a class list next to their child's name. Another incentive could be that these learners can wear normal clothes to school on a set day. In this way learners will also encourage their parents to attend parent meetings.

- Education authorities such as the Department of Education officials should create a framework to train educators and learners about human rights and the responsibilities accompanied by these rights. This should be implemented as part of the school curriculum, through guest speakers or educational functions motivated by the department of education in collaboration with schools.
- Teachers should undergo pre-service, in-service training (Department of Education) on how to discipline learners without the infringement of their human rights.
- Educators should be trained by the school management team annually about the school code of conduct and the SASA on when to take mitigating circumstances into account and when to impose punishment immediately.
- The principal and the SMT should explain the function and the purpose of the code of conduct to the parents in order for the parents to understand why severe action is sometimes necessary. As soon as parents and learners understand the benefit of severe consequences, it can make them more co-operative in the process of discipline.

5.6.3 Recommendations from the identified challenges experienced by the teachers in a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline

- School management teams should be focused on building effective relationships amongst members of staff, as well as amidst parents and educators based on mutual trust to encourage good communication as

well as establishing co-operation among staff in managing learner discipline.

- The school, more specifically the SMT and the SGB, should appoint members of staff to serve and consult as part of a disciplinary committee. The disciplinary committee should take responsibility for implementing and maintaining an effective recording system to ensure the continuous reporting of learner progress and intervention in order to identify problem areas with regards to discipline and learner behaviour. This disciplinary committee can consist of both SMT members as well as staff.
- At the beginning of every school year the SMTs should invite parents to a parents evening to ensure that parents are actively involved in their child's education. It is important to have information about every learner's background as well as personal circumstances at home to know how to interact with learners when the need arises in a disciplinary matter.
- The school management teams should empower parents with information about disciplinary related matters and policies, which would range from what is regarded as severe transgressions to the reiteration of the school's dress code. Weekly newsletters to parents and a good communication system can be used to convey information related to these disciplinary related matters and policies.
- The school management teams should also empower educators with supportive assistance and an induction process. When a disciplinary matter is escalated to management, teachers should experience a sense of help from the SMT. If the matter is escalated and the SMT ignores the matter, teachers will feel helpless and they would eventually become uncooperative in addressing disciplinary matters. There must be an effective and clearly stipulated line function in place when addressing disciplinary matters.

5.6.4 Recommendations for managing a zero-tolerance approach to discipline

- The Department of Education should empower parents, teachers and the SGB with information regarding relevant legislation about disciplinary processes.
- The SMT as well as SGB should inform stakeholders via various platforms such as social media groups and radio talks of the importance of their participation and their role in the disciplinary processes.
- The Department of Education should assist schools to address serious misconduct by responding swiftly when schools need assistance.
- The Department of Education should have programmes in place every year, which are presented by educational specialists, where they make principals and educators aware of the importance of implementing the code of conduct correctly and continuously. These programmes and workshops should consist of real life case studies which portray events that unfolded in the aftermath of stakeholders not implementing the code of conduct as they should have.
- Since disciplinary problems often relate to household or socio-economic challenges, schools should work closely with support staff such as social workers, psychologists and the local districts' Inclusive Special Schools (ISS) unit to provide therapy or refer the learner to someone who will be able to help.

5.6.5 Recommendations for future research

This study was conducted in secondary schools. Further studies can be conducted in primary schools on how they ensure the continuous implementation of the code of conduct. Future studies can be done on teachers' experiences or perceptions of value driven discipline, rather than a punitive discipline such as a zero-tolerance approach. It is also recommended

that studies are conducted about teachers' knowledge of relevant legislations regarding disciplinary processes.

5.7 CONCLUSION

The main aim of this study was to investigate how secondary school teachers experience a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline. By interviewing the participants, the researcher investigated the challenges teachers experience with a zero-tolerance approach, how these challenges are addressed and how a zero-tolerance approach is managed to implement disciplinary policies. The study revealed that teachers understand a zero-tolerance approach as an approach to discipline where consequences and rules are implemented regardless of mitigating circumstances. Teachers mentioned that parental support together with the overemphasis on human rights as possible challenges. They also mentioned that the approach is time-consuming. The study also revealed that teachers believe in not taking mitigating circumstances into account when imposing discipline and only following the rules, often makes learners uncooperative because learners experience all disciplinary interventions as punitive. These challenges can be addressed through effective communication between various stakeholder as well as active participation from the SMT in the process of discipline. Lastly, it was concluded that learner behaviour can be managed through effective recording of both interventions and transgressions as well as the promotion of values of trust and respect among learners.

5.8 A FINAL WORD

It is clearly evident from the study that schools can have very well formulated policies but the success and failure of any policy depends on the methods utilised to implement the specific policy.

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ANNEXURE A: LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



GAUTENG PROVINCE
 Department: Education
 REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	16 March 2021
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2021 – 30 September 2021 2021/68
Name of Researcher:	Smit (Coetzee) D
Address of Researcher:	24 Pohl Street Parkrand Boksburg
Telephone Number:	082 468 5739
Email address:	daniellecoetzee57@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Secondary school teacher's experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline.
Type of qualification	M.Ed Leadership and Management in Education
Number and type of schools:	3 Secondary Schools
District/s/HO	Gauteng East and Tshwane North

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

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

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

1. Letter that would indicate that the said researcher has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001

Tel: (011) 355 0488

Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za

Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2. The District/Head Office Senior Manager's must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.
3. Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.
4. The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.
5. A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researchers have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.
6. A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.
7. The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.
8. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researchers may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.
9. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.
10. Items 8 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.
11. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.
12. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationary, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.
13. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.
14. On completion of the study the researcher's must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.
15. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.
16. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards



Mr Dumani Mukatuni

Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 17/03/2021

2

Making education a societal priority

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

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ANNEXURE B: CONSENT LETTER TO SCHOOL



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Pretoria
Pretoria
0002

Dear sirmadam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR SCHOOL TO PARTICIPATE IN AN INTERVIEW FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT:

Title: Secondary school teacher's experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline

My name is Danielle Smit (Coetzee) and I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a Masters Degree under the supervision of Dr. T.A. Ogina. The title of my approved research study is: *"Secondary school teacher's experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline"*

The aim of the Intended research is to explore how secondary school teachers experience a zero tolerance approach to learner discipline. To obtain data for the study teachers will be interviewed about their experiences of a zero tolerance approach to learner discipline.

Interviews with teachers will take approximately 45 minutes outside of contact time. Interviews will be conducted at the school, if possible and all COVID-19 protocol will be followed Should the participant feel more comfortable doing a ZOOM or Google Meet interview, this can also be arranged accordingly. I have included here for your information a schedule of interview questions. I hereby request your permission to allow educators to participate in an interview.

All participation is completely voluntary. No harm or injury will come to the educators during the interview. Please note that the decision for educators to participate is completely voluntary and

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this will not affect their livelihood. No results attained in the interview will be used for assessment purposes. The educators may request to leave the interview or observation session at any time without any explanation or consequences.

As part of the data collection I will be using an audio recorder to capture the interviews for research purposes. The purpose of the audio recorder is to capture and transcribe the data accurately. All information obtained during the research study will be treated confidentially. My supervisor and I will have access to the data. The names of educators, principal or school will not be mentioned during any phase of the study. Furthermore, pseudonyms will be used to avoid identification of the educator and school.

At the end of the study, I will provide the school with a copy of the dissertation containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. In addition, I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

The information gained during the study will be treated with confidentiality, by University of Pretoria and 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 dissertation.

Regards

Danielle Smit (Coetzee)

Researcher's Contact Details

Name: Danielle Smit (Coetzee)

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email: daniellecoetzee57@gmail.com

Supervisor's Details

Name: Dr. T.A. Ogina

Tel: 082 374 9618

email: teresa.ogina@up.ac.za

ANNEXURE C: CONSENT LETTER TO PARTICIPANT



Faculty of Education

Dear sir/madam,

REQUEST FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERVIEW FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT:

Title: Secondary school teacher's experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline

My name is Danielle Smit (Coetzee) and I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a Masters Degree under the supervision of Dr. T.A. Ogina. The title of my approved research study is: *"Secondary school teacher's experiences of a zero-tolerance approach to learner discipline"*

The aim of the intended research is to explore how secondary school teachers experience a zero tolerance approach to learner discipline. To obtain data for the study participants will be interviewed about their experiences of a zero tolerance approach to learner discipline.

Interviews will take approximately 45 minutes outside of contact time. Interviews will be conducted at the school. I have included here for your information a schedule of interview questions. I hereby request your permission to conduct an interview.

All participation is completely voluntary. No harm or injury will come to the participants during the interview. Please note that the decision to participate in the study is completely voluntary and this will not affect your livelihood. No results attained in the interview will be used for assessment purposes. You may request to leave the interview session at any time without any explanation or consequences.

As part of the data collection I will be using an audio recorder to capture the interviews for research purposes. The purpose of the audio recorder is to capture and transcribe the data accurately. All information obtained during the research study will be treated confidentially. My supervisor and I will have access to the data. The names of educators, principal or school will not

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be mentioned during any phase of the study. Furthermore, pseudonyms will be used to avoid identification of the educator and school.

At the end of the study, I will provide the school with a copy of the dissertation containing both the findings of the study and recommendations. In addition, I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

The information gained during the study will be treated with confidentiality, by University of Pretoria and 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 dissertation.

Regards

Danielle Smit (Coetzee)

Researcher's Contact Details

Name: Danielle Smit (Coetzee)

Tel: 082 488 5739

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Supervisor's Details

Name: Dr. T.A. Ogina

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ANNEXURE D: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE



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UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Please state your age?
2. Please state your gender?
3. Please state the number of years that you have been teaching?
4. Please state your position in the school (Principle, HOD, grade head etc.)
5. How long have you been teaching at this specific school?
6. Please tell me about the demographics of the school. (teacher learner ratio, gender of learners)
7. Please tell me about your involvement in the schools discipline activities
8. What do you understand a zero-tolerance approach to discipline? Please explain.
9. What can you say about zero-tolerance approach and creating an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Please explain.
10. Please explain to me how zero-tolerance approach to discipline work in this school
11. Tell me about how the policy is implemented.
12. How do you manage the behaviour of learner using zero-tolerance approach
13. What are the challenges you face in implementing a zero-tolerance approach to discipline?
14. What can you say about the identified challenges in relation to the quality of teaching and learning at your school, please elaborate?
15. How does the school address these challenges?
16. Which aspect of the zero-tolerance approach would you like to change and why?
17. Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about zero-tolerance approach to discipline?

ANNEXURE E: DATA ANALYSIS SAMPLE

Question and Sub-Question	Responses	Segments	Comments/Codes	Themes/ Sub-themes
Research Question: How do secondary school teachers understand the concept “zero-tolerance approach to discipline?”				Theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach.
Interview question 1: What do you understand a zero-tolerance approach to discipline? Please explain.				Sub-Theme 1: Understanding of a zero-tolerance approach. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action taken as prescribed in code of conduct/policy.
A	Zero-tolerance can be a very dangerous thing, it can't be a rigid thing. My think of a rigid thing is you do this wrong I act now. There is an administration process to be followed. Zero- tolerance to me is don't warn today and do nothing and warn tomorrow and still do nothing and warn the day after and you	when the transgression happens you need to take action as described in the code of conduct zero-tolerance is	Action taken according to prescribed policy Consistency of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action taken without compassion. • Action taken without exemption. • Consistent application of rules • Implementing the

	<p>keep on warning and warning and warning. Nobody will live by the rule if you just say “don’t come late” you need to take action. So when the transgression happens you need to take action as described in the code of conduct follow the rule and the administration process must be in place. So if an incident happens and it is a serious incident we do have a policy and policies need to be followed. Let’s go to the extreme of the extreme policy regarding sexual harassment or physical harassment of a learner ... Wat se ons daarvoor? <i>(What do we say for that.)</i></p> <p>Child abuse... You got a policy on child abuse some needs the attention of the police immediately. There is nothing else that you can do but involve the police. You get a child that’s been badly</p>	<p>tough but you need to be strict, fair, consequent. You must always be the same</p>	<p>application</p>	<p>consequences for misconduct without taking mitigating circumstances into account</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After a warning zero-tolerance
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	<p>beaten up by a parent. I got a case now of a little girl that was badly beaten by her father so the police is involved and SBST (School Based Support Team). So zero-tolerance is possible with a little bit of tolerance so it means to mean you must act and your action must be visible. You do not go in front of the school this happened and I did this. You don't call it by name and you don't say who the parties are but you need to tell the story if this happens this is what is going to happen to you So the point of zero-tolerance, we do not allow learners to carry on with their problems we allow one mistake or two mistakes and we then take action so to me the zero-tolerance thing is we are dependant on policies on whatever gets described to us. What the county laws are giving to us. I can't expel a child by myself we can separate and</p>			
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	<p>we may suspend but we have a meeting or a pre-hearing where we bring the two parties and we say this is what happened we do not want for example a group fight at school for until the hearing happens you guys are suspended you will catch up all you test and everything else when you come back to school. Cause we don't want those two parties to come and create a some kind of volarity at school. So zero-tolerance is tough but you need to be strict, fair, consequent. You must always be the same. If you allow one teacher to get permission for one thing you can not say no to the other teacher so it is better to have a golden line to stick to. We try or we strive to have a zero-tolerance here. We contact the parents immediately we inform the parents immediately we take action on the problem immediately. But there is</p>			
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	still a thing like a minor transgression and a major transgression. And the minor transgressions we will do inhouse and sometimes we will give the parent a friendly call and say please pay attention to this.			
B	According to me that is if you will not make exceptions like the exceptions that I just made. Like this is a first-time offender it was the heat of the moment. I won't treat that the same as a repeat offender, like there is no excuse. Zero-tolerance is not really even listing to excuses it is not about accepting them or not accepting you are not even listening. That is what I think zero-tolerance is...	According to me that is if you will not make exceptions	Action taken without exemption	
C	It means that there are no grey areas, and it depends on situation to me. You cannot just draw a line through a child's life. Zero-tolerance means if the child did not adhere to the rules	It means that there are no grey areas Zero-tolerance means if the	No exemptions	

	<p>you get rid of him, and we cannot do that. You must give the child a chance to improve and correct his mistakes. But in this situation where we work with our executive committee, the learners, you must in advance communicate with the kids the zero-tolerance. You are the example in the school and if something serious happens you are gone you are off the executive committee.</p>	<p>child did not adhere to the rules you get rid of him</p>		
D	<p>It is very much like what I do. My learners know their boundaries and I don't tolerate any bad discipline. And they know, I will phone your parents from out of my classroom.</p> <p>It means that I need to be fair. That which I do for the one, I need to for the other as well. An also that I need to get my parents involved and to also be part of doing</p>	<p>My learners know their boundaries and I don't tolerate any bad discipline</p> <p>It means that I need to be fair. That which I do for the one, I need to for the other as well. An</p>	<p>Intolerant behaviour</p> <p>Consistency and fairness in the action taken towards unacceptable behaviour</p>	

	<p>the discipline. So then the learners will know that when they arrive home there is trouble at mom and dad. I keep on reacting upon it.</p>	<p>also that I need to get my parents involved and to also be part of doing the discipline</p>		
E	<p>That you have no compassion or that there is no leeway for any child to be a child. So, I do not believe in zero-tolerance.</p>	<p>That you have no compassion or that there is no leeway for any child to be a child. So, I do not believe in zero-tolerance.</p>	Reactions that lack compassion	
F	<p>You know, I... I am very lenient with other things. My learners knows when and what they are not allowed to do, for example. A lot of times I am in a meeting or something and then when I am not in my class they know they are not allowed to stand outside my class so they step in immediately. So such things they do because I allow a lot. I'm not you sit and stay quiet n that's it. If there is a child who takes a bite of his</p>	<p>you fight over everything all the time</p>	All discipline matters are addressed	

	<p>sandwich, I leave them because it is not the end of the world for me. And I think if you fight over everything all the time, you may not eat and you may not this or that, is your homework done? This may be part of zero-tolerance. Where I do not struggle with learners who do not do homework for example. I do not check one day if their homework is done because I will not get through the syllabus. So, I start right away I mark the work in detail on the board and then I explain the new work. And I do not struggle with learners who do not do homework, but they know I do not check. So now I feel again if I fought all the time and checked all the time the kids might later have an attitude of "oh I'm not going to do my homework." Because I do not struggle with it they do their homework, they do their work, they do not talk in my</p>			
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	class. I do not need to say keep quiet because I allow if anyone you want to tell me something in my class then I allow it. So, he does not come in and he may not even say a word and remain silent.			
G	Yes, you need to be consistent, that is very important to me, it doesn't help that you allow one class to do something and not another class to do the same things. What's good for the goose is good for the gander. In other words, that which is applicable to one should be applicable to everyone.	that which is applicable to one should be applicable to everyone.	Consistency of application	
H	I see it as... I actually do not see it as black and white 100% it's right or wrong. There is still a little of a grey area for me but I would say zero-tolerance is, what is in the policy of your school, what the rules are of your school it is non-negotiable. For example, if I have to think now, let's take	after there is a warning, I will say now we have no tolerance towards this	After warning no tolerance	

	<p>learners' appearance in a school system. I would say that you have a warning as he knows the policy states, he may not wear those pants or shirt or skirt. You may not wear winter clothes in the summer. And I would say there is a warning. If the warning is given and it is not corrected, then there is no tolerance then the learner will be sent home. But I see a zero-tolerance when you tell the learner it's against your policy, you may not do this or that there must be at least some form of warning to show there is still caring in the process and then after that, You have been addressed and here it is stated in the school policy. So, now we move on with the process.</p>	<p>I see a zero-tolerance when you tell the learner it's against your policy, you may not do this or that</p>	<p>Disciplinary action taken according to policy</p>	
I	<p>This means that you should not pamper children. If a mistake is made, there must be consequences and he must be punished. The punishment is determined</p>	<p>If a mistake is made, there must be consequences and he must be punished.</p>	<p>Disciplinary action taken according to policy</p>	

	<p>by what he did. You can not have a blank sentence. It must be specialized. The type of offense must have a specific sanction. One must work strictly according to it. If you slip then the other kids see this guy did something wrong and he gets away with it and then the trouble starts.</p>			
J	<p>I do not think I fit very well into that role because I am not the fiercest, strictest individual there can be in a school, but I do set boundaries. And zero-tolerance for me is the limit and if you go over then you carry the consequences quickly and without further negotiation.</p> <p>I read up on zero-tolerance and from what I could see of zero-tolerance it means it should be almost like a bit militaristic. And I'm not going to ever be able to fit into that role because then I have to change my whole being. I am not a militaristic</p>	<p>And zero-tolerance for me is the limit and if you go over then you carry the consequences quickly and without further negotiation.</p> <p>zero-tolerance it means it should be almost like a bit militaristic.</p>	<p>Implementing the consequences of misconduct without further negotiation.</p> <p>Militaristic</p>	

	<p>enforcer of authority. I think one can do it in a different way. I happened to be talking to someone about the same thing yesterday and asked if it was a mistake on my part.</p>			
K	<p>I would like it if children ... if I see my ideal in a school there will be no rules and regulations there will be an inherent value system of, I have respect for someone else and his stuff, so I do not steal something. Sometimes a situation of do not do it do not do it I feel we do not teach children a future driven outlook on life but if I teach a child we respect each other then it includes all these other things. If I have self-discipline then I do my homework so I do not have to have a rule that says if you do not do your homework I will give an entry. So for me we work</p>			

	<p>with people who have to go into life and have to go down a path and become dads and moms one day so for me it is more important to capture a certain value in a child. So I would like zero-tolerance in the end but it has to be an inherent thing I have to know from the inside that the school is not going to accept it, it is unacceptable but it is because we stand for these values. An unwritten agreement I can almost call it. If there are 720 rules I have to follow.</p>			
L	<p>Zero-tolerance is for me not tolerating bad behaviour but to speak up against and then to address the value that can be connected with the rule that was broken but it means that you need to be firm, and you should act immediately and also act the same. Not to make or show difference between learners or incidents that happen.</p>	<p>. not tolerating bad behaviour but to speak up against</p> <p>you need to be firm, and you should act immediately and also act the same. Not to make or show difference</p>	<p>Intolerant behaviour</p> <p>Consistency of application</p>	

		between learners or incidents that happen		
M	<p>Well, I might be completely wrong my understanding of it is that any disciplinary issue must be dealt with and can not be tolerated.</p> <p>Obviously as an educational institution your first aim is to rehabilitate tottry and reach the child so to speak to get him on the right path but together with that the needs to be a process that also handles a learner if there is no change in behaviour. To me that is zero discipline in other words there is nothing that you can get away with and it is not tolerated for the sake of tolerating it. That you escalate it up to a point where the learner needs to know there is no more place for him in the school. You have to deal with every single discipline issue whether it be through communication, whether it</p>	<p>any disciplinary issue must be dealt with and can not be tolerated</p> <p>there is nothing that you can get away with and it is not tolerated for the sake of tolerating it. That you escalate it up to a point where the learner needs to know there is no more place for him in the school. You have to deal with every single discipline issue</p> <p>Every time you do it there</p>	<p>Must be dealt with no tolerance.</p> <p>deal with every single discipline issue</p> <p>Recording for the</p>	

	be with meeting with the parent. Every time you do it there needs to be good recording of it so that you can bring it to a point of bringing a child to a point of maybe expulsion.	needs to be good recording of it so that you can bring it to a point of bringing a child to a point of maybe expulsion.	purpose of expulsion.	
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ANNEXURE F: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

Interviewer	Please state your age?
Interviewee	50
Interviewer	Your gender?
Interviewee	Male
Interviewer	Please state the number of years that you have been teaching?
Interviewee	26
Interviewer	Your position in the school?
Interviewee	Principal
Interviewer	How long have you been teaching at this specific school?
Interviewee	4 years
Interviewer	Please tell me about your involvement in the schools' discipline activities?
Interviewee	I am the disciplinary head of the school if I can put it like that. I am part of the process regarding handling disciplinary issues in the school from where it is handled by the teacher in the class and depending on the severity of a disciplinary matter it will be escalated to me whether it be the top management of the school or the governing body related when it comes to hearings for the governing body. I am basically in charge of the discipline of the school.
Interviewer	What do you understand under a zero-tolerance approach to discipline?
Interviewee	Well, I might be completely wrong my understanding of it is that any disciplinary issue must be dealt with hand cannot be tolerated. Obviously as an educational institution your first aim is to rehabilitate tot ry and reach the child so to speak to get him on the right path but together with that the needs to be a process that also handles a learner if there is no change in behaviour. To me that is zero discipline in other words there is nothing that you can get away with and it is not tolerated for the sake of tolerating it. That you escalate it up to a point where the learner needs to know there is no more place for him in the school. You have to deal with every single discipline issue whether it be through communication, wether it be with meeting with the parent. Every time you do it there needs tob e good recording of it so that you can bring it to a point of

	bringing a child to a point of maybe expulsion.
Interviewer	Would you say that a zero-tolerance approach is conducive for creating a good environment for teaching and learning.
Interviewee	I think so...it just needs to be handled correctly if you use the word zero-tolerance, and I use it with my staff often especially the last couple of months I use it with my staff more often, you need to guide then so that they do not become insensitive to their role that they still have as educators. To try and nurture a child back to being on the straight and narrow if I can put it like that and not just condemn a child. Teachers can learn in that direction very quickly to just write a child off and then their language, their communication how they handle a child is basically condemning not giving a child a chance. So I think it is conducive but you need to handle it correctly and guide your staff that they keep their empathy and remember that they are still educators and monistray where everybody is just supposed to be like little angels because they are not, they are children. They need to be guided.
Interviewer	What do you mean by, your staff needs to be guided?
Interviewee	Because I use strong language I can often see that they feel the principal has given them... is empowering them to just handle a child to be strong with a child and not give the child the benefit of the doubt of maybe changing his ways, and they need to be guided there that although I am very adamant I don't want a child to infringe on the rights of educators to educate or other learners to be educated. I am very strong about that, I still need to remind them the whole time remember we first want to get this child back on the road it is not us just writing him off. So, I use strong language bit in the same sense I need to remind them that they must still be the educator and built relationships and still show this child that they have the best interest of the child at heart and not be cold and heartless because that is often something that you get with teachers when you say zero-tolerance.
Interviewer	So in what kind of situation will you use a zero-tolerance and in what kind of situation will you use relationship building?
Interviewee	I will not say that you need to decide between one or the other. My language with learners is always ... we are now in a process they need to understand that we are now in a process of building a case against them. They need to understand that, and they are building a case for themselves against them, but in the same time that I am speaking with that child I am saying we need to be determined to interrupt the process so that we don't go there. What can we do to help you to not bring us to that point where we have to get rid of you? So, I do not want to say that you only use zero-tolerance and I tend to. Sometimes I am so angry and I feel I just want to get rid of this child as quick as possible and you sometimes use that type of language although I am training myself not to but you need to...So what I am trying to say, yes use strong language

	<p>and you commit yourself to the process you don't steer of that process but in the process... That is why it is a process it is not a "we condemn you there you go" depending on how severe it is, obviously if it something that goes towards criminality or sexual assault that is something different. I am talking about using drugs, I am talking about bullying and disrupting of the educational process then I want them to understand that I am not going to tolerate that but we also want to help them, get them to the counsellor, have interviews with the parents see how we can assist. But in the same time you are busy with the process of bringing him to justice that might be the worst justice. I suppose it depends on the severity of the infringement.</p>
Interviewer	<p>Please explain to me how a zero-tolerance approach to discipline works in this school?</p>
Interviewee	<p>Maybe my understanding of a zero-tolerance approach is different from the next guy... In our school as I have said we insist that that educators record, whether it is a normal disciplinary conversation that they have with a child that they record that. In other words a notice should be made on our D6 recording system, if there is a phone call made to a parent the phone call is recorded on the system. When you get to a point where there is a grade head hearing that minutes of meeting is taken, that it is recorded and then as it escalates towards the point where you have to take the most severe action everything was recorded in the process of recording. And it was because of a lack that I have identified, we had a disciplinary head at the school a person that was hired. I actually started here and there was this person and then he went to another school it is a very common thing here in Pretoria the school do it and we employed another person but that we have found was it is not ... what I have found is that is not a good thing because the teachers use it as their crutch. This person is their crutch, if there is a child disrupting a class, they phone the disciplinary head, that person comes and takes the child out of the class has an interview with the child, let him write an essay say why he must change his ways. Try and council him back to being a better person and the success rate of that was not very high. So, it was more ... to me it was more trying to put out fires all over the place and becoming a crutch for the teachers. They just pick up the phone, this child is disrupting my class, he is being difficult and then a phone call. We realized that we need to be the process in place where it is not just a situation of tolerating it anymore and counselling and counselling and doing all these interviews. We need to have a process in place where the child is brought to book for action when there is no change and it is a lot more work for us especially the top management because of hearings. I have so many, I have top management hearings next week and the week after that we have governing body hearings but it was because of kids and what they do during the days that they were off before they came back to school. But we have accepted it as part of our daily job. It is part of your work, it is part of the process it is not something that you are going to... you finish this job and you put it way. It must be part of your daily routine to handle situations like that that and to have a disciplinary</p>

	process with children.
Interviewer	What systems do you have in place to ensure the implementation of the disciplinary policy?
Interviewee	<p>It starts with out meetings, out HOD meetings because they are also grade heads and they are responsible for their grades and then we use our D6 system to see how children are doing in terms of recording of discipline so the system in place currently is, if a child gets to a certain number of points they get detention, so they sit Monday detention. The already it goes out with a notification to the parents and the child receives a written notification and then we also every second Friday we have a meeting with the staff, grade meetings with the staff where those teachers that have experienced that they are having difficulty with children where they minute it... we have a pro-forma minute system where they minute. But it is not just behaviour, it is socio-economic issues maybe emotional issues al sorts of things are recorded in that meeting. And then we bring it to our HOD meeting and we identify the kids that are now appearing in the radar for class disruption, for bunking class and we start booking grade head disciplinary hearings for them. So they get a disciplinary hearing and with the grades when they receive that notification I call them and I have a quick conversation with them where I explain the process to them and what zero-tolerance in my eyes mean. They are now entering a process but we need to interrupt this process and they need to understand that this process is going to take care of them if there is no change So I take that on me to have that conversation, so then we have feedback. So every second Friday we have feedback from the staff and if we see that the behaviour is continuing now there is even more transgressions recorded on the D6 system more class bunking. We have a point system in our code of conduct and when they get to this amount of points we have a grade disciplinary hearing the next step then is a top management hearing and the we go to a governing body hearing. So the code of conduct actually describes the process to the learners in their diaries it describes the process. So that is the system and we try and keep to it, it is fairly new because the disciplinary head that we had was seen as the go to, and there wasn't a system in place of building up accountability for a child and that is the only way you can do it now because you have the law against you but it is also good all along that process if you have the determination and you show determination to the child you want this to change but you also record that determination that you have and those conversations that you have then in the end the book speaks for itself when their time is up. We didn't expel learners from this school as I say we the governing body didn't apply for expulsion for learners where we followed this process before so it is fairly new, we have expelled learners or learners was expelled for drug use where you also had a process of interventions etc but there was no results from it and then in the end the department gave the go ahead that the child can be expelled. SO this is fairly new but this is why I said to our staff and I frequently remind them that the only we can really put a tough stronghold on a child is if he sees that the system is taking him somewhere to me</p>

	<p>that is zero-tolerance. The system is taking you somewhere and that there is accountability and each time there is an intervention, each time there is a hearing it is another intervention but it takes you to a point where we have ... you can say you have tolerated it but you have built up a case where the department can not say no but the child must get another chance you built a case up for the child. But as I have said we try not be vindictive and try not day that we have our knife in for that child it is why am I here I am an educator.</p>
Interviewer	<p>How do you ensure that the system remains fair? You said that a child must not feel that you have your knife in for him, so how do you prevent that? Teacher misuse of the system.</p>
Interviewee	<p>I was very cross with my staff yesterday because of staff abusing the recording of the ... you know they are using the D6 system to record transgressions. This morning I had to say to them I was cross yesterday, I felt like that I feel you are not... there are certain staff members and I suppose I should pin point and I shouldn't speak to the whole staff as if everybody is guilty. So they are also aware to guard against it but I said to my staff that there are people that there is no proof that they had any real empathy with the child. Had a conversation with the child, shown their determination to build a relationship so that the disciplinary issue does not go on and they just use it as a whip. Oh, you are disrupting my class again another five points, another five points. The child finds himself in one teachers class out of all the teacher that teaches him, he finds himself having to sit detention because of one teacher that has ... and I am not saying that the child is innocent but the teacher never made an effort to be the educator to be fair towards the child to hear what the child has to say or some teachers ... and I have said that to the staff as well yesterday they have conversations in the staff room the child walks into the class for the first time and he gets boomed with a remark something in the sense of "oh I know you I have heard everything about you I will be watching you." and immediately the child is on his heels and he doesn't have a chance. So now the child actually does not get a chance to start on a clean slate he actually starts as if he already has this long history with the teacher because another teacher prepped this teacher against the child. And I have often seen real sincere efforts from children to change and they don't get the chance. And sometimes they are really to the T using zero-tolerance for even just the slightest thing and they use it as a method of trying to discipline the child. And that is why I said to the teachers yesterday, I said to my staff if the D6 system becomes your disciplinary manager in your class we have lost it. You are the discipline in your class, you are the one that are supposed to manage your class. Let the learner come and sit here right in front have some effort with him. Maybe just go and walk with the child. Book a break and tell the child you want to see him at break and even if you have to do it for five breaks at least then try and sort something out so that the rest of the year goes better. But now you do not want to take that time to really spend real effort with the child.</p>

Interviewer	You have mentioned that you talk very loudly about implementing the zero-tolerance? So where do you draw the line between listening and hearing the child's side and implementing the zero-tolerance approach? So where is that golden line?
Interviewee	I suppose it is not that easy to say there is a golden line, I would say that it is two things that go concurrently with one another. The whole route they go concurrently. You try and build a relationship but in the same time you say to the child this does not go unrecorded. The fact that I am trying to build a relationship here and the fact that I am trying to see if you can't establish a good class atmosphere by you co-operating I am sincere about that but I am also making sure that I am backing myself by using the system that we have to record this and to show. That is why the system also makes provision for making notes just for the staff to see and not for the parents because the D6 communicates with the parents. They can go on their phone and see all their child's transgressions but the D6 also makes provision for making notes that only staff can see. To say that I had this conversation with the learner, and I bank on that. I draw it out in hearings, and I say there is the conversation. That staff member showed his intention to see if you cant grow out of this problem that you have. So, I wont say that there is really a golden line there is actually a golden line. It takes wisdom from teacher and you try and equip them. It is actually good that I have this conversation because I just realised now how difficult it must be for some them to understand how to really be the firm one and be empathetic at the same time and really be an educator and to also really be one that does not tolerate it. It is not the easiest thing to do, you tend to think your staff will know how to handle it but not all of them do.
Interviewer	How do you manage the behaviour of learners using a zero-tolerance approach?
Interviewee	Communication. I would day communication with the parent, with the learner. Communicate that you have this result that you are not going to give up on one of the two. You are not going to give up on the child, but the system might give up on him in the end. So, I think communication. A child must know where he stands and where his making bad progress in this whole path that is going to take him to the edge of destruction. So, I think communication a child needs to know where he stands with you all the time and where he is on this...
Interviewer	What are the challenges you face with implementing a zero-tolerance approach? What makes it difficult.
Interviewee	I think staff find it time consuming. I think staff feel that you have to handle a child, the problem must be sorted out and you can go on. So to get your staff to commit themselves to keep note and everyday to communicate with the child be that communicator. And then also to go on and record and do the recordings and show all your interventions and show that you have had the conversation. Show that you have warned

	<p>him, show that you have phoned the parents. You can't make your first entry onto the system if you haven't at least phoned the parent once and said "look I can see this is heading in the wrong direction you need to have a conversation with your child I am having constant problems I had to warn him a couple of time and now I have decided I am going to start using the system to keep on reminding you that there is no co-operation from his side, to keep on reminding you that this is what is going to happen. I think that is time consuming to start with. And I have often found myself in a hearing with a child that has ... because we also send out reports, before we have a hearing teachers give a written report to me about what they have experienced about the child and some of them would say he was unmanageable in my class and then I go onto the system to print out his complete history and there has never been any recording of the teacher so it is a new way of thinking. Technology is making it easier now, I often say to the staff you can sit in front of the TV tonight with you notes that you have made. Maybe conversations that you have had or entries that you want to make do it on your phone. You do not even have to take out your laptop. You know book a time in the afternoon to do it, so I think that is a challenge.</p>
Interviewer	<p>You mentioned earlier that communication with parents are important, would you say that parents are co-operative in disciplinary matters.</p>
Interviewee	<p>They are co-operative until they see their child gets to a point where they see it is now serious and they might have to go and find another school and it is not easy to find another school. Especially if you have a bad track record. So in general I would say parents are co-operative.</p>
Interviewer	<p>What can you say about this challenge in relation to quality teaching and learning at your school? Will you say that the challenge that you have mentioned makes quality teaching and learning difficult.</p>
Interviewee	<p>I think it has a bad effect on the quality especially if you are sitting with a few that you know that the system is first going to have to take care of them if there is no change. So yes, I would say it can have an effect, but we do remind constantly that I don't want them to feel that they are powerless and that is why I make myself part of this. Me and the other deputy principals. We make ourselves part of this communication with the child. When we go to a grade disciplinary hearing I make myself communication to say what power do the teachers have and although that teacher might be having difficulty, maybe their classroom management skills are not up to par or they are inexperienced they actually have a lot of power in bringing that child to account to a point where it might mean the end of the road for him at the school so I suppose it might have an effect especially with your more inexperienced teachers. Or teachers that are not up to it, that might have this idyllic idea that they want class full of sweet little kids and then that one that is the problem needs to be constantly hit and when I say hit I mean throwing demerit points at him. The effect of that is the child often becomes much worse</p>

Interviewer	So how does the school address these challenges?
Interviewee	<p>Look those challenges present themselves sometimes when a parent sends a message to the school or phone the school to say in this specific class my child is having a tough time. There are a few kids that keep on disrupting the class and it seems like the teacher does not have control over the class so teachers tend to hide that sort of thing until comes under your attention and then you have conversations with the teacher and see if you can equip them to handle the situation in the class better. Also have a conversation with the kids in that class to say this is the process we have instructed the teacher to follow the following, do the following things. So, you must know there is going to be trouble. So, it often boil down to having conversations with teachers. And to try and equip the to handle the situation better in the classroom. Teacher intervention.</p>
Interviewer	And the challenge of it being time consuming?
Interviewee	<p>Well, the technology that they have, it is cloud based. D6 is cloud based. Whatever you at home, whether it is putting your marks on the system, whether it is making an entry or doing a little background check on the child see what is going on at home. Maybe there is only a grandma looking after them at home. You try and make it easier for them by giving them the tools, the physical tools to do it. You try and create time for them to do it, I feel they have enough time to it. Even if it is after school.</p>
Interviewer	Which aspect of a zero-tolerance approach do you not agree with or would you like to change and why?
Interviewee	<p>I am a teacher at heart first and I've often seen good success stories even of kids that were expelled from the school. So, often ask myself the question could we not have ... did we not make a mistake, you know in being clinical and sticking to the rules. Did we not make a mistake? Was the child not on the brink of becoming a different person here so zero-tolerance has that potential to sometimes miss the heart of a child.</p>
Interviewer	What is your experience of a zero-tolerance approach if you had to put it in word.
Interviewee	<p>It is reasonably new. And you know where I come from it is what I learner from my previous school that you have to have a system in place in and you have to bring a child to book. Although I think it was more clinical and colder there and it made it difficult to help kids. Here we have a councillor that works for the school and we have a brilliant youth pastor here together with the church.</p> <p>As I have said we are fairly new with this last year with COVID we developed. We rewrote our code of conduct. There was elements of it in the previous code of conduct although as I said we were not hands on</p>

and when I say we I mean us as management I think the staff lost their trust in the management of the school to handle the discipline of the school, because they felt we were not in touch with it. So, what I really feel are helping us now is the fact that we are getting in touch, I mean we are in March we have only been back with the full school for a week and a half and it is very early days. And if I look at the amount of disciplinary hearings and the amount of things that we already have to handle and I am really excited about the fact that we can handle problems that could have been handled much earlier in the past we can handle it much earlier and I think we are going to have a very good effect on the learners. The message is now running there is no nonsense, we are not going to keep on tolerating your nonsense. I want that message to go out, it is a good message to go out to your community as well. The parents feel my child is safe if they are not tolerating bullies and drug users so to me that is very good. We have more hands on, on what is going on in the school. We are also regaining the trust of the staff that they see we are committed. I have to drive it, I can see there is an unease with some of my grade heads and departmental heads because I am putting pressure on them to have the disciplinary hearings to have meetings with parents to follow up. I can see that they are ... some of them are ...it is a job that we have always had as HOD's as departmental heads and as deputy principals but I can see that some of them are now almost sort of faced with having to do something all new and it is not really new it showing the child that the management of the school is strengthening the hands of the staff.

ANNEXURE G: TURNITIN REPORT

Dr T.A.OGINA
11/08/2021

D.A. Ogina
Coetzee

