

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO LEARNER
DISCIPLINE AT SILVERLEA PRIMARY SCHOOL**

By

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SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR WILLIAM FOX

CAPE TOWN

DECLARATION BY CANDIDATE

I, Anthony Peter Charles Adams (student no. 200371193), hereby declare that the contents of this thesis represent my own unaided work, and that the thesis has not previously been submitted for academic examination towards any qualification. Furthermore, it represents my own opinions and not necessarily those of the Cape Technikon.



Signed

03/04/05
Date

ABSTRACT

Corporal punishment was abolished in schools in June 1995 (Benson:1995). The suspension was sudden, and the Education Department provided very little guidance with regard to alternative means of maintaining discipline. Teachers, who for years had the option of resorting to corporal punishment as a final means of instilling and maintaining learner discipline, now had very little to fall back on to. An upsurge in disciplinary problems seemed to follow the suspension, and many schools struggled to maintain effective learner discipline.

As with many other schools, Silverlea Primary School battled to come to grips with learner discipline in the post-corporal punishment era. Educators had little or no training in alternative methods of maintaining discipline, but still had to deal with the same, or worsening, levels of learner discipline. It is because of this perceived erosion of learner discipline that this study was undertaken. It is grounded in the belief that a positive, disciplined environment is essential for effective teaching and learning to happen consistently, and moves from the premise that the system of discipline and, to a large extent its effectiveness, is the creation of the staff of that school. This system, though, should operate within a supportive framework of the Department of Education.

Discipline impacts strongly on the quality of education offered and received. It also affects the ability of educators to maintain consistently high standards.

Although the environment from which the learners come affect their behaviour and discipline, the management of this discipline at school is dependent on the management skills and systems present at the school.

Four concepts - effective discipline, curriculum, management styles, and the abolition of corporal punishment - are identified as being central to the study of discipline. They affect the running of the school, and thus the discipline adhered to at the school. This discipline in turn impacts on the educators who have to constantly be dealing with disciplinary problems rather than teaching.

A descriptive research method was used. The educators, as well as the support staff, were invited to attend sessions where questionnaires were issued and completed. Randomly selected samples of learners were also invited to a survey session. Parents were issued questionnaires via their children, and these were returned in the same way. Informal interviews with randomly selected members of the various role-playing groups, viz. parents, teachers, support staff and learners, were conducted. The researcher also entered into participant observation.

The research investigates learner discipline at Silverlea, how that discipline is managed, what the causes of learner disciplinary problems are, and how learner discipline impacts on the delivery of quality education.

The research demonstrates that, in the absence of a uniform system of discipline operating at the school, the expectations regarding learner discipline are not clear. There is no common understanding of learner discipline, or what is

acceptable or not. For learner discipline to be effective, expectations have to be clear, and clearly communicated to all role players. The research shows further that the causes of disciplinary problems stem from both the home and the school. This presents a challenge for the effective management of learner discipline. The research also shows that poor learner discipline impacts negatively on the delivery of quality education. Educators spend much time on disciplining learners. In addition to taking up time intended to be used for formal education, the constant need to be involved in disciplining practice adds to the stress that educators experience. This, in turn, impacts on their delivery of education.

Recommendations around the management of learner discipline are made. One of the core suggestions is that a uniform, well-communicated system of discipline be adopted, while a common understanding of discipline at the school needs to be developed. Learner discipline should be seen as educative rather than merely punitive. The Code of Conduct should become a valued and used document, and training in effective methods of discipline given to educators. The hidden curriculum should also be used as a tool to address learner discipline.

Learner discipline will always be an issue at schools. An awareness of its causes and impact, in combination with a fair and consistently applied discipline plan, will facilitate the effective management of learner discipline.

DEDICATION

To Ingrid, Kirsten and Daniel

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The issue of learner discipline constantly rears its head when discussion turns to the functioning of schools. Since the Department of Education suspended corporal punishment in schools in June 1995 (Benson:1995), learner discipline has become ever more topical, especially as an upsurge in disciplinary problems seemed to accompany this suspension. *"Teachers were still expected to maintain discipline, but have not been provided with alternatives by the [Education] Department,"* says Benson (1995:18). The authority of the teachers seemed to be undermined and many teachers were stuck, as they had no training in, or knowledge of effective alternative methods. There seemed to be no immediate recourse to a recipe for effective discipline in the absence of corporal punishment. This study seeks to investigate learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School and make recommendations regarding the effective management of learner discipline.

1.2 BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Silverlea Primary School prides itself on the delivery of what is accepted in the community as a high standard of education. With very limited resources at its

disposal, and drawing its learners from various communities where unemployment, poverty and violence are common, Silverlea has historically enjoyed a reputation for producing well-rounded learners who, on the whole, hold their own when they proceed to high school. This reputation - borne out by the comparatively large number of learner applications to the school, and the fact that many potential learners have to be turned away because there is no place at the school for them - includes the acknowledgement of a disciplined environment in which learners experienced a high quality education.

Silverlea has a staff complement of 23 fulltime and two part time educators, headed by a Principal. Classes (Grade R to Grade 7) range from 35 to 48 learners per class, making up a total of 847 learners. In addition to the standard curriculum of eight learning areas (*Languages [English and Afrikaans], Mathematics, Social Science, Natural Science, Economic and Management Science, Technology, Arts and Culture, and Life Orientation*) prescribed by the Education Department, Silverlea offers Art, Music Theory, Instrumental Music, Creative Dance, a third language (Xhosa) as well as structured physical education as part of the learning plan. A variety of sporting codes are also offered as extra-mural activities. The educators are all qualified, and regularly attends in-service training courses. School fees are R400 per child per year.

During the last few years, especially since the abolition of corporal punishment, learner discipline, and how it is dealt with, seems to have eroded. Incidents of gross disregard of school rules have multiplied dramatically, and with education as a whole being party to many changes, (*eg. a shift to Outcomes*

Based Education, rationalisation of educators, implementing the Revised New Curriculum Statements, etc) educators have had their hands full dealing with the deteriorating state of learner discipline discipline.

It is because of this perceived erosion of learner discipline that this study is proposed. Good discipline has long been acknowledged as being "one of the most important characteristics of an effective school and a crucial aspect of school and classroom management." (Squelch and Lemmer, 1995:40) This study is grounded in the belief that a positive, disciplined environment is essential for effective teaching and learning to happen consistently, and moves from the premise that the system of discipline and, to a large extent its effectiveness, is the creation of the staff of the school, in conjunction with all other role players (School governing body, Parents, Support staff, learners) in the life of the school. It seeks to give insight into the elements of positive discipline, and its impact on learning and teaching. Positive discipline has many positive spin-offs, among them the creation of an environment conducive to effective learning and teaching.

This study seeks to address

- the current state of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School,
- what influences impact on learner discipline at the school,
- the management of discipline, and
- the impact of learner discipline on learning and teaching.

It will then make recommendations around the effective management of

learner discipline that will make a positive contribution to the quality of education experienced at Silverlea.

There exists at Silverlea an urgency to improve learner discipline by implementing strategies based on scientific enquiry. It is the researcher's contention, as deputy principal of the school, coordinator of the Learner Discipline Committee tasked with improving and managing learner discipline, and a member of the management team, that an in-depth investigation into the causes of learner discipline (positive and negative) and an analysis of the findings, will facilitate finding solutions, and developing those strategies to improve learner discipline. Scientific investigation will point further to the impact which learner discipline has on learning and teaching, and ultimately lead to the *effective management and improvement of learner discipline at the school.*

This study is generated from a management perspective and does not seek to generate answers around specific misbehaviour of individual children. Management in the context used here refers to both macro (school) and micro (classroom) management. It refers to whole-school management of learner discipline, to the interaction between educator and management team with reference to learner discipline. Thus the ways in which the principal (as manager of the institution), the deputy principal (tasked with improving learner discipline), the management team as an identifiable leadership unit, and the educator in the classroom manage discipline will be investigated, as the effective, positive management of learner discipline improves the tone of the school and impacts positively on the quality of education offered and received.

Chapter 2 will outline the study. It will state the research objectives and present an overview of what research is. It will then place the study within a theoretical framework before identifying and elaborating on, by means of a literature review, concepts considered key to this study. The methods and methodology used in the study will be explained in this chapter.

Chapter 3 takes the reader into the context of the study. It describes the nature of learner discipline and how it is managed at Silverlea Primary School, the case study. My observations as deputy principal, coordinator of the Discipline Committee, member of the management team and participant observer are then presented.

Chapter 4 seeks to explain the collection of data, and presents and analyses that data.

Chapter 5 summarises the analyses of the previous chapter, while **Chapter 6** presents conclusions based on those analyses.

Chapter 7, the final chapter, puts forward recommendations aimed at improving the disciplinary practices at Silverlea Primary School.

Chapter 2

THE STUDY OUTLINED

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Research is a structured process that aims at providing solutions to problems. In this process the methods used to obtain data to solve the problem is as important as the data itself. When undertaking any research project, it is therefore essential that the researcher has a clear idea of what research is, what is to be researched, how the problem is to be researched, how the research fits in with existing knowledge, and what the intention of the research is. A clear understanding of the concepts involved in the problem to be researched is also essential.

This chapter will :-

- state the research objectives of the study,
- present an overview of what research is,
- place the study within a theoretical framework,
- identify concepts which are considered key to the study,
- explain the concepts of methods and methodology,
- situate the study within the context of a case study,
- elaborate on the instruments to be used to gather data, and

- discuss the key concepts by means of a literature review.

2.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The research objective of this study is to study learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School. This will be done by investigating:-

- the perception of learner discipline amongst the stakeholders (learners, educators, support staff, parents) at Silverlea Primary School,
- the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School,
- the causes of learner disciplinary concerns at Silverlea Primary School, and
- the impact of learner discipline on the delivery of quality education at Silverlea Primary School.

2.3 RESEARCH: AN OVERVIEW

Mouly (1970:12) defines research as *“the process of arriving at dependable solutions to problems through the planned and systematic collection, analysis and interpretation of data.”* In narrowing his focus to educational research, Mouly (1970:13) describes educational research as *“activities designed to discover facts and relationships that will enable educators to make the educational process more effective.”* Wiersma (1990:4) holds that all research in education is directed to one or two ends: (1) the extension of knowledge, and (2) the solution of a problem. In this study, which sees learner discipline and

its management at Silverlea Primary School as the problem, and which seeks to gain further knowledge around the impact of this problem, research will set in motion a process geared towards arriving at workable solutions through the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. The research will lead to the discovery of facts and relationships, and the resultant extension of knowledge should enable educators to intervene in order to make the educational process more effective.

Best (1970) argues that all research falls into either one or a combination of three approaches to research. He names these approaches as the **historical**, the **descriptive** and the **experimental** approaches.

Researchers using the **historical** approach seek to cast light on past practices. What has gone before is investigated, analysed and interpreted *“for the purposes of discovering generalisations that are helpful in understanding the past, and to a limited extent, in anticipating the future”* (Best, 1970:40).

The **descriptive (or survey)** approach addresses current conditions. It seeks to describe, record, analyse and interpret what is, and so provide greater understanding of current events.

When using the **experimental** approach, the researcher seeks to describe what will happen in the future should certain variables be manipulated or controlled. Future situations are predicted on the basis of information collected in the process of the research.

The current research is a combination of the historical and descriptive approaches. I will first look at the historical aspects of discipline at the school. Current learner discipline is described and, once the impact of learner discipline on the delivery of education has been ascertained, recommendations will be made regarding the improvement and management of learner discipline at the school. The dominant approach in this research will be the descriptive or survey approach.

So far one has provided a general definition of research and educational research, looked at different approaches to research and identified the dominant approach to research that will frame this project. The issue of what characterizes good research will be expanded on now. Best (1970) discusses this issue and identifies ten characteristics of research that I strove to comply with. Best (1970:9) argues that:-

- Research involves gathering new data or using existing data for a new purpose.
- It is always directed toward the solution of a problem.
- Research is characterized by carefully designed procedures, always applying rigorous logical analysis.
- Research places emphasis on the development of sound theories or the discovery of general principles that will be helpful in predicting future occurrences.
- Research requires expertise.

- Research involves accurate observation and description.
- Research aims to be logical, applying every possible test to validate the procedures employed, data collected and conclusions reached.
- Research is characterized by patient and unhurried activity. Unhurried in the sense that research should not be rushed carelessly. Research is, however, bound by time and financial restrictions.
- Research sometimes requires courage.
- Research is carefully recorded and reported.

As researcher one based the collection of data on these aspects of good research. By applying acquired expertise and using carefully designed procedures new data was gathered with the intention of providing a solution to an identified problem. The research was unhurried, observation and description recorded as accurately and objectively as possible, with the analysis of collected data being logical and rigorous.

2.3.1 Methods and methodology

Research is undertaken in a planned and systematic manner and thus every researcher has to develop and use specific tools and methods to gain data relevant to the study being undertaken.

A distinction between the terms **methodology** and **methods** needs to be made. Methodology refers to "*the philosophy of the research process*"(Bailey,

1978:26). Methodology looks at the motivation for the research and it aims “to help us to understand, in the broadest possible terms, not the products of scientific enquiry but the process itself” (Cohen & Manion, 1980:26).

In contrast, **methods** refers to “that range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation, for explanation and prediction”(Cohen & Manion, 1980:26). It refers to the research techniques used in gathering information or data and may include interviews, questionnaires and participant observation.

In this study the research falls within the framework of a case study, and the instruments or methods used to gather data included interviews, questionnaires and participant observation. A literature review was conducted to gain an overall context of learner discipline, its management, and its impact in schools.

2.3.2 Literature review

Central to any research project is the literature review. This review of relevant literature provides the researcher with a broad picture of the knowledge that already exists within the field he or she is researching. Mouly (1970:126) describes the importance of the literature review succinctly when he says,

The review of the literature is an exacting task, calling for a deep insight and clear perspective of the overall field. It is a crucial step which invariably minimizes the risk of dead-end rejected topics, rejected studies,

wasted effort, trial-and-error activity oriented toward approaches already discarded by previous investigators, and – even more important – erroneous findings based on faulty research designs. It promotes a greater understanding of the problem and its crucial aspects and ensures the avoidance of unnecessary duplication. It provides comparative data on the basis of which to evaluate and interpret the significance of one's findings and, in addition, contributes to the scholarship of the investigator.

From Mouly's (1970) description it is clear that the literature study is vital to this, and any study. For this study, the researcher reviewed the literature to gain a broad understanding of learner discipline in schools, its management, and the difficulties and influences associated with it. The literature was searched for definitions of learner discipline, for what constitutes "good" or "poor" learner discipline, for examples of best practices in educational institutions, and for theories on learner behaviour and management practices. The literature was scanned for a clearer understanding of the key concepts of this study, viz. effective discipline, curriculum, management style, school organisation, teaching styles, the school environment, and corporal punishment. The manner in which these key concepts interact when related to learner discipline and its management was a focus of the literature review.

Finally, the literature provides the researcher with a clearer idea of the range of research instruments used to obtain data, while the body of knowledge available in the literature serves as a foundation on which to base the research and analysis of this study. The works of Best (1970), Mouly (1970), Wiersma

(1990), Cohen and Manion (1980), Simons (1989), Fredman (1996), Hersey and Blanchard (1993) and Vally (1995), amongst others, proved particularly useful in laying this foundation.

2.3.3 Case study

This study is situated within the framework of a case study. The case to be studied is Silverlea Primary School. Case studies recognize *"the particular contexts in which innovations are embedded and aspires to describe and analyse the processes by which, and the conditions in which innovations are implemented"* (Simons, 1989:115). Cohen and Manion (1980:99) argue that the purpose of a case study is *"to probe deeply and to analyse intensely the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalisations about the wider population to which that unit belongs."* Thus, I will use the case study to draw conclusions about discipline at the school that may be applied to other schools in the vicinity.

One problem the researcher may experience during the gathering of data is that case studies often mean that individuals in the "case" are portrayed very closely. This may prove threatening unless they have some control over the information they offer and how this information is recorded in a report (Simons, 1989). To overcome this, the following steps will be taken:

- Interviews will be conducted on the principle of confidentiality.
- The use of data will be negotiated with participants.

- Interview data will only be used with the participants' consent.
(Simons, 1989).

The question of whether Silverlea Primary is the best case needs to be addressed briefly. The aim of the research is to assess and improve learner discipline at Silverlea, and move towards the effective management of learner discipline at the school. Being a teacher at Silverlea, and being responsible for the management of learner discipline at the school, one feels that research into learner discipline will be most useful at the school where I would be in a position to address the findings of the research. Silverlea has for many years enjoyed the reputation of being a well disciplined school, and the research would go a long way to testing this reputation as well as plugging any disciplinary shortcomings that may have developed. The research into learner discipline may also be seen as a pro-active step, based on scientific enquiry, to ensure that good, proper learner discipline is maintained.

2.3.4 Participant observation

An important aspect of researching a case study is observation. There are two broad types of observation.

Non-participant observation happens when the researcher sets him completely apart from that which he is observing. Here the researcher is somewhat like a spectator at a cricket match – interested, but not part of it.

Participant observation transposes the researcher from the role of a spectator to that of a player. The researcher now "*engages in the very activities he*

sets out to observe"(Cohen & Manion, 1980:101). As a teacher, coordinator of the committee tasked with managing learner discipline, and deputy principal at Silverlea Primary, one will be able to engage in participant observation as part of one's daily routine. The researcher is acutely aware of the danger of subjectivity whilst being engaged in participant observation. To guard against the possibility of subjectivity, observations were discussed with the discipline committee and well as randomly selected educators.

The researcher observed general practices around the school as they impact on the discipline at the school. Particular aspects observed are the relationships involved when disciplining learners, the type of discipline being practiced, educators' roles throughout the day, practices when changing classes and practices when lining up for classes. The manner in which disciplinary cases were referred to me, as discipline coordinator, and the number of referrals was also observed.

2.3.5 Interviews

Another technique through which data was gathered was by way of informal interviews. The interviews were used to access the views and attitudes of educators, learners, support staff and parents with regards to the effective management of discipline at Silverlea, as well as the impact of learner discipline on the delivery of quality education. A stratified random selection of interviewees was made.

While conducting the interviews I was very clear that the data gained from the interview was for research purposes only. The research is aimed at improving learner discipline and its management at Silverlea. Colleagues were helpful once the aim was established, and assured that their identity will not be revealed.

A reason for choosing interviews as a means of gathering data is because of its personal nature. Interviews are flexible and allow for in-depth questioning. It also allows for explanations in the event of any misunderstandings, and thus encourages rapport between interviewer and interviewee. Interviews are private and, although following a planned format, nevertheless allows for spontaneity. With an interview, the interviewer can ensure that all the questions are answered, while also ensuring a maximum return from respondents.

Interviews, however, are time-consuming, and severely restrict the number of participants that can be reached. They are also open to bias and prejudice on the part of the respondents. The interviewer has to guard against possible bias and prejudice.

Educators, learners, support staff and parents were interviewed regarding their understanding of the nature and causes of discipline at Silverlea, its impact on education and how it may best be managed.

2.3.6 Surveys

The advantage of surveys over interviews is that surveys “are a *relatively quick way of exploring the opinions of a large number of people*” (Cowin, 1990:60). Responses can be anonymous, and they also allow those who are generally not good public speakers a chance to respond in writing. Written responses are also not likely to be unquestioned by sceptics. Parents, learners, educators and support staff will be surveyed.

Surveys usually obtain less information than interviews because the probing for explanations and clarifications is not there. Another disadvantage of surveys is that some people are either reluctant or unable to write down responses.

In formulating questions for the survey, the researcher followed the following precautions:

- The questions were clear and unambiguous.
- The questions avoided asking respondents to respond to more than one concept at a time.
- A variety of questions, ranging from simple to more complex, were asked.
- Great care was taken to avoid bias.
- The survey was not too long.

The survey sought to address the nature of learner discipline at Silverlea, its possible causes and how it is managed.

When conducting the survey, the researcher first conducted a trial run to ascertain the suitability and level of difficulty of the questions. Triallists were taken from each of the sample groups. Confidentiality was ensured and guaranteed.

By using these methods of data collection, one is confident that most of the relevant information to make this study a success was captured.

2.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The research is framed by the view that, regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school. It holds further that this discipline impacts strongly on the quality of education offered and received. How behaviour and discipline at school are managed is not dependent on the environment from which the pupils come, but rather on the management skills present at the school. This then impacts on the quality of education offered. Situated within this framework are four key concepts, namely

- Effective discipline,
- Curriculum,

- Management and teaching styles, and
- The abolition of corporal punishment.

These concepts are central to the study of discipline at Silverlea Primary School, and a clear, uniform understanding of them is essential. They are considered key because they all have a vital impact on the running of the school, and thus on the discipline adhered to at the school. This discipline in turn impacts on the delivery of education.

The key concepts have to be researched and elaborated on within the context of the study.

2.5 THE FOUR KEY CONCEPTS DEFINED

The key concepts, as identified earlier in 2.4, are discussed here. Curriculum is central to schooling, and the literature review teases out what is understood by the term curriculum, as well as the ways, if at all, it affects discipline at schools.

The review investigates what the concept “discipline” entails, and what is understood by effective discipline. The literature has much to say about the subject of school discipline and class control. These terms should not be seen in a negative, rigid, autocratic sense. Rather, it refers to *“the process of running*

an organised and effective classroom, a classroom in which the abilities of individual children are given due opportunity for development, in which teachers can fulfil their proper functions as facilitators of learning, and in which children can acquire sensibly and enjoyably the techniques for monitoring and guiding their own behaviours" (Fontana, 1987:3). A well-controlled classroom should have positive learning outcomes, as it will provide an atmosphere conducive to both learning and teaching.

Management style and the organisation of the school have an impact on the effectiveness of the school. This, in turn, has implications for the management of discipline at the school. The review addresses the extent to which the management style and organisation of the school, as well as the way educators teach, impact on learner discipline and its effective management.

The abolition of corporal punishment has had a major impact on the way learner discipline is dealt with at schools. Many educators are still crying out for it to be reinstated. In the absence of corporal punishment, there have not been a ready means of instilling positive discipline. The literature review discusses the role of corporal punishment and the effect it had on learners. It also identifies positive ways of addressing learner discipline.

This section seeks to address and define the four concepts key to this study.

2.5.1 Effective discipline

The term "discipline" is in itself problematic, as it has the potential to mean different things to different people. A first step in researching discipline would then obviously start with a definition of the concept.

The term discipline has been variously defined. Cowin *et al* (1990) argue that the concept of discipline ranges from it being seen as an educative process to it being equated with punishment. This varied view of discipline has implications for schools, because unless the concept of discipline is first mutually defined, the idea of effective discipline is lost. Where discipline was seen as punishment, corporal punishment and detention, both very authoritarian in nature, seems to have dominated. Where discipline is seen as an educative process, it *"is regarded as a positive way of encouraging and promoting appropriate behaviour and is more concerned with promoting self-discipline, co-operation, mutual respect and responsibility"* (Squelch & Lemmer, 1995:41). In this respect discipline is definitely not to be equated with punishment, which is generally used when rules have been disobeyed.

When discussing discipline, one needs to consider that it is behaviour which is to be addressed. Thus we need to address the issue of behaviour or, perhaps more to the point, misbehaviour. As with the concept of discipline, many different views around what constitutes misbehaviour abound. Ramsey (1981) speaks of *"unruly behaviour"* while Charlton and David (1993:7) suggest that

while some see misbehaviour as *"maladjustment"*, others see it as behaviour *"manifested verbally, or physically, which overtly challenges - to varying degrees and in a variety of ways - the authority of the teacher or school."* Yet others, he says, hold a view in variance with the latter. They argue that misbehaviour is simply *"a catalogue of comparatively minor misdemeanours which, whilst not immediately challenging the authority of the teachers, demand the expenditure of inordinate amounts of teacher time and energy."*

It is clear, then, that the very concept one is investigating is not defined exclusively. The challenge for the effective management of discipline is to come to clear definitions of what both discipline and misbehaviour are. McManus (1989:4) warns against broad generalisations of misbehaviour and labelling pupils accordingly. He holds that *"no objective definition which would reduce the measurement of disruption to a simple counting process is possible. This definitional obscurity... is an important clue to one of the ways in which the problem of troublesome behaviour may be tackled. There are at least two parties to every disruptive incident. Both contribute to its being defined as serious or not, or indeed to whether it becomes defined as a disruptive incident at all."*

The implication of this definition for the researcher is that both educators and pupils will have to be researched and their part in the maintenance of discipline at the school explored. In addition, the context in which the behaviour presents itself, as well as the environmental factors which impact on behaviour have to be researched. Discipline, however, is a subjective concept, and to study it in

an objective manner, and measure it using a simple sliding scale is not possible.

For the purposes of this study, effective discipline is seen as *"the extent to which the desired expectations of individuals, groups, and the discipline organisation are perceived as being achieved. When principals, teachers, parents, and students in a school perceive most of these expectations as being successfully accomplished, a relatively high level of discipline effectiveness exists in that school"* (Furtwengler & Konnert, 1982:6). Ramsey (1981:44) states, quite emphatically that *"the basis for discipline is effective instruction. Positive behaviour is a by-product of sound teaching."* He also holds that *"regardless of the nature of the school community or the type of student served, the discipline tone of the school is the creation of the school staff"* (1981:19).

Expectations, then, need to be created, and coupled with "sound teaching" if effective discipline is to be achieved. It is against these expectations that *"the processes designed to aid students develop social behaviours and attitudes for appropriate participation in an adult democratic culture"* (Furtwengler & Konnert, 1982:6) can be measured. The ultimate aim of effective discipline is thus the development of individuals who would eventually take their place in adult society and exhibit appropriate social behaviours and attitudes.

It is my contention that when a programme is in place that develops students in such a way that they can take their place in adult society in a responsible

manner wholly appropriate to that society, then effective discipline has been achieved.

2.5.2 Curriculum

A second key concept in the debate around the effective management of discipline centres round the curriculum, which is central to schooling and education.

Defining curriculum is a practice that is yet to yield a single, authoritative, unbiased, unambiguous definition. Definitions have been influenced by the view that the definer has of curriculum and what it should entail. Two different camps have emerged when looking at this rather complex topic. The one camp sees curriculum as *"an intention, plan or prescription, an idea about what one would like to happen in schools"* (Stenhouse, 1975:2). The other camp sees curriculum as what is presently happening at school, the actual goings-on at the school. This researcher's view is that curriculum falls somewhere between these views. It is a combination of intention and reality. Intention, in the sense that deliberate goals are being pursued in teaching, and reality in the sense that the pupils will copy that behaviour which the teacher wittingly or unwittingly displays.

Stenhouse (1975:4) offers this definition of curriculum: *"A curriculum is an attempt to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational*

proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and capable of effective translation into practice."

Eisner holds that *"the curriculum of a school... can be conceived of as a series of planned events that are intended to have educational consequences for one or more pupils."*(Eisner, 1985:45).

The curriculum is not to be equated with the syllabus. A syllabus is merely a breakdown of planned academic work. The curriculum is much broader, encompassing also the attitudes, feelings and relationships at the school. Stenhouse's definition sees the school as being open to scrutiny and development. In this sense it is provisional, merely an educational proposal. This view lends itself to discovery and effective translation into practice.

Eisner's definition is prescriptive. It implies that curriculum lends itself to controlled and prescriptive teaching. This curriculum is autocratic, planned and formal.

The writer subscribes to Wolpe's (1988:180) definition of curriculum. She argues that *"the curriculum is the essential core of both the form and content of knowledge transmitted by schools."* This definition incorporates the conventional curriculum as well as the hidden curriculum, a term which will be discussed later.

Whatever one's view on the curriculum, one cannot deny that it is key to the management of discipline. What is being taught, and how it is being taught, impacts on the maintenance of discipline. Does the curriculum address the needs of the pupils? Is the curriculum too content orientated? Does the curriculum prepare the child for the real world? In addressing these questions, Bybee and Gee (1982:4) put forward the view that *"student violence is higher in schools where the curriculum and instruction are not aligned with the interests and needs of the students."* Ramsey (1981:21) argues that a sure way of promoting ill discipline in the school is to provide *"a narrow, rigid curriculum that stresses content at all costs and knowledge first - feelings later."* Charlton and David (1993:11) identify *"a curriculum which is matched to pupils' present and future needs"* as a characteristic which is likely to impact positively on pupil behaviour.

The curriculum is one of the main concepts that will have to be considered when searching for ways to minimise ill discipline among pupils and manage discipline effectively.

The "hidden curriculum", is that part of schooling which is not intentionally or formally taught. Without him or her necessarily formally intending it, the educator diffuses attitudes, values and norms in the classroom. So, for instance, pupils learn that they do not have to respond promptly to bells because teacher does not, or that neatness is important because teacher is very neat. This has implications for discipline, as the pupils copy their teachers.

Charlton and David (1993:3) sum up the importance of the curriculum when they say that *"what schools offer, and how they offer it, helps determine whether pupils respond in desirable or undesirable ways, and the reasons for pupils' misbehaviour may have as much (if not more) to do with their experiences at school as those they encounter in the home, or with aspects of their personality."*

This has implications for the management of discipline at school.

2.5.3 Management and teaching style

Managing discipline effectively depends to a great extent on the person performing the discipline act. If the teacher in her classroom is seen as the leader there, and the principal the leader of the institution, we may apply the notion that *"the organisation without effective leadership is in trouble."* (Fiedler, as quoted in Gorton, 1987:72). Leadership is central to the effective management of discipline. Leadership is about influence (Hersey and Blanchard, 1993), and in the management of discipline there has to be much positive influence. Gardner (1988:1) says of leadership that it *"is the process of persuasion or example by which an individual (or leadership team) induces a group to pursue objectives held by the leader and his or her followers."* Burt Nanus (1989:4) says that *"Effective leaders have agendas; they are totally results oriented. They adopt challenging new visions of what is both possible and desirable,*

communicate their visions, and persuade others to become committed to these new directions that they are eager to lend their resources and energies to make them happen. In this way effective leaders build lasting institutions that change the world."

The educator in the classroom is a leader, and one of the most important management tasks is to *"establish sound discipline in the classroom so that optimum learning can take place"*(Squelch & Lemmer, 1995:56). Educators should manage discipline in such a way that it is seen as being positive, building the pupils' esteem. The type of discipline an educator instils in the classroom is reflected in the type of leader he or she is. This leadership may be autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire. This also impacts on the teaching style used.

The management style of the manager of the institution will have an effect on how teachers manage discipline in their classrooms. Thus the manager will have to develop a style of management that allows for the views of all stakeholders – educators, parents, support staff and learners - and to use these views to build a vision for the school. Charlton and David (1993:12), drawing on research, list the following characteristics that impact positively on pupil behaviour. It is the prerogative of the overall manager as well as the managers in the classroom to adopt and evaluate these characteristics, which include:

- Good leadership by senior management in consultation with colleagues

and sensitive to the opinions of parents and pupils;

- Shared staff policy on academic and behaviour expectations, which are meaningful to pupils and consistently (though not inflexibly) enforced;
- Academic expectations that are high, though not unreasonable;
- An emphasis on the effective use of rewards for good behaviour and good work, rather than the application of punishments;
- High professional standards by staff in terms of planning, setting and marking work and starting and ending lessons on time;
- Classroom management skills that help prevent problem behaviours from arising;
- Opportunities for pupils to become involved in, and share responsibilities for, the running of the school; and
- An effective system of pastoral care.

2.5.4 The Abolition of corporal punishment

The abolition of corporal punishment in schools has evoked much reaction. Much has been said both in favour and against the abolition. What is unquestionably true, though, is that the abolition of corporal punishment has had an immense impact on the way schools deal with discipline, as well as the manner in which discipline is now looked at. Benson (1995:19) of the Centre for Conflict Resolution's Youth Project, puts forward the view that *"the positive aspect of the banning of corporal punishment is that teachers are forced to explore other, often ignored, methods of discipline. Perhaps they will find new*

solutions to old problems."

With the banning of corporal punishment in 1995, the authorities took away what was, for many schools, the only effective means of punishment and left nothing in its place (Benson, 1995).

A brief discussion around the motivation for the banning might prove to be useful. Vally (1995:8) summarises some of the findings used in motivating the banning of corporal punishment in schools:

- Corporal punishment tends to develop aggressive hostility rather than self-discipline. It tends to encourage feelings of revenge and aggressiveness.
- By making use of corporal punishment, teachers do not take up the search for alternative means of discipline. Corporal punishment thus became a "crutch" for many a teacher.
- Corporal punishment fosters the idea that violence "is an acceptable way to express dissatisfaction and a legitimate way of resolving tensions." It shows, through the hidden curriculum, that by inflicting pain one can gain power and dominance.
- Physical punishment does not deter or positively alter behaviour.
- Corporal punishment often causes pupils to develop an aversion towards schools. It breaks down self-esteem as well as relationships between pupil and teacher.

- Corporal punishment causes children to confuse fear with respect.

Vally goes on to argue that *"Self-discipline, embodying an ideal of growth toward independence and self-control rather than punitive measures, should be the goal of disciplinary strategies."*

Ramsey (1995:142) indicates that "the presence or absence of corporal punishment is not a critical factor in deciding the discipline fate of any school." What he implies is that corporal punishment should never be seen as the only means of instilling and maintaining learner discipline. Effective discipline can, and should, happen without the need to resort to corporal punishment. He lists four potential pitfalls of corporal punishment:

- It may attack the person rather than the real problem.
- It may produce adverse ramifications and side effects.
- It may merely serve the needs of the adults involved and not the needs of the student.
- Its effectiveness diminishes with use. (Ramsey, 1995:146)

The main criticism against the abolition of corporal punishment, according to Fredman (1996:2) "has been that this prohibition is a liberal attempt to remove a pedagogical tool from the school system." Fredman believes that corporal punishment is as much part of the teaching and learning process as are textbooks and pencils. Vally (1995) suggests some alternatives to corporal pun-

ishment. He says firstly that a code of conduct in which teachers, pupils, management and parents have input should be drawn up. Then, also, conflict resolution procedures should take place privately and individually. He also suggests that parents should play a much more prominent role in the discipline of their children, and thus there should be greater liaison between school and parents. Vally further suggests that pupils who regularly obey the rules should be rewarded.

The abolition of corporal punishment has had a major impact on discipline and its management at the school. Learners became seemingly more rowdy and unruly, knowing that they could not be disciplined by means of corporal punishment. Whereas corporal punishment provided a quick "solution" to errant learner behaviour, alternatives were often lengthy and time consuming. What are the alternatives to corporal punishment? The literature provides the following overarching alternative to corporal punishment. It suggests that

"The development of a democratic approach to discipline in school compatible with the principles of equality, mutual respect and responsibility is the alternative to corporal punishment. The emphasis should be on capturing rather than coercing, engineering rather than reacting, building dignity rather than being punitive" (Valley, 1995:9).

2.6 CONCLUSION

This chapter has introduced the research objectives of the study, and placed the study within a theoretical framework. The concepts of **effective discipline, curriculum, management and teaching style and school organisation**, as well as the **abolition of corporal punishment** were identified as key to the study and were elaborated on through a review of relevant literature. An overview of research was then given, while the methods and methodology to be used in the study were discussed. The instruments used to collect data were also expounded on.

In the following chapter, the study will be placed into context with a description of the current state of learner discipline and how it is managed. The observations of the researcher will also be reported.

Chapter 3

THE CASE IN CONTEXT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter introduced the reader to the study. It set out the research objectives, explained how data was collected, and expanded on four key concepts by reviewing related literature. This chapter takes the reader into the context of the study. It describes the nature of learner discipline and how it is managed at Silverlea Primary School. It then presents my observations as a participant observer in the case.

3.2 CURRENT DISCIPLINE FRAMEWORK

As stated in paragraph 1.2, Silverlea has a staff complement of 23 fulltime and two part-time educators, a secretary and 4 support staff (1 caretaker, 1 cleaner, 1 handyman and 1 security guard). The organisation is structured in a hierarchical way with a principal (post level 4), deputy principal (pl 3), two heads of department (pl 2), with the remaining educators (21) on post level 1. The principal, together with the deputy principal and heads of department make up the management team. Two additional members serve as acting heads of department and also as part of the school management team. The

school is run in keeping with democratic principles. Regular staff meetings are held, and learner discipline and its management feature regularly on the agendas.

There are many facets to learner discipline at Silverlea, among them the school's vision and mission, the Code of Conduct, the Discipline committee, the Prefects, Playground duty, passes and, of course, the role of the educator.

3.2.1 Vision and mission

Silverlea Primary has a vision and mission statement that was developed by the staff with input from parents and other interested parties. This statement is intended to be the framework of all that Silverlea does.

Based on the values of transparency, honesty, openness, democracy, equality, empowerment and being non-judgemental, the vision of Silverlea Primary School is of

“a pro-active, innovative and progressive school where the whole school community is partner to the offering of a balanced, high quality education which aims to develop confident, numerate and literate learners ready to take their place in a democratic society.”

It goes on to say that one of the ways of ensuring high quality education is by *“developing procedures to promote and foster positive discipline among learners”*.

The mission statement highlights a number of areas, which if developed, promotes positive learner discipline. It says that Silverlea, as it strives to ensure quality education, is committed to

- Actively pursuing academic excellence by ensuring good, positive and innovative classroom practice;
- Providing positive, visionary leadership and management;
- Actively promoting sound values (punctuality, hard work, love, helpfulness, cleanliness, faith, etc);
- Providing opportunities for teachers to be developed continuously to ensure their continued effectiveness;
- Ensuring a clean, healthy environment conducive to teaching and learning;
- Actively promoting the Arts as an educational tool;
- Developing procedures to promote and foster positive discipline among learners;
- Providing regular opportunities for learning outside the classroom;
- Providing opportunities for sporting achievement; and
- Regular communication between the school and parents detailing progress of learners as well as events at school.

From this vision and mission statement, it should be clear that the education the school provides is deemed a multi-faceted process. All facets, including classroom practice, visionary leadership and management, promoting sound

values, and a positive environment, etc. interact in the delivery of education. Although learner discipline is only mentioned once in the mission statement, it is deemed an important part in the delivery of this quality education, the primary goal of any school. By including the phrase “developing procedures to promote and foster positive discipline amongst learners” in the mission statement, the school has identified the clear link between positive learner discipline and delivering high quality education.

3.2.2 The code of conduct

The preamble to the Silverlea Primary School Code of Conduct says that: “The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to inculcate good school discipline as an important feature of effective schooling. Learners learn best in an orderly and safe environment. The Code of Conduct is an important management tool in the school. It is therefore the duty of the Principal and staff to maintain proper discipline and order at school. This by no means exempts the parents from laying the foundations of good discipline at home.”

The Code of Conduct aims at

- Maintaining a well organised and good school so that effective learning and teaching can take place;
- Developing leadership in learners;
- Providing a guide for the behaviour of the learners and those responsible for their proper conduct at school; and

- Promoting self discipline and good conduct.

The Code of Conduct presents guidelines for positive learner behaviour, disciplinary measures and spells out various rules for learners and visitors. Various misdemeanours or infringements are highlighted and suitable punishment attached. Measures given for dealing with misbehaviour include:-

- **Individual counselling** : A learner's conduct is discussed with him or her. Repeat offenders are referred to the Teachers' Support Team, a team dealing with various aspects of learners' behaviour and academic progress.
- **Withholding of privileges** like participation in sport and excursions,
- **Withdrawal** : Temporary removal from the classroom
- **Special assignments** : Meaningful, extra, written assignments in line with the learner's academic proficiency are given.
- **Interval detention** : The learner is denied access to the playground.
- **Detention to perform certain duties** : After school hours the learner is compelled to do certain tasks under supervision. These tasks are assigned in a positive way, avoiding embarrassment and humiliation.
- **Detention** : This is a compulsory class to be attended after school and during which learners do special assignments (not homework) under supervision.
- **Suspension** : School attendance for the learner and all other privileges at school are suspended for a period of a maximum of one week. Par-

ents will be called to meet with the School Governing Body. Suspension can only happen after a fair hearing, and should be seen as a correctional measure.

- **Expulsion** : This is the permanent removal of the learner from the school, and is implemented only after a period of suspension. Expulsion is enforced only when the further attendance of the learner is detrimental to the school and other learners, and will only be used in the case of very serious offences. Only the Head of Education may expel a learner from a public school (section 9 of South African Schools Act).

The Code of Conduct explains in detail all aspects of conduct and uniform, and lists the rules learners are expected to adhere to.

3.2.3 Discipline committee

The need to address learner discipline at Silverlea resulted in the establishment of a learner discipline committee consisting of a coordinator, and five other nominated educator members. This committee comprises only the educator component of the Silverlea stakeholders. Tasked with developing the disciplinary procedures at the school, this committee has not been particularly effective yet. However, this is being addressed, and there is a positive sense that it will soon be very effective. A discussion document has been drawn up.

3.2.4 Prefects

Prefects are Grade 7 learner leaders who have been appointed to positions of authority and leadership by educators. Educators have identified these 23 learners as having the required leadership qualities. The process of selecting the prefects involved the staff identifying learners and putting their names forward for possible selection. Educators then discussed these names informally before a final selection was made by the two educators placed in charge of the prefects. A Head Boy and Head Girl were selected from the 23 prefects. There was no input at all from learners, thus losing a real opportunity of acting out the workings of democracy.

The prefects are on duty during intervals, and as required. They have duty points in the corridors, in the playground, at the tuck shop, school gates, and entrances to the building. Each prefect has also been assigned to a class, working with the class educator to maintain and enforce discipline in lines or when the educator has to be elsewhere. Two educators, nominated to take charge of the prefects and their development, have regular meetings with them. These educators are both part of the Discipline Committee, although they were nominated to the role of mentoring the prefects before the DC was established.

The prefects are prepared for their role as learner leaders by attending a three-day camp where their leadership skills are honed. The camp programme is

designed to develop leadership skills, to cultivate ways of dealing with “difficult” learners, and enforcing the rules of the school. At school they have been issued with bright bibs that are worn as a means of identification.

In the course of performing their duties, prefects are required to record names of transgressors and take these to the educator on duty.

3.2.5 Playground duty

During every interval teams of three teachers each are allocated to do playground duty. This requires the educators to be present in the playground with the aim of being a calming influence around the learners as they play.

3.2.6 Passes / Permission Cards

A system of passes, or permission cards, has been in operation for two years. This system requires any learner who is out of the classroom during lesson time to be able to present a permission card saying that he or she has permission to be out and is running an errand. The card has the class educator’s name on it, and is aimed at curtailing and controlling unnecessary movement outside the classroom. It is a way of ensuring that every child out of the classroom during teaching time has permission from the educator to be out.

3.2.7 Role of the educators

Educators play a central role in learner discipline as they set the discipline tone for the school.

In terms of discipline, educators are required to handle disciplinary problems in their classrooms, as well as play their part in the general maintenance of positive learner discipline. Each member of the management team has been allocated to a grade for discipline purposes and educators refer disciplinary problems which they feel they cannot handle, to them. Should the problem still not be resolved satisfactorily, learners are referred to the principal.

Educators are also required to respond immediately to interval bells and be present when learners line up.

Learners are to be escorted to the school gate when dismissed, this to facilitate orderly dismissal. Parents are then to collect their children at the gate.

Educators are also required to do playground duty, scholar patrol duty, and any other duty as assigned by the principal.

3.2.8 Assembly

Assembly plays an important role in the day-to-day existence of Silverlea. Apart from the traditional Monday morning assembly of approximately ½ hour where the school gathers to listen to a moral story being told, there is the daily short (10 minutes) assembly. Every morning the school gathers before going to class to pray and listen to any notices. Daily assemblies were implemented so that the school day could start in a calm, orderly manner.

3.2.9 Discussing discipline

Discipline is a regular item on staff meeting agendas. Among the things that have been requested of teachers is that they be at lines timeously, that they not leave their classrooms unattended unnecessarily and that they do their *playground and other duties*.

Individual cases of poor discipline are also discussed, while much discussion around discipline also happens informally amongst educators.

3.2.10 Detention

Detention, which is keeping learners after school to attend a structured,

supervised discipline class, is one of the main forms of censure. Learners are required to stay after school for an hour completing extra assignments. Learners are not allowed to complete homework in this class.

Where a learner has transgressed in such a way that detention is merited, he or she is given a letter to take home informing his or her parents or guardians of the transgression and the date of the detention class. The teacher then compiles an extra assignment to be completed in the detention class. There is *strict supervision in the class, and an attendance register is kept.*

3.3 OBSERVATIONS

As the deputy principal at Silverlea Primary School since July 2000, I have been well placed to observe practices around learner discipline. My observations, covering the period January 2004 to March 2004, are based on the discipline framework which was discussed earlier.

- The **Vision and Mission** statement, which was developed over a number of staff development sessions by the whole staff, is not generally afforded the importance that it should have. It is not seen as the guiding framework it is intended to be. The mission statement recognises the importance of learner discipline to education, yet *learner discipline is seen in isolation.* It is regarded as a goal in itself, rather than as a central part of a quality education.

- The **Code of Conduct**, which details what is acceptable and what is not acceptable learner behaviour, is not a high profile document. Seldom, in my experience, has it been referred to when dealing with learner misconduct. Learners are also not made aware of the contents. The code of conduct links certain sanctions to specific behaviours and details procedures for dealing with disciplinary issues , yet it is spoken about without actually been used.
- The **discipline committee** was constituted as a working committee to deal with learner discipline – specifically putting in place structures dealing with discipline. During the period of observation (February 2004) this committee has not functioned, although meetings have been scheduled.
- The **prefects** were appointed by educators without any input from the learners themselves. Much debate amongst educators went into the initial selections. However, there was still some disagreement when the final selection was made. I suggested that the selection process should be to democratised by allowing learners a say in that selection, but educators felt that this would not be reliable, as it would allow learners to select on the basis of friendship rather than leadership potential. I felt that we were wasting a real opportunity to instruct our learners in the working of democracy. My feeling was that learners should be taught at a young age that leaders should be appointed democratically, and carry with that accountability.

The prefects were announced, and honoured at the Assembly. They were told of their leadership responsibility, and the learners were encouraged to treat them with respect and cooperate with them.

Their job was initially tackled with great gusto, but because they were not clear of what was expected of them, their enthusiasm waned after a few weeks. Having been cast in the role of policemen, they went all out to enforce the *code of conduct*, or any *ad hoc* rules that may have been formulated. They did not seem to receive the necessary support from the educators authorised to discipline transgressors the prefects reported. Their enthusiasm improved when they were issued with new, brightly coloured bibs by which they could easily be identified. The leadership camp, which occurred two months after they were initially appointed, also seemed to energise the prefects, instilling great motivation and enthusiasm.

Prefects were sometimes requested to stand in for educators who would be late, or who needed to be elsewhere for a while. This often proved a challenging task for Grade 7 learners, especially when one considers that trained adult educators have difficulty maintaining order in classes of over forty learners. Learners should, of course, be under adult supervision at all times, and this practice is not in general keeping with the policy of the school or the Education Department.

- **Playground duty** is a vital part of maintaining learner discipline. Educators' presence on the playground during interval can prevent inappropriate learner behaviour or, where such behaviour does occur, can nip it in the bud. In the week 23 to 27 February 2004, during which I specifically observed the effectiveness of playground duty, four out of the ten weekly intervals had no educator on duty, while the other six intervals had only 1 or 2 of the 3 allocated educators on duty.
- **Passes**, or permission cards, were used regularly by only a few classes. A number of learners were noticed in the office area regularly. Some of them accompanied other learners on an errand for their teacher, while others were there of their own volition. Some learners had been sent to either the principal or deputy principal for disciplinary reasons. At times this created congestion and noise. When asked about the lack of passes, learners indicated that their passes had gone missing, or they had simply "forgotten" to take it. No replacement passes had been requested from the office. This system of passes had been agreed to by the entire staff, and the aim - to limit and control the number of learners out of the classroom during teaching time - discussed. The fact that some learners were very conscientious in taking their permission cards or passes with them when they left the classroom, point to the fact that the system can work. The educators have to make it work by instilling this discipline.

- Educators handled discipline in their classes ably, although learners were often put out of the classroom to stand in the corridor. Other learners were sent to the office. A big problem early in the year was learners who did not have the necessary books, or who had left their books at home. One educator indicated that she had, over a number of years, struggled to keep her classes reasonably quiet and well disciplined, and was envious of others who could do so relatively easily.
- Educators are willing to **contact parents** to discuss learners. In the week of *observation, parents were contacted both because learners (2) presented disciplinary problems, as well as because one educator was concerned about a learner's progress in addition to him presenting behavioural concerns.*
- Educators were observed out of their classrooms on a number of occasions. The office area, where the computers, duplicating machines and telephone are situated, seems to be a congregating point. At one stage five educators were gathered in the secretary's office to either duplicate material, pay in money or use the telephone. On enquiry, one educator was officially "free". Educators feel free to be out of the classroom, and this impacts on learner discipline as the class is then without educator supervision.
- The bell, which signals the end of interval does not meet with the same response from all educators. In some instances there was an immediate reaction to start moving towards their classrooms, while in other instances there was a

much slower response. During the week of observation, an educator came to the line fully 6 minutes after the bell had sounded, while others were timed at between two and three minutes. A number of educators got to the lines promptly.

- The period after interval is characterised by much noise, with learners still chatting, shouting and joking in the lines. Many learners are very tardy about getting to the lines.
- **Detention** classes had not yet been implemented during the observation period. A look through the Detention Book, which is a record of all learners who have attended detention, shows varied entries. Detention was used to punish transgressions ranging from not having the relevant books available, to not doing homework, to fighting, stealing and swearing. All these misdemeanours were punished in the same way, with no distinction being drawn with regards to the seriousness of the offence.
- As stated earlier, the **Assembly** is regarded as a very important part of the school day. Learners line up every morning in a quadrangular, facing a stoep area. Educators stand on the stoep facing their class. Either the Principal or Deputy Principal then leads the school in prayer, after which some notices may be read. Monday morning assembly would also include a moral story told, in turn, by educators. Songs would also be sung. The focus is Christian. The speakers often highlight interesting snippets pertinent to the day. Prayers are

alternatively said in English, Afrikaans and Xhosa, while the learners are also greeted in all three languages. Assembly is always conducted in English.

Gathering for the assembly is, generally, a noisy affair. Teachers on the whole do not silence the learners, instead waiting for the principal or deputy principal to do this. The intention of having a daily assembly was to start the day in a calm, orderly manner. However, because the learners are noisy, and educators are not enforcing disciplined gathering, questions are being raised. Educators should be quieting learners as they assemble, while learners should be taught to gather in an acceptable manner.

During the assembly, sporting or other achievements are highlighted and the learners concerned honoured. Learners who have returned lost goods or money are also honoured, while learners celebrating birthdays are called up, wished well and given a birthday card.

3.4 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This chapter has contextualised the study by describing the nature of learner discipline and how it is managed at Silverlea. It presented the current discipline framework by describing various aspects of the management of discipline, including the vision and mission statement, the code of conduct, the discipline committee, prefects, educator duties, detention, and educator duties. It then documented my observations as a participant observer. I suggested that

prefects should be elected in a democratic manner rather than appointed by educators, while playground duty is largely ineffective because educators do not do duty. The system of passes is also not as effective as it should be because the whole staff do not enforce it. Educators are regularly out of the classroom, and this affects learner discipline. Not all educators got to their lines promptly after the bell had gone, which created a forum for learners to misbehave. No distinction was made between misdemeanours when sending learners to detention.

As participant observer, one was struck by the many identified instances which contributed to learner ill-discipline. All these instances can be avoided or rectified by effective management, as well as the staff pulling together to reach a stated goal of a well-disciplined school. The researcher's role as deputy principal in the management of learner discipline also led to much introspection.

Chapter 4 will explain the collection of data, and present and analyse this research data by means of tables and description.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS & INTERPRETATION OF THE RESEARCH DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter described the nature of discipline at Silverlea and how it is managed. It then documented my observations as a participant observer. This chapter seeks to explain the collection of data, and present and analyse that data.

4.2 DATA COLLECTION

Data was gathered chiefly by means of questionnaires. All role players – educators, support staff, parents and learners - were surveyed, and their responses compiled and analysed. Finding suitable appointment dates for formal interviews proved prohibitively difficult because of the sheer volume of other school activities during the research period. A series of informal interviews were then conducted to gain added information.

4.2.1 Staff survey

The views of the educator staff regarding the issue of learner discipline at Silverlea is critical to this study as they have a direct impact on learner discipline and how it is managed. These views therefore had to be captured. The educators were informed of the study by the Principal and were asked to meet on a Friday afternoon to complete the questionnaire. The timeslot used is usually reserved for staff development. Educators were asked to meet in a central venue as this would ensure a maximum return. Eighteen of the 25 staff members were present, the others being absent for a variety of reasons. Questionnaires were issued a few days later to the absent staff members, but they were not completed.

The research objectives were explained, and then the questionnaires were handed out. The questionnaire (Annexure A) sought to elicit opinions of educators on aspects of learner discipline at school. The questions were varied with respondents required to indicate their opinions by encircling codes, and then answering open ended questions in the spaces provided. The profile of the respondents is indicated in the tables 4.1 and 4.2.

Table 4.1 : Profile of educator respondents (a)

Number of Educators surveyed	Males	Females	Total number of educators on staff	Percentage of educators surveyed
18	5	13	25	72 %

Table 4.2 : Profile of educator respondents (b)

No. of Educators	Post Level 1		Head of Department		Acting Head of Department	Principal
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
18	3	11	1	1	1	1

4.2.2 Learner survey

Grade 6 and 7 learners were surveyed. These learners were selected because I felt it important to get their views on discipline at school and how it is managed. The selected grades would, because of their age and stage of development, and based on my experience as educator, be able to give reasonably clear and objective responses. A stratified random selection of 30 learners from each grade was asked to meet at given times to complete the questionnaire (Annexure B) as well as to engage in interviews. A trial run was conducted with grade 5 learners.

The sessions were conducted as workshops, with me first reading a question aloud, and the respondents then completing their written response. Discussion was allowed, and deeper responses elicited. Learners were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and I appealed to them to respect the confidentiality of the session. Three of the selected learners did not arrive at the venue. They were not replaced. The learner respondent profile is indicated in

Table 4.3. Three of the learners respondents (all boys, and all in Grade 7) were attending weekly counselling sessions with a school psychologist as a result of repeated fighting and forming a “gang” at school.

Table 4.3 : Profile of learner respondents

Grade	Number of Learners surveyed	Boys	Girls	Total number in Grade	Percentage of learners surveyed
6	27	15	12	90	30%
7	30	15	15	131	23%

4.2.3 Support staff survey

The support staff has a deep insight into the goings on at the school. The nature of their work takes them all over the plant, and this affords them the opportunity to often see the bigger picture that educators or managers who are confined mostly to a classroom or office, do not see. It is for this reason that their views regarding learner discipline and its management at school were sought. They agreed to a meeting time.

The support staff consists of the secretary, foreman, cleaner, handyman and security guard. The secretary was not available for the meeting. A questionnaire was issued, but not returned. The support staff felt that the questionnaire should be filled in collectively, after relevant discussion, rather than individu-

ally. The profile of the support staff respondents is tabled below. On the day of the meeting, the cleaner was absent.

Table 4.4 : Profile of support staff respondents

Total number of support staff	Foreman	Cleaner	Handyman	Security guard
4	1	1	1	1
	Male	Female	Male	Male

4.2.4 Parent survey

Although parents do not play a direct role in learner discipline at school, they do play an important supportive role. They had, of course, been involved in drawing up the Code of Conduct via the School Governing Body, and approved the CoC at a general meeting of parents. Their views on learner discipline and its management at Silverlea thus gives an indication of how successful the school is in implementing its plans. Parent views are based more on perception than actual experience, as they are not present at school to witness the workings of the discipline system. They are often dependent on their children to report to them about learner discipline and how it is dealt with. There are a number of parents, though, who regularly assist at school, and their views are based more on actual experience. As clients of the school, parents'

views are very important. These views also have to be taken into consideration when changes are made at school.

33 responses were received from parents after 60 questionnaires were issued to parents of the learners who had earlier been surveyed. The parent response per grade is tabled below.

Table 4.5 : Profile of parent respondents

	Grade 6	Grade 7	Total
Number of questionnaires issued	27	30	57
Number of parent respondents	19	14	33
Percentage of parent respondents	70	47	58

4.3 Interpreting and analyzing the data

This section presents and analyses the data collected by means of the surveys and the informal interviews. Responses from each group of respondents will be presented separately, and followed by a comparative analysis. Some concluding remarks will end this section.

4.3.1 Educator survey

As indicated earlier in Table 4.1, 18 educators, or 72% of the total educator complement, were surveyed. The responses varied markedly, showing sharp differences in the way learner discipline is perceived by the educators of Silverlea Primary School. The range of responses also provide an indication as to why learner discipline has not always been dealt with in a uniform and effec-

tive manner. They also point to the fact that the very subject of learner discipline, as indicated in the introduction, is a subjective issue.

In this section, questions will be clustered under descriptive headings. This is to facilitate discussion and analysis. The percentage responses will be given, and an analysis made. The complete questionnaire is included as Annexure A. The number in the number column refers to the corresponding number in the questionnaire.

The descriptive headings under which the questions were clustered are:

- Educators' perceptions of learner discipline;
- The impact of learner discipline on educators;
- The management of learner discipline;
- The code of conduct;
- Main causes of disciplinary problems, and
- Dealing with learner discipline.

4.3.1.1 Educators' perceptions of learner discipline

The first two questions gauged educators' perception of learner discipline and its management. Table 4.6 illustrates the responses.

Table 4.6 : Staff perceptions of learner discipline and its management

NO.	Questions	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Not acceptable	Poor
1	How do you perceive learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School?	0%	12%	33%	33 %	22%
2	How do you perceive the management of discipline at Silverlea Primary School?	6%	17%	16%	50%	11%

The way the state of learner discipline at Silverlea is viewed by the very educators that enforce, it differs. Whereas 12% perceive it as being good, 22% describe it as being poor. A third of educator respondents (33%) find learner discipline acceptable, while 33% also find learner discipline unacceptable. 45% of respondents thus find learner discipline acceptable or good, while 55% find it to be not acceptable or poor.

The management of discipline met with a similarly varied response. Responses ranged from very good (6%) to poor (11%). Half (50%) of the respondents rated the current management of discipline as not acceptable. On the whole, 39% of respondents regarded the management of discipline as acceptable, good or very good, while 61% regarded it as not acceptable or poor.

The different perceptions of learner discipline and the management thereof at Silverlea have major implications for dealing with learner discipline. When the staff engages in discussion of learner discipline, there is not a common understanding of what is being discussed. Members of staff who see learner disci-

pline as poor or not acceptable will not share the same understanding as those who see it as acceptable or good. This impacts on the importance one attaches to dealing with the issue under discussion. The extent to which there is a lack of common understanding around the issue of learner discipline is indicated in table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 : Staff understanding of learner discipline

NO.	Question	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
5	There is a common understanding amongst the staff regarding learner discipline at Silverlea.	0%	50%	44%	6%	0%

Exactly half the staff feels that there is a common understanding regarding learner discipline, while the other believes there is no common understanding.

This scenario extends a challenge to the leadership of the school to develop a common vision and understanding of what is acceptable and what is not in terms of learner discipline at the school.

Questions 3 and 18 sought to ascertain educators' views regarding whether the system of discipline employed at the school is dependent on the environment from which the learner comes, or on the management skills of the staff. Respondents responded to a given statement. The responses were as follows:

Table 4.8 :

Educator views on the creation and management of the system of discipline

NO	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
3	Regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school	33%	44%	17%	6%
18	The manner in which behaviour and discipline at school is managed is dependent on the general management skills portrayed at school.	33%	33%	28%	6%

The majority (77%) of the educator staff agrees or strongly agrees that it is the staff that should create an effective system of learner discipline, while 66% agree that the management of that system depends on the management skills of the staff.

When the responses to these two questions are analysed in conjunction with the responses to question 5, the importance of having a common vision and goal is clearly illustrated. The staff here demonstrates significant agreement that it is they that should develop the system of discipline and that they should manage that system effectively. Respondents showed 100% agreement that learner discipline is a function of the entire staff (cf. table 4.9 below). This is the only question where all the respondents agreed. The missing element is the common understanding of what is to be achieved in terms of learner discipline.

Table 4.9: Learner discipline as a function of the staff

NO.	Question	Management only	The entire staff	Mainly management
19	Learner discipline at school is a function of (i) management only (ii) the entire staff, or (iii) mainly management	0%	100%	0%

4.3.1.2 The impact of learner discipline

The following questions sought to ascertain whether educators feel that there is a link between learner discipline and their educator performance.

Table 4.10: The impact of learner ill-discipline on educators

NO	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
6	Ill-discipline amongst learners impacts negatively on the quality of education offered.	72%	11%	11%	6%	0%
13	Poor learner discipline contributes significantly to educator stress at Silverlea	66%	22%	0%	6%	6%

A significant proportion (83%) of respondents felt that learner ill-discipline impacts negatively on the quality of education they are able to offer. This is ostensibly because they (88% of respondents) feel that poor learner discipline contributes significantly to educator stress. 39% of educators indicated that

they often struggle with learner discipline, while 50% said that they sometimes struggle (cf. table 4.11 below).

Table 4.11: Struggling with learner discipline

NO	Question	Often	Sometimes	Seldom
20	Do you struggle with learner discipline?	39%	50%	11%

Learner discipline clearly has a major impact on educators as they spend much time struggling with it. This in turn affects the quality of education they are able to deliver, and is also a significant contributor to educator stress.

Some of the disciplinary issues educators have to deal with were captured in question 18 which asked how often educators had experienced a variety of transgressions.

Table 4.12 : Disciplinary manifestations

NO	How often have you experienced any of the following:	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
18.1	Homework not done.	28%	28%	28%	16%	0%
18.3	Learners fighting	22%	44%	22%	12%	0%
18.4	Classroom disorderliness while teacher is in the classroom	17%	28%	44%	11%	0%
18.6	Learners not obeying educator's instructions	33%	33%	28%	6%	0%
18.7	Learners being noisy in their lines	44%	50%	6%	0%	0%

Homework not done, fighting, disorderliness, learners not obeying instructions and the concomitant disrespect, are occurrences that educators have to deal with regularly. Much time and energy go into addressing these. The implication here is that, unless learner discipline and its management improve markedly, a situation where a number of educators have to take leave because of stress could present itself. The quality of education suffers as a result of educator stress, and could lead to a lowering of the levels of commitment to delivering quality education. Constant educator stress could also lead to a breakdown in team spirit amongst staff members.

Systems thus have to be developed to drastically reduce the occurrences of these types of misbehaviour. Where learners, for instance, are disorderly while the teacher is in the classroom, better classroom management skills have to be developed. Where homework is not being done, a plan ensuring that greater numbers complete their tasks has to be devised. Strategies to prevent learners from fighting, as well as encouraging alternate forms of dealing with conflict have to be developed.

Table 4.13 below shows the frequency of educators experiencing disorderliness while there is no teacher in the classroom, and educators not being present when learners line up. Both these areas have been identified (cf 4.3.1.4) as potential causes of poor learner discipline. This becomes a school management issue, as reasons have to be found as to why the educators are not

where they are required to be, displaying poor educator discipline. The answer could be interpreted either as a cause of poor learner discipline, or a consequence thereof.

Table 4.13: Frequency of educator absenteeism from classrooms and lines

NO	How often have you experienced any of the following:	Very often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
18.5	Disorderliness while no teacher in the classroom	61%	11%	28%	0%	0%
18.8	Educators not present when learners line up.	33%	22%	39%	6%	0%

The vast majority of educators (88%, cf. q13, table 4.10, p62) indicated that the impact of poor learner discipline was serious. Frustration, stress, being demotivated and despondency were common responses. Educators also indicated that dealing with poor learner discipline was time consuming and disruptive. One respondent said that it “overloads coping barriers”, while another indicated that it “results in educators not being able to give 100% of your commitment and input”.

Learner discipline thus clearly has a serious impact on educators at Silverlea as they go about curriculum delivery.

4.3.1.3 The management of learner discipline

The questions in this section relate to the management of learner discipline. It asks, amongst others, about rewarding learners who obey the rules, procedures for dealing with conflict, lesson preparation, the school environment, and discipline since the abolition of corporal punishment. The questions and responses follow in Table 4.14

Table 4.14: Managing learner discipline

NO	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
7	Children who regularly obey the rules are rewarded.	17%	39%	17%	11%	16%
8	Maintaining high levels of learner discipline receives high priority at Silverlea.	6%	33%	28%	22%	11%
9	Silverlea has fixed procedures for dealing with conflict.	0%	11%	39%	28%	22%
10	Lesson preparation and planning are crucial elements in maintaining learner discipline	50%	44%	0%	6%	0%
12	Educators are only responsible for disciplining learners from their own classes.	6%	11%	44%	33%	6%
14	The school environment is conducive to teaching and learning.	0%	50%	44%	0%	6%
17	Learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment.	44%	44%	0%	6%	6%

Table 4.14 indicates that 39% of respondents believe that maintaining high levels of learner discipline receives a high priority at Silverlea. 50% believe that that it does not, while 11% is not sure whether learner discipline receives a high priority or not. This statistic seems to indicate that there is not a common way of looking at issues. It suggests that different, possibly undeclared or

unknown, factors come into play when issues are dealt with. Effective communication is needed to ensure that all staff members are aware of where priorities are being placed.

On the question of whether Silverlea has fixed procedures for dealing with conflict, 22% of respondents indicated that they were unsure. 67% either disagreed or strongly disagreed, while only 11% of respondents felt that there are fixed procedures in place. The fact that there is such a vast discrepancy in responses to this question indicates that educators either are not aware of the disciplinary procedures contained in the school's Code of Conduct, that these measures have not been communicated effectively, that the measures in the code of conduct are not being followed, or that Silverlea does, in fact, not have fixed procedures for dealing with conflict.

The vast majority (94%) of educators felt that lesson preparation and planning are vital elements in maintaining learner discipline, while 44% felt that the school environment is not conducive to learning and teaching. For effective teaching and learning to take place, lessons have to be well prepared, and the environment has to be conducive. An environment that is not conducive to learning and teaching will affect learner discipline and thus impact on the education offered.

The abolition of corporal punishment has had a major effect on learner discipline. Whether this effect is real or perceived, 88% of respondents are of the opinion that learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal

punishment. It is not clear whether corporal punishment in itself was an effective means of maintaining discipline, or whether the perceived worsening of learner behaviour is due to educators not receiving adequate training in alternative means of maintaining learner discipline.

One of the means used to punish transgressions is detention. Table 4.15 shows the responses to questions dealing with the effectiveness of detention, and the treatment of transgressors. Questions about the effectiveness of detention as a deterrent, and whether transgressors are handled uniformly are asked in Table 4.15.

Table 4.15 : Detention as a deterrent for poor behaviour

NO	Questions	Yes	No	Not sure
21	In your opinion, is detention an effective deterrent for poor learner behaviour?	39%	22%	39%
22	In your opinion, are transgressors handled in a uniform, consistent way?	6%	61%	33%

Detention class is a central tool in the management of learner discipline at Silverlea. However, more than one third (39%) of the respondents are not sure whether it is effective, while the same number say that it is an effective tool. For detention to be an effective tool it has to be integrated into the discipline strategy of the school in such a way that its effectiveness is unquestioned. Reasons why it is considered ineffective have to be addressed and

rectified. Later when the learners' response to the same question is addressed, some of these issues will be highlighted.

A vital aspect of any discipline strategy is that all learners are treated in a uniform, consistent way. Yet 61% of educator respondents feel that transgressors are not treated in a uniform and consistent way, with only 6% feeling that they are. Thirty three percent (33%) are unsure.

No system of discipline can be successful if transgressors are not treated uniformly and consistently. The implication of not treating transgressors uniformly is that the system of discipline is doomed to failure, as transgressions will be dealt with subjectively and on an *ad hoc* basis. A possible solution to this problem lies in the implementation of, and adherence to, a code of conduct. The next cluster of questions deals with the code of conduct.

4.3.1.4 The code of conduct

The code of conduct is central to the effective management of learner discipline. It tells the reader what the institution considers to be acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and also indicates the sanctions for unacceptable behaviour.

The questions in this section deal with the level of awareness of a code of conduct at Silverlea.

Table 4.16: The code of conduct

NO	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
15	Learners are generally aware that Silverlea has a code of conduct for learners	6%	33%	39%	11%	11%
16	Learners understand the code of conduct and its requirements	0%	17%	39%	28%	17%

Table 4.16 shows that although 39% of respondents think that learners know about Silverlea’s code of conduct, only 17% of them think that the learners are familiar with the contents thereof. More than two thirds (67%) of respondents feel that learners do not know the requirements of the code of conduct. This statistic takes on even greater significance when viewed against the results of question 9 that indicates that 67% of educator respondents feel that there are no fixed procedures for dealing with learner discipline.

A greater awareness and knowledge of the Code of Conduct has to be fostered for the management of learner discipline at Silverlea to be effective.

4.3.1.5 The main causes of disciplinary problems

In an open-ended question educators were asked what, in their experience, the main causes of disciplinary problems at Silverlea are. Most responses fitted into two broad categories, viz. (i) Home and environment, and, (ii) Inconsistencies in administering discipline.

In the category **Home and Environment** educators felt that some learners are exposed to undisciplined home environments where there is very little or no parental involvement or interest in schoolwork. Many learners are exposed to violent lifestyles, and this manifested itself at school. Children also often brought personal issues to school, and did not have the mechanisms to deal with these. Often these home and environmental factors manifested themselves at school in unacceptable behaviour.

Most responses (74%) fell into the category of **inconsistencies on the part of the educators**. Very prominent was the feeling that there was not a common goal. Educators felt that discipline was not being administered consistently, that there was no functional discipline policy, and that learners continually got away with ill discipline. They also felt that unsupervised classes, and educators not being at their lines when required to be there were hot spots for disciplinary problems. Educators not doing their required duties also contributed. Furthermore, not all educators were seen to be enforcing the rules of the

school, and an “atmosphere of discipline” did not prevail. Overfriendliness with learners was offered as another problem area.

In response to the question “From your observation, where or how does poor learner discipline manifest itself at Silverlea”, a virtual match to the main causes of discipline resulted. Educators indicated that unsupervised classes, educators not present when learners lining up, “rough” games in the playground, inconsistencies amongst staff, and dismissal times are when poor learner discipline mainly manifests itself.

4.3.1.6 Improving learner discipline

Responses to the question “How, in your opinion, can learner discipline at Silverlea be improved” placed great emphasis on the role of the educators in maintaining and managing learner discipline. Some of the actual responses are quoted below.

- Teachers must have a common goal – and all must make the effort to work together.
- A functional discipline policy must be implemented.
- The code of conduct must be enforced.
- Learners should be constantly reminded of the rules.
- All teachers must be in their classes, not duplicate work, take money to the office or visit another teacher during teaching time.

- There must be a collective effort from all staff members.
- Teachers should get to the lines promptly.
- The consequences of transgressing should be communicated to the learners, and enforced.
- Educators must be exemplary and consistent in enforcing discipline.
- A proper learning environment should be created.
- Greater parental involvement should be encouraged.
- Learners should be praised for good behaviour.
- Stick to what has been decided.

These responses indicate that educators realise that the system of learner discipline, and its management, rests with them. They accept that their role in learner discipline is key. They also seem to have ready ideas of how learner discipline and its management can be improved.

4.3.1.7 Concluding comments: Educator survey

The educator survey elicited much valuable information, and provided answers to questions around learner discipline at Silverlea. Very striking was the vastly differing perceptions of the current nature of learner discipline and how it is managed. There is no common understanding of what is acceptable behaviour, which leads one to conclude that a clear vision and expectations are not being communicated. A code of conduct exists, but its content has not been

communicated very well. The staff accepts its role as creators and maintainers of learner discipline, but need clear direction in this regard. Educator stress is a by-product of poor learner behaviour, while this behaviour also influences the quality of education offered. The vast majority of the staff struggled with learner discipline, and they feel strongly that learner discipline has deteriorated since the abolition of corporal punishment. This deterioration has had a major impact on educators, causing stress, despondency and frustration.

The main causes of disciplinary problems were laid at the feet of the learners' home environment, as well as inconsistencies amongst educators regarding the implementation of discipline policies. Poor learner discipline, it was indicated, manifested itself when classes were unsupervised, educators not at lines, in the playground and in inconsistencies amongst educators. Many ways of improving learner discipline were given, the main being a shared vision of learner discipline.

4.3.2 Learner survey

As indicated in 4.2.2, the learner survey was conducted amongst the Grade 6 and 7 learners. The findings of these surveys are presented in this section. The findings of the two grades will be transposed so that a comparison can be drawn.

4.3.2.1 Learners' perception of discipline

Table 4.17 below shows that the Grade 6 respondents confined their rating of learner discipline at Silverlea to OK (50%), bad (46%) and very bad (4%). Grade 7 respondents' opinions ranged from excellent (3%) to bad (20%), with the bulk (70%) feeling that discipline is acceptable.

Table 4.17: Learners' perceptions of discipline

NO	Questions	Grade	Excellent	Good	OK	Bad	Very bad
1	Describe learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School.	6	0%	0%	50%	46%	4%
		7	3%	7%	70%	20%	0%

Most learners also feel that they are not always treated fairly when they misbehave, and that the severity of their punishment is not always in keeping with the misdemeanour (cf. table 4.18).

Table 4.18: Learners' perceptions of the fairness of punishment

No	Questions	Grade	Always	Most times	Sometimes	Seldom	Never
2	Do you feel learners are treated fairly when they misbehave?	6	7%	22%	56%	11%	4%
		7	0%	30%	54%	3%	13%
3	Does the punishment normally match the crime?	6	9%	30%	43%	9%	9%
		7	3%	13%	61%	13%	10%

4.3.2.2 Code of conduct

Table 4.19 below shows that although most of the respondents are aware that the school does have a code of conduct for learners, most of them did not know its contents. They were thus not aware of the rules of the school, or the consequences of breaking those rules.

Table 4.19: Learners' opinions of the code of conduct, environment and detention.

No	Question	Grade	Yes	No
4	Are you aware that Silverlea has a code of conduct?	6	74%	26%
		7	70%	30%
5	Do you know what's in the code of conduct?	6	16%	84%
		7	30%	70%
8	Are all children who are guilty of misbehaviour treated the same?	6	15%	85%
		7	7%	93%
9	Do you feel the school environment is conducive to learning?	6	85%	15%
		7	33%	67%
10	Do you feel your classroom environment is conducive to learning?	6	67%	33%
		7	53%	47%
11	Have you ever been sent to detention?	6	59%	41%
		7	50%	50%
12	Do you think detention works?	6	56%	44%
		7	17%	83%

4.3.2.3 The Environment

The environment in which learners learn is very important, in terms of both learning and discipline. The school environment has to be conducive to learning. An environment where learners are not being treated equally will certainly not be conducive to learning. Eighty five percent (85%) of the Grade 6's and only 33% of the Grade 7's viewed their school environment as being conducive to learning.

It is also to note the vast fluctuations as to whether the school and classroom environments are conducive to learning. The learning environment is central to creating a positive discipline environment, yet a significant number of grade 6 and 7 learners feel that their school environment is not a positive one. This perception can be linked to learner ill-discipline.

4.3.2.4 Detention

Detention is an important tool in the management of learner discipline at Silverlea. Of the respondents 59% of Grade 6's and 50% of the Grade 7's had been sent to detention at least once. Yet only 17% of Grade 7's and 56% of Grade 6's see detention as an effective deterrent to poor behaviour (cf. table 4.19 above). The reasons given for this view is mainly the management of detention, as many children simply don't attend when required to, without facing any consequences.

4.3.2.5 Why learners misbehave

Below are listed some of the actual reasons given by learners as to why they misbehave.

- Problems at home;
- No teacher in the classroom;
- Looking for attention;
- Treated unfairly;
- Children do not like the teacher;
- Some teachers are too soft;
- "Sometimes they think the teacher does not treat them like they treat the other children"

These are some of the reasons given by learners, which recur most often, about why learners misbehave. From what the learners are saying, the system of discipline goes beyond merely a set of rules. Fairness and compassion should also be central elements.

4.3.3 Parent survey

As indicated in 4.2.4, parents do not play a direct, hand-on role in managing learner discipline at school, although they do have an essential supporting role to fulfill in the home in support of the school.

Whereas no educators rated learner discipline at Silverlea as either excellent or very good, Table 4.20 below indicates that 13% of parent respondents rated learner discipline as excellent, 25% as very good, and a further 22% as good. Only 3% of parents did not feel positive the learners discipline. The management of discipline met with a similarly positive judgment, although 3% rated it as poor, and 6% as very poor.

Table 4.20: Parents' perceptions of learner discipline and its management

NO	Questions	Excellent	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Not acceptable	Poor	Very poor
1	How do you perceive learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School?	13%	25%	22%	37%	0	3%	0
2	How do you perceive the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School?	9%	22%	32%	28%	0	3%	6%

Discipline plays a big part in parents' choice of school for their children. If the impression of learner discipline amongst the parents of Silverlea is this positive (97% of parents indicated that learner discipline at Silverlea ranges from being acceptable [37%] to excellent [13%]), it may mean that either the disciplining job done by educators is much better than they give themselves credit for, or a positive impression of the school as a whole is being communicated. Either way, parents will continue sending their own children, and recommending others, to Silverlea.

Based on the statistics (cf. table 4.20, p79) the parents' impression of discipline at Silverlea is very positive, contrasting sharply with the views of their children. Parent respondents agreed overwhelmingly (88%,cf. Table 4.21,p80) that learners are dealt with uniformly and fairly, that they are aware of, and understand the code of conduct, and that the school environment is conducive to learning and teaching. They also believe overwhelmingly (96%,cf. Table 4.21, p80) that learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment. Significantly, 65% (cf. Table 4.21, p80) of parent respondents believe that there is a common understanding between staff and parents regarding discipline at Silverlea, while 86% (cf. Table 4.21, p80) of respondents believe that maintaining high levels of discipline receives high priority at Silverlea. A complete questionnaire is attached as Annexure C.

Table 4.21 : Parents' opinions of the management of learner discipline

NO	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
3	Regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school.	21%	55%	18%	6%	0
4	The manner in which behaviour and discipline at school is managed is dependent on the general management skills portrayed at the school.	15%	40%	33%	9%	3%
5	There is a common understanding among staff and parents regarding discipline at Silverlea.	20%	45%	20%	6%	9%
6	Learner discipline impacts on the quality of education offered.	45%	33%	19%	0	3%
7	Learners are dealt with uniformly and fairly when disciplined.	23%	45%	20%	0	12%

8	Parents are aware of, and understand the learner code of conduct.	30%	48%	12%	4%	6%
9	Learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment.	36%	24%	36%	0	4%
10	Maintaining high levels of discipline receives high priority at Silverlea.	36%	50%	4%	4%	6%
11	Parents are regularly consulted regarding learner discipline.	25%	44%	16%	6%	9%
12	At Silverlea, poor learner discipline manifests itself mainly outside the classroom.	13%	41%	25%	6%	15%
13	Educators should only be responsible for disciplining learners from their own class.	10%	19%	42%	29%	0%
14	The school environment at Silverlea is conducive to learning and teaching.	45%	40%	6%	3%	6%

4.3.4 Support staff survey

Three of the five support staff members were present at the meeting to complete the questionnaire. The responses are recorded as crosses rather than percentages in tables 4.22 and 4.23.

Table 4.22 : Support staff perceptions of discipline and its management

N O	Questions	Excellent	Very good	Good	Acceptable	Not acceptable	Poor	Very poor
1	How do you perceive learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School?				X	XX		
2	How do you perceive the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School?			XX X				

There was generally agreement amongst the support staff regarding the different aspects of learner discipline, although they differed when asked their perceptions of learner discipline at Silverlea, as well as on whether the school environment is conducive to learning and teaching. A complete version of the Support Staff Questionnaire is attached as Annexure D.

Table 4.23 : Support staff view of learner discipline at Silverlea

NO	Questions	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
3	Regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school.	xxx				
4	The manner in which behaviour and discipline at school are managed is not dependent on the environment from which pupils come, but rather on the general management skills portrayed at the school.	xxx				
5	There is a common understanding among staff and parents regarding discipline at Silverlea.	xxx				
6	Learner discipline impacts on the quality of education offered.	xxx				
7	Learners are dealt with uniformly and fairly when disciplined.	xxx				
8	Parents are aware of, and understand the learner code of conduct.			xxx		
9	Learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment.	xxx				
10	Maintaining high levels of discipline receives high priority at Silverlea.	xxx				
11	Parents are regularly consulted regarding learner discipline.	xxx				
12	At Silverlea, poor learner discipline manifests itself mainly outside the classroom.	xxx				

13	Educators should only be responsible for disciplining learners from their own class.				XXX	
14	The school environment at Silverlea is conducive to learning and teaching.		X	XX		

Among the responses given by the support staff as the main causes of disciplinary problems at Silverlea, were:

- Teachers not always in their classrooms;
- Children walking around during teaching time;
- Learners disregarding the rules;
- Teachers not always doing playground duty, and
- All teachers not pulling in the same direction.

4.4 Concluding comments

This chapter has explained the collection of data, and presented and analysed that data. By using tables, it has shown respondents' responses to the questionnaires, followed by an analysis. The educators' responses were dealt with in much detail, as they are the ones to implement any discipline rules. Learner discipline, from the educators' perspective, was discussed under the headings:-

- Educators' perceptions of learner discipline;
- The impact of learner discipline on educators;
- The management of learner discipline;
- The code of conduct;

- The main causes of disciplinary problems, and
- Improving learner discipline.

Responses of learners, parents and support staff were also presented and analysed.

Learner discipline, as has been indicated, is a subjective issue. This plays itself out in the many fluctuations in responses to questions regarding discipline. Amongst the staff and learners especially, perceptions fluctuated markedly. The staff and learner perception differed markedly from that of the parent group.

A significant factor drawn from the data is that 67% of learner respondents indicated that they do not know what the requirements of the Code of Conduct are, while 67% of educator respondents indicate that that they feel that there are no fixed procedures for dealing with learner ill-discipline.

The next chapter will summarise the results discussed in this chapter, with the aim of formulating conclusions.

Chapter 5

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter explained the collection of data, before presenting and analyzing that data primarily by means of tables and an accompanying analysis. This chapter will summarise the aforementioned analyses with the aim of presenting conclusions in the following chapter. The summaries will be presented under the same headings that data was presented in chapter 4, viz.

- Perceptions of learner discipline;
- The management of learner discipline ;
- The impact of learner discipline on educators;
- The code of conduct;
- The main causes of disciplinary problems, and
- Improving learner discipline.

5.2 PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

In section 2.6.1 it was pointed out that the term "discipline" is in itself a problematic and subjective concept that has the potential to mean different things to different people. Discipline, it was argued, can be viewed as both punishment, as in detention or corporal punishment, or as an educative process geared towards "*encouraging and promoting appropriate behaviour*" (Squelch and Lemmer, 1995:41).

The varying views of discipline held amongst the various role players of Silverlea bear testimony to the subjectivity and problematic nature of discipline. This is reflected in the wide discrepancy in the way learner discipline is viewed, with 45% of educator respondents finding the current state of learner discipline acceptable, and 55% finding it unacceptable or poor.

The learners themselves had different perceptions of discipline. In their appraisal of the current state of learner discipline at Silverlea, (cf. Table 4.17), the Grade 6's and Grade 7's presented views ranging from excellent to very poor.

Parents presented the most positive view of learner discipline at Silverlea. Even within this positivism, the responses ranged from "acceptable" to "excellent".

The support staff view was split between "acceptable" and "not acceptable".

The data gathered show that the perception of learner discipline at Silverlea differs broadly amongst the respondents. There could be many reasons for the vast discrepancy in the way learner discipline at Silverlea is viewed. The different views are probably the result of discipline being the subjective and problematic concept alluded to earlier, meaning different things to different people. This would explain the range of views within groups of respondents. However, the different views could also be the result of groups of respondents being exposed to different facets of learner discipline. Parents, as a group, may, for instance, be responding from an "outsider" perspective, while the other groups experience learner discipline from the "inside".

There is clearly no dominant perception of learner discipline at Silverlea. Different groups seem to have different expectations regarding learner discipline, and their perception is framed by this expectation. Having scanned the literature for definitions of learner discipline, paragraph 2.5.1 states that for the purposes of this study, "*effective discipline will be seen as the extent to which the desired expectations of individuals, groups and the discipline organisation are perceived as being achieved*". From the data gathered, it is clear that expectations regarding learner discipline are not the same for all groups of respondents, and thus their interpretation of the discipline they see differ. Even within respondent groups there does not seem to be uniform, clearly defined expectations. This is borne out by the data collected, which indicates that 50% of

educator respondents believe there is a common understanding amongst the staff regarding learner discipline, while the other 50% believe that there is no such common understanding.

5.3 THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

Leadership is central to the effective management of learner discipline. Leadership is about influence (Hersey & Blanchard, 1993), and in the management of learner discipline there has to be much positive influence. It is about persuading a group to pursue objectives held by the leader (Gardner, 1988). Thus the leader must have an agenda, and be results orientated (Nanus, 1989). With effective leadership, the management of learner discipline will be effective.

The perceptions of how effectively learner discipline is managed at Silverlea follow a similar pattern to the responses to the perception of learner discipline. The educators feel that this aspect of the school is lacking (cf. table 4.6), while the learners feel that it lacks consistency (cf. table 4.18). The parent respondents are generally positive about the management of discipline (cf. table 4.20), as is the support staff (cf. table 4.22).

Because there is no common understanding regarding learner discipline at Silverlea (cf. table 4.7, as well as paragraph 5.2 above), the management of learner discipline is tinged with inconsistency. This inconsistency is caused by

the differing expectations of the discipline agents (educators), as well as those to be disciplined (learners). Learners may see the way in which they are dealt with as unfair and inconsistent simply because they do not know what is expected of them or what the punishment for particular misdemeanours are. The lack of a uniform system of discipline throughout the school exacerbates this inconsistency.

Table 4.14 indicates that maintaining high levels of learner discipline does not receive high priority. This is felt by 50% of the educators, while only 39% feel that learner discipline does indeed receive high priority. 11% are unsure of the level of priority. In addition, 67% of respondents feel that Silverlea has no fixed procedures in place for dealing with conflict, 11% think there are fixed procedures, while 22% are not sure whether there are fixed procedures or not.

The combination of low priority being given to learner discipline, combined with the lack of a uniform and generally understood system of discipline or fixed procedures for dealing with learner discipline, indicates a lack of effective management of learner discipline – both in the macro and micro sense. This impacts on the learners, who feel overwhelmingly (cf. table 4.19) that learners who break the rules are not treated the uniformly.

The vast majority (88%, cf. table 4.14 no.17) of educator respondents feel that learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment. This view is shared by the parents (cf. table 4.21 no.9), as well as the support

staff (cf. table 4.23 no 9). The learners were not asked about corporal punishment as they had started school post 1995. Since this abolition, there has been very little whole-school strategising to deal with discipline. Educators explored alternative methods individually, but there was no whole-school approach. Emphasis is still placed on the punitive (detention) rather than on developing positive self-discipline.

Detention plays an important role in the management of learner discipline at Silverlea. It is used to punish errant behaviour. Yet only 39% of educators believe that detention is an effective deterrent for poor learner behaviour (cf. table 4.15 no.21), 22% believe that it is not, while 39% are not sure. Only 17% of Grade 7's believe detention is effective, compared to 56% of grade 6's (cf. table 4.19).

Lesson preparation and planning are crucial elements in maintaining learner discipline. 94% of the surveyed educators agree with this statement. Procedures have to be put in place to monitor this central element of learner discipline.

Charlton and David (1993:12) set out guidelines for the overall manager (principal) as well as the managers in the classroom (educators) to note in the management of learner discipline. These guiding principles (*the full list, quoted earlier, is included on page 21, paragraph 2.5.3*) include:

- Good leadership by senior management in consultation with colleagues and sensitive to the opinions of parents and pupils;
- Shared staff policy on academic and behaviour expectations, which are meaningful to pupils and consistently (though not inflexibly) enforced;
- Academic expectations that are high, though not unreasonable;
- An emphasis on the effective use of rewards for good behaviour and good work, rather than the application of punishments;
- High professional standards by staff in terms of planning, setting and marking work and starting and ending lessons on time;
- Classroom management skills that help prevent problem behaviours from arising.

The effective management of discipline can only happen in an environment where there is a uniform, well-understood system of discipline, and where expectations around behaviour, dress and work are understood and accepted by all the relevant role players.

5.4 THE IMPACT OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE ON EDUCATORS

Learner discipline has a huge impact on educators. Where educators function in a well-disciplined environment, they are able to offer more. Educators at Silverlea indicated that learner discipline impacts on the quality of education they offer (94%), as well being a significant contributor to educator stress (88%, cf. table 4.10). Much time has to be spent dealing with errant behaviour,

while frustration, stress, being demotivated and despondent, result from constantly having to deal with unacceptable behaviour. Table 4.12 indicates the frequency of poor discipline. Learners do not seem to be obeying educators' instructions, while fighting is also a frequent occurrence. Learners are noisy in their lines very often. The frustration that builds up because of incomplete homework impacts heavily on educators, as this leads to stunted class progress. It is noted that high rates of disorderliness occurs when there is no teacher in the classroom, or when educators are not present when learners are lining up.

From the research findings, it is clear that learner discipline impacts greatly on the educators. It affects the level of work they are able to offer, as well as being a source of great stress.

5.5 THE CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct is an important tool in the management of learner discipline. It spells out what is acceptable or unacceptable at school, addressing issues like behaviour, dress and general expectations. It also spells out punishment for misdemeanours. The success of a code of conduct is found mainly in communicating the expectations effectively, and applying the procedures.

A minority of educators (39%) felt that learners knew about Silverlea's code of conduct. An even smaller minority (17%) felt that learners understood the code of conduct and its requirements.(cf. table 4.16)

Among the learners, 74% of Grade 6's and 70% of Grade 7's knew of the existence of a code of conduct, but only 16% of grade 6's and 30% of Grade 7's knew what it contained.(cf. table 4.19)

A majority of parent respondents (78%) indicated that they are aware of, and understand the learner code of conduct.

From the research data, it is clear that the code of conduct, which is central in the management of learner discipline, is generally not well understood, or communicated. Very little reference is made to it, and it is not a 'living' document.

The code of conduct has to be communicated to all role players if it is to be effective. With a commonly known and understood code of conduct, all role players will know what to expect and will act accordingly. The issue of learners being dealt with inconsistently will be addressed by a working code of conduct.

5.6 THE MAIN CAUSES OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

The main causes of disciplinary problems evidently have its roots both at home and at school. Both educators and learners, the two groups most affected by disciplinary problems, identified both home and school as main areas of origin.

Educators laid the cause of unacceptable learner discipline at the door of un-disciplined home environments where there is little or no parental involvement. Learners were also often exposed to violence and harshness at home, either “live” or real, or via television and movies. The fallout from learner exposure to this environment was aggressive behaviour, homework not done, withdrawal, etc. Learners were also exposed to varying levels of poverty, and this led to aggressive behaviour relating to low self-esteem and teasing.

Learners also looked to the home as a cause for disciplinary problems. They, however, focused on learners having “problems at home” and “looking for attention”.

The support staff did not look to the home as a cause of disciplinary problems at all.

Educators, learners and support staff all looked towards events at school as causes for learner disciplinary problems. All three groupings pointed to similar causes, citing unsupervised classes and inconsistent administering of disci-

pline. The educators and support staff both felt that the staff as a whole does not share the same goal in terms of discipline. Not all educators, they say, are enforcing the rules. Both groups also pointed out that educators are, on the whole, not performing playground duty, which means that there is no adult, calming presence in the playground.

In addition, educators spoke of there being “no atmosphere of discipline” in the school, while learners said that where they do not like a particular teacher, they tend to misbehave in that class.

The various groupings indicated significant similarities in their views regarding the main causes of learner disciplinary problems at Silverlea. To improve learner discipline, these views have to be addressed.

5.7 IMPROVING LEARNER DISCIPLINE

The educators were the only grouping surveyed with regards to how to improve the problem of learner discipline. The full list of responses is given in paragraph 4.3.1.6. Educators indicated that a common goal regarding learner discipline has to be established and the staff work together to reach this goal. The code of conduct, they said, should be enforced and learners constantly reminded of the rules and what is expected of them. The consequences of transgressing should be understood. Good behaviour, though, should be praised. Educators suggested that teachers should be in their classes, attend

to their lines, and enforce discipline consistently. It was also suggested that educators should be exemplary.

5.8 SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a summary of the data presented and analysed in chapter 4. It provided summaries in six broad sections in preparation for drawing conclusions and making recommendations in the following two chapters.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS and RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, the research data was summarized. This chapter seeks to draw conclusions from those summaries. The objectives of this study will be revisited, after which conclusions, based on the data, will be put forward for each of them. The implications of each of these conclusions will be discussed and, in each instance, recommendations will be made.

6.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research was undertaken to investigate learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School. In pursuit of this goal, the following research objectives were formulated:

- The first objective of the study was to investigate perceptions of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School. To meet this objective the current disciplinary practices at the school were investigated and

described, and the stakeholders (educators, learners, support staff and parents) were surveyed for their perceptions of learner discipline.

- The second objective of the study was **to investigate the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School**. To meet this objective, current practices of managing learner discipline were investigated and described. Educators, learners, support staff and parents were surveyed.
- The third objective was **to investigate the causes of learner disciplinary problems at Silverlea**. Role players' opinions were asked and recorded.
- The fourth research objective was **to investigate the impact of learner discipline on the delivery of quality education at Silverlea**. The views of educators were sought by means of a survey and informal interviews.
- The last of the research objectives was **to make recommendations around learner discipline and its management**. This will be done in the next chapter.

It is around these objectives that the research was undertaken and structured, and thus conclusions will be drawn, and recommendations made, around them.

6.3 PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

The perceptions of the various groups of respondents are important in the light of improving practice. Perception, though, is not necessarily the same as reality. It is, however, a vital part of the existence of any organisation. The conclusions around the perceptions of learner discipline at Silverlea are tabled here. Each group of respondents is dealt with separately.

- No single, generally accepted view of discipline exists at Silverlea. Among the educators, who are the custodians of learner discipline at school, there is no common understanding of what they themselves expect in terms of learner discipline. Impacting factors here may include educators' different views on learner discipline, educators' different experiences of discipline systems at schools their children attend, or the lack of general behaviour expectations at Silverlea against which to measure learner discipline.
- The learners have different perceptions of discipline. This leads one to conclude that they either expect different things, that the experience of discipline is different in Grade 6 and Grade 7, or that there is no uniform set of rules against which to measure discipline.

- The support staff also differs in their perception of learner discipline. Again, this leads one to conclude that there is nothing to measure learner discipline against.
- The parents generally have a good and positive perception of learner discipline at school. The reason for this could be that parents see only the overall picture presented to them, while being unaware of the inner workings of the school.

It is clear, then, that there is no single or common view of discipline at Silverlea. The implications of this fact will be discussed below.

6.3.1 Implications

The implications of a broadly split perception of learner discipline is that introducing change becomes a much more difficult task. Should discipline be discussed by the staff, there is no common understanding of the very thing that is being discussed. Half the staff could suggest that the discussion and improvement is long overdue, while the other half may wonder what the fuss is all about. Should improvement or change be suggested, there is no clear idea of what is to be changed or improved. Where action and change are suggested, the effectiveness of that action may be compromised because the level of commitment needed is not forthcoming from a sizeable portion of the staff that is less than convinced of the need for that action.

If part of the positive view parents have of Silverlea is due to the positive way in which they see learner discipline, the onus is on the school to develop a uniform, sustainable system of discipline that would project this image even more powerfully. This action may meet with some resistance, as the need for it may not be generally recognised.

If the educators are seen as the directors of the system of learner discipline, the learners themselves can be seen as the actors. They are the recipients of the system of discipline. In the absence of a clear script, the actors cannot perform optimally as they do not know what is expected of them. Where the directors are giving dissimilar instructions, the actors become confused and chaos ensues. In the same way, the educators' lack of a common vision regarding discipline leads to a "chaotic" environment. The learners need clear guidelines. They need to know the consequences of actions, and that these consequences will be effected uniformly and fairly.

The parents' view of learner discipline at Silverlea is very favourable. This could very well explain the growth in learner numbers the school has experienced in the last four years. The implication is that learner discipline, in addition to general academic excellence, has to be pitched at a high level to retain the confidence of current and future parents.

6.3.2 Recommendations

- The development of a common understanding of learner discipline is vital to the success of any discipline system at Silverlea. If learner discipline is to be addressed successfully, the entire staff has to share a common understanding of what is expected, what is acceptable and what is unacceptable.
- Learner discipline should be seen as an educative process - developmental rather than punitive. It should be regarded as a *“positive way of encouraging and promoting appropriate behaviour and is more concerned with promoting self-discipline, co-operation, mutual respect and responsibility”* (Squelch & Lemmer, 1995:41).
- A whole-school system of discipline should be developed, so that all learners know what is expected of them as they progress through the years. All other role players in the school community would also know what is expected in terms of learner behaviour, what the rewards and sanctions are, and how the system of discipline works. A culture of discipline would be a positive offshoot of this system.

6.4 THE MANAGEMENT OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

The research leads one to conclude that there is much inconsistency in the management of learner discipline at Silverlea. The following is noted:

- Although a vision and mission statement has been developed, a clear vision and expectations are not being communicated to the staff.
- The mission statement holds that one of the ways of ensuring a high quality education at Silverlea is by “developing procedures to promote and foster positive discipline among learners.” However, no system has yet been put in place to promote and foster positive discipline amongst learners.
- A comprehensive code of conduct detailing what is expected in terms of learner behaviour, and the consequences of transgressing, exists. However, the contents and expectations of this code have not been communicated effectively to either the learners or the educators.
- There is a distinct lack of unity of thought with regards to learner discipline.
- The staff accepts its role as creators of the system of learner discipline. However, it needs clear direction and leadership in this regard.
- The vast majority of the staff struggles with learner discipline. They also feel that learner discipline has deteriorated since the abolition of corporal punishment. Yet no extensive training programme, or uniform system of discipline has been developed.
- The majority of staff members feel they are under stress, and that poor learner discipline is impacting on their ability to give of their best.
- Low priority is given to the development of a whole-school system of learner discipline.

- Lesson planning and preparation is acknowledged as an important part of developing positive discipline. Yet, no effective procedures are in place to ensure that planning and preparation is in fact done.
- The management of detention is not what it should be, thus rendering it less than fully effective.
- Learner disciplinary problems manifest themselves largely when the educator is not present in the classroom, or at the lines.
- There is no school-wide system of rewards for good, positive behaviour.
- Not all educators enforce the rules equally.

The above leads one to conclude that the management of discipline at Silverlea is not very effective.

6.4.1 Implications

The ineffective management of learner discipline has implications for Silverlea.

- One of the most obvious implications of not managing learner discipline effectively is the impact it has on educators. Educators would show signs of excessive stress, or burnout, followed by loss of motivation, absenteeism, a sense of hopelessness and, ultimately, illness. All these have already manifested.
- Educators have indicated that learner ill-discipline impacts on their ability to offer and maintain a high quality of education. Should the man-

agement of discipline not be effective, it would severely affect the quality of education offered by the school.

- In the absence of the effective management of learner discipline, the school could become known in the community as an undisciplined school. This may have the effect of a reduction in new learner enrolments, leading to a reduction in staff, and eventually the downgrading of the school.
- In an undisciplined environment, many learners tend to fall by the wayside. This is especially true of the weaker learners.
- The Code of Conduct, as well as the Mission Statement recognise effective management of learner discipline as central to effective learning. Should the management of this discipline not be effective, it impacts on the ability to have effective schooling.

Learner discipline or, more correctly learner ill-discipline, has to be managed effectively and consistently if learner discipline is to improve. Clear leadership has to be taken in communicating the vision and direction that is to be taken in terms of learner discipline. All role players must know what the aims are, and what their roles are in reaching these aims. Effective alternative positive disciplinary measures then have to be developed and implemented.

6.4.2 Recommendations

The management of discipline at Silverlea has to gain a much greater measure of consistency if it is to be effective. To gain this essential consistency, the following is recommended:

- The vision of a well-disciplined school has to be communicated to all role players unambiguously and passionately. This will serve as motivation to educators, as well as clearly spell out expectations regarding the maintenance of effective learner discipline.
- A system of discipline where the emphasis is on promoting positive learner discipline - rather than the punishment of poor discipline - should be adopted and developed. This requires a shift in mindset away from the current position of concentrating on the punishment of poor behaviour. Learners should be encouraged to behave positively, within the parameters of the school rules. This encouragement may take the form of rewards, praise or acknowledgement.
- The Code of Conduct should become a valued, used document. It should be adapted to reflect the emphasis on positive discipline. Its contents should be communicated to all role players.
- Clear leadership should be given in the management of learner discipline.
- Training educators in ways of managing learner discipline positively should be made part of the school's development programme.
- Whole-school learner discipline should be afforded priority status.

- Learner discipline should not be seen in isolation. It is part of the whole school, and should be an integral part of the whole school development plan.
- Ways of employing a remedial educator and school psychologist or counsellor should be investigated.

6.5 THE MAIN CAUSES OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

The main causes of learners' disciplinary problems are found both at home and at school. The home environment from which the learners are drawn impact on the way they behave – both positively and negatively. It is the negative impact that causes concerns at school.

The school environment also affects learner behaviour. Unsupervised classes and lines, together with the inconsistent administering of discipline, were cited as among the main causes of disciplinary problems.

6.5.1 Implications

Being aware of the main causes of learners' ill discipline means that the problem can now be addressed. Although the school has very little control over the home environments from which the learners are drawn, an awareness of that environment should lead to better managing transgressors. The home envi-

ronment should become a focus area of the school's general communication with parents. Being aware of the home circumstances of the learners also allows the educators to understand the learner better, thus fostering positive discipline.

Awareness of the causes of disciplinary problems at school means that the overall manager, and the entire staff, can address these, thus leading to reducing potential causes. The result should be fewer opportunities for learners to be undisciplined, resulting in better learner discipline generally.

6.5.2 Recommendations

- Although the school does not have any control over the home environments from which learners are drawn, procedures should be put in place to deal with learners who come from troubled homes. A counsellor should be made available for this purpose.
- One of the main causes of disciplinary problems is that educators are not where they should be. This is a management issue, and should be dealt with as such. Classes should be supervised, lines attended, and discipline be administered consistently.
- The hidden or social curriculum should be used consciously when dealing with learner discipline. Educators should respond punctually to bells, be present where duty requires them to be, be consistent in administering dis-

cipline, be prepared at all times, and be compassionate in dealing with learners. This will inevitably send positive messages to the learners.

6.6 THE IMPACT OF LEARNER DISCIPLINE

The impact of learner discipline is seen in increased levels of educator stress, more time spent on discussing discipline matters (in staff meeting, staff room, office, etc), and less time spent discussing academic matters. Much time is spent having to deal with various aspects of learner discipline, time which should be spent teaching and learning.

Educators become more and more frustrated that so much time and emotional energy is taken up dealing with learner discipline. This sometimes leads to an "I give up" attitude, resulting in the educator not performing at optimum levels.

6.6.1 Implications

- Poor and ineffectively managed learner discipline has many implications. Educators who are burnt out or suffering from stress are unlikely to deliver high quality work. This will lead to a lowering of the standards that the school and community have grown accustomed to.
- Absenteeism is likely to increase as educators become demotivated because of the stress and burn out.

- The staff morale is likely to suffer, with cliques and “camps” forming.

6.6.2 Recommendations

- Educators should be trained in ways of dealing with learner discipline effectively.
- Provision should be made for educators to have “time out” or relaxing time.
- A support group should be established to help educators deal with stress.
- Educators should be motivated, encouraged, appreciated and rewarded regularly.

6.7 CONCLUSION

Learner discipline at Silverlea is characterised by inconsistency, a lack of common understanding and goals, and an emphasis on punishment rather than on positive development. There is no uniform, generally accepted and consistently applied system of discipline in place. This situation has to be addressed in a way that complements effective education. A positive, disciplined environment is crucial if effective learning and teaching is to happen consistently. This disciplined environment, and the system of discipline which sustains it, is the creation of the staff of the school.

This study sought to address what effective discipline is, what influences impact on learner discipline, the management of learner discipline, and the im-

pact of learner discipline on learning and teaching. Once these issues had been investigated, recommendations were made. These recommendations are made as a means of improving learner discipline and the way it is managed at Silverlea, with the ultimate aim of improving the delivery of quality education.

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Annexure A

Questionnaire: Educators

This questionnaire is part of research being conducted into the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School. It seeks to elicit the opinions of educators on various issues regarding learner discipline at the school. Questionnaires are anonymous, and will be treated with strict confidentiality. Thank you for your willingness to be part of this study.

1. How do you perceive learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School:

excellent	very good	Good	acceptable	not acceptable	poor	very poor
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2. How do you perceive the management of discipline at Silverlea Primary School?

excellent	very good	Good	acceptable	not acceptable	poor	very poor
-----------	-----------	------	------------	----------------	------	-----------

For questions 3 – 17, please respond by using the following codes.

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure

3. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school.

1 2 3 4 5

4. There is a common understanding amongst the staff regarding learner discipline at Silverlea.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Learner discipline impacts negatively on the quality of education offered.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Children who regularly obey the rules are rewarded.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Maintaining high levels of learner discipline receives high priority at Silverlea
- 1 2 3 4 5
8. Silverlea has fixed procedures for dealing with conflict.
- 1 2 3 4 5
9. Lesson preparation & planning are crucial elements in maintaining learner discipline.
- 1 2 3 4 5
10. At Silverlea, poor learner discipline manifests itself mostly outside of the classroom.
- 1 2 3 4 5
11. Educators are only responsible for disciplining learners from their own classes.
- 1 2 3 4 5
12. Poor learner discipline contributes significantly to educator stress at Silverlea.
- 1 2 3 4 5
13. The school environment is conducive to learning and teaching.
- 1 2 3 4 5
14. Learners are generally aware that Silverlea has a Code of Conduct for Learners.
- 1 2 3 4 5
15. Learners understand the Code of Conduct and its requirements.
- 1 2 3 4 5
16. Learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment.
- 1 2 3 4 5
17. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:
The manner in which behaviour and discipline at school are managed is dependent on the general management skills portrayed at school.

1 2 3 4 5

18. How often have you experienced any of the following:

1	2	3	4	5
Very often	Often	Sometimes	Seldom	Never

18.1 Learners' homework not done
1 2 3 4 5

18.2 Disrespect towards educators
1 2 3 4 5

18.3 Learners fighting
1 2 3 4 5

18.4 Classroom disorderliness while teacher is in classroom
1 2 3 4 5

18.5 Disorderliness while no teacher in classroom.
1 2 3 4 5

18.6 Learners not obeying educators' instructions.
1 2 3 4 5

18.7 Learners being noisy in their lines.
1 2 3 4 5

18.8 Educators not present when learners line up.
1 2 3 4 5

19. Learner discipline at school is a function of:

1 = management only 2 = the entire staff 3 = Mainly management

20. Do you struggle with learner discipline?

Often Sometimes Seldom Never

21. In your opinion, is detention an effective deterrent for poor learner behaviour? **Yes** **No** **Not sure**

22. In your opinion, are transgressors handled in a uniform, consistent way? **Yes** **No** **Not sure**

23. What, in your opinion, are the main causes of disciplinary problems at Silverlea?
-
-
24. From your observation, where or how does poor discipline manifest itself at Silverlea?
-
-
25. How, if at all, does poor learner discipline impact on you as educator?
-
-
26. How do you deal with poor learner discipline? (What measures do you follow?)
-
-
27. How, in your opinion, can learner discipline at Silverlea be improved?
-
-
28. Describe your vision of a well-disciplined Silverlea Primary School.
-
-
29. Any comment / additional information?
-
-

Thank you for your kind cooperation. It really is appreciated.

Annexure B

QUESTIONNAIRE: LEARNERS

These questions will be workshopped with 20 learners (5 groups of 4) from each of Grades 5 - 7. Each grade will be workshopped separately. Questions will be set, discussion will take place in the groups, and groups will the report back. Clarification and more discussion may then follow.

1. Describe learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School.
Excellent good bad very bad
2. Do you feel learners are treated fairly when they misbehave?
Always most times sometimes seldom never
3. Does the punishment normally match the crime?
Always most times sometimes seldom never
4. Are you aware that Silverlea has a Code of Conduct for learners?
Yes No
5. Do you know what's in the Code of Conduct? **Yes No**
6. Why do learners misbehave?

7. What happens to you when you misbehave?

8. Are all children who are guilty of misbehaviour treated the same? **Yes No**

9. Do you feel the school environment is conducive to learning? **Yes No**
Why? _____
10. Do you feel your classroom environment is conducive to learning?
Yes No
Why? _____
11. Have you ever been sent to detention? **Yes No**
12. Do you feel detention works? **Yes No**
Why? _____

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

Annexure C

QUESTIONNAIRE – PARENTS

This questionnaire is being conducted as part of a research project into the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School. Your efforts in completing it and thus contributing to the improvement of the management of learner discipline at Silverlea are appreciated. All information in the questionnaire will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

1. How do you perceive learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School:

excellent very good good acceptable poor very poor

2. How do you perceive the management (the way discipline is dealt with) of discipline at Silverlea Primary School?

excellent very good good acceptable poor very poor

For questions 3 – 14, please respond by using the following codes.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure

3. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school.

1 2 3 4 5

4. There is a common understanding amongst the staff regarding learner discipline at Silverlea.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Learner discipline impacts on the quality of education offered.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Learners are dealt with uniformly and fairly when disciplined.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Parents are aware of, and understand the Learner Code of Conduct.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Learner discipline impacts on the quality of education offered.
- 1 2 3 4 5
9. Maintaining high levels of learner discipline receives high priority at Silverlea.
- 1 2 3 4 5
10. Parents are regularly consulted regarding learner discipline.
- 1 2 3 4 5
11. At Silverlea, poor learner discipline manifests itself mainly outside the classroom.
- 1 2 3 4 5
12. Educators should only be responsible for disciplining learners from their own classes.
- 1 2 3 4 5
13. The school environment at Silverlea is conducive to learning and teaching.
- 1 2 3 4 5
14. Learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment.
- 1 2 3 4 5
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
The manner in which behaviour and discipline at school are managed is dependent on the general management skills portrayed at school.
- 1 2 3 4 5
16. What, in your opinion, are some of the **main causes** of disciplinary problems at Silverlea.
-
17. From your observations, where or how does poor discipline manifest itself (if at all) at Silverlea?
-
18. What, in your opinion, should be done to improve learner discipline at Silverlea.
-

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND COOPERATION

Annexure D

QUESTIONNAIRE – PARENTS

This questionnaire is being conducted as part of a research project into the management of learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School. Your efforts in completing it and thus contributing to the improvement of the management of learner discipline at Silverlea are appreciated. All information in the questionnaire will be treated with the strictest confidentiality.

1. How do you perceive learner discipline at Silverlea Primary School:

excellent very good good acceptable poor very poor

2. How do you perceive the management (the way discipline is dealt with) of discipline at Silverlea Primary School?

excellent very good good acceptable poor very poor

For questions 3 – 14, please respond by using the following codes.				
1	2	3	4	5
Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure

3. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statement:
Regardless of the community served, or the type of pupil who attends the school, the system of discipline is the creation of the staff of the school.

1 2 3 4 5

4. There is a common understanding amongst the staff regarding learner discipline at Silverlea.

1 2 3 4 5

5. Learner discipline impacts on the quality of education offered.

1 2 3 4 5

6. Learners are dealt with uniformly and fairly when disciplined.

1 2 3 4 5

7. Parents are aware of, and understand the Learner Code of Conduct.

1 2 3 4 5

8. Learner discipline impacts on the quality of education offered.

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
9. Maintaining high levels of learner discipline receives high priority at Silverlea.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
10. Parents are regularly consulted regarding learner discipline.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
11. At Silverlea, poor learner discipline manifests itself mainly outside the classroom.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
12. Educators should only be responsible for disciplining learners from their own classes.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
13. The school environment at Silverlea is conducive to learning and teaching.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
14. Learner discipline has worsened since the abolition of corporal punishment.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
15. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?
The manner in which behaviour and discipline at school are managed is dependent on the general management skills portrayed at school.
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
16. What, in your opinion, are some of the **main causes** of disciplinary problems at Silverlea.
-
17. From your observations, where or how does poor discipline manifest itself (if at all) at Silverlea?
-
18. What, in your opinion, should be done to improve learner discipline at Silverlea.
-

THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND COOPERATION