SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND COLLABORATIVE RULE-MAKING:
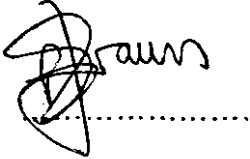
PUPIL PERCEPTIONS

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this dissertation is my own original work and has not in its entirety, or part, been submitted at any university for a degree.

14 November 2006

B.S.STRAUSS   DATE

ABSTRACT

Teachers often complain of a lack of discipline in the school environment. In addition, these breakdowns in discipline become, on occasion, media headlines when violence, bullying, vandalism and intimidation flare up into major incidents. This, coupled with the desire of the national Department of Education (DOE) to encourage teachers to use more co-operative disciplinary methods, has led to this investigation.

This dissertation explores the perceptions of senior secondary pupils around school discipline, with a particular focus on collaborative rule-making. Pupil perceptions were ascertained through a structured interview process. A framework of understanding was established by examining the pupils' interpretation of the meaning of discipline; the state of discipline in their school and recommendations to address problem areas; authority; corporal punishment; power and prefectship; power and non-prefect matrics; prefect versus non-prefect views on discipline; the prefect system; the fairness of school rules; and pupil input into school rules. The understanding gleaned from the pupils' perceptions of these notions established a solid base from which an investigation into collaborative rule-making was launched. Thereafter, the notion of collaborative rule-making, the viability of collaborative rule-making, the advantages and disadvantages of collaborative rule-making and the implementation of collaborative rule-making were examined.

The pupils came out strongly in support of collaborative rule-making and were keen to have an input into the school's disciplinary structures. The potential advantages far outweighed any possible disadvantages. These findings support both Bernstein's (1996) principle of pupil participation and the premise of pupil input into Codes of Conduct as detailed by the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996).

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ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMINOLOGY

Acronyms and Abbreviations:

DES   Department of Education and Science (England and Wales)

DOE   Department of Education (South Africa)

MEC   Member of the Executive Council

PAT   Professional Association of Teachers (United Kingdom)

SRF   Students Representative Forum

WCED Western Cape Education Department

Terminology:

Pupil/Learner: While the current South African terminology refers to the 'learner', most of the literature refers to the 'pupil' and a decision was made to use the term 'pupil' and not 'learner'.

Teacher/Educator: The same argument applies here, and again a decision was made to use the term 'teacher' and not 'educator'.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

A sound educational system that produces well-qualified and self-disciplined pupils is crucial to any country. This requires a disciplined learning environment where all the stakeholders are working together and not against one another. One issue which can impact on the quality of learning is discipline, or the lack thereof, in the school. This issue is of concern to teachers, educational authorities, parents and the wider public in South Africa and in many other countries.

In South Africa, in 2005, only 68% of matriculation pupils passed their final examinations and, as a proportion of the 2003 grade 10 class, this was only 32% (United Nations Integrated Regional Information Networks: 2006). These are alarming statistics and investigation is needed to ascertain the causes of these poor results. Bush & Anderson (2003: 96) make the point that many South African schools do not have a strong culture of learning and teaching. The reasons for this are complex; however, disciplinary issues are definitely part of the problem. Evidence of a breakdown in teacher authority and a lack of pupil punctuality and truancy are apparent (Moloi, 2002: xv). This finding is reinforced by Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000: 34) who stress that the lack of discipline in South African secondary schools is a significant issue.

The breakdown of school discipline is an international concern and England, Wales and America are all experiencing this problem in their schools. In England and Wales a major government enquiry into school discipline was initiated as a result of concerns surrounding school discipline (Department of Education and Science (DES): 1989). Concerns in America have been expressed though the Gallup Poll which identified school discipline as one of the major problems in education throughout the period from 1969 to 1999 (Rose & Gallup: 1999).

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It is important to understand the causes of this poor discipline and many reasons have been put forward. These include a variety of socio-economic issues, inadequately trained teachers, and, in the case of South Africa, the unique history of our country. It is also interesting and concerning to note the different perceptions of the main stakeholders - the teachers, pupils and parents. All of these are inclined to place the blame for poor behaviour on one of the other parties. It is thus crucial that all the parties should listen to one another and be aware of the differing viewpoints.

Various schools of thought exist when it comes to addressing disciplinary issues. One approach is to tighten up and increase the severity of consequences; another is to adopt a more participative approach and involve the pupils in rule-making. Both can be taken to extremes which are unhealthy, and unlikely to produce the desired result. Prevention is always better than cure and schools should do their best to be proactive and have policies in place for all the role-players. These policies should reflect the best courses of action for teachers, pupils and parents in the light of developing and maintaining sound school discipline.

Competent teachers with good classroom management skills are crucial to ensuring sound discipline and, with this in place, a recommendation would be to incorporate some degree of pupil involvement in the discipline process. Collaborative rule-making, in which pupils and teachers draw up and agree on rules together, is one possible means of reducing disciplinary problems. This may help to lessen the differences in perception between the various parties and thus alleviate the 'teacher versus pupil' disciplinary scenario that so often plays itself out. It may also contribute to pupils becoming citizens who, through experiencing 'democracy in action', are able to play a more constructive role in our new democracy. The Department of Education actually stresses in its 'Rights and Responsibilities of Parents, Learners and Public Schools' that teachers

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should be trained in co-operative discipline methods (South Africa: n.d.). In addition, the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) stipulates that pupils should have an input into school Codes of Conduct.

Davidoff & Lazarus (1997: 3) make a valid comment: "The current challenge in South Africa is the building of a truly humane society – a society which respects the rights of the individual, a society which unites rather than divides, and which enables its citizens to participate meaningfully and creatively in its ongoing development". Schools which contribute to the country through competent teaching and learning and which produce self-disciplined individuals with an understanding of the true meaning and value of democracy will be rising to this challenge.

1.2. Definitions of discipline and actions which constitute a lack of discipline

It is first of all necessary to ascertain what is meant by discipline, and a lack of discipline; thus some definitions and specific actions will be examined.

Discipline, in general, refers to prevention, control and remediation. As a noun, discipline can be the 'strict training, or the enforcing of rules intended to produce ordered or controlled behaviour in oneself or others'; 'the ordered behaviour resulting from this' or 'punishment designed to create obedience' (Chambers, 1996: 380). As a verb it is 'to train or force, oneself or others, to behave in an ordered and controlled way' or 'to punish someone' (Chambers, 1996: 380). These definitions certainly highlight the 'control' aspect of discipline, whether it is externally imposed or internally motivated.

In the classroom, what actions would constitute, for teachers, a lack of discipline? The *Discipline in Schools* report (1989) which was the result of a major

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government enquiry into school discipline in England and Wales, defined the following actions as constituting a lack of discipline in their survey:

- talking out of turn;
- calculated idleness or work avoidance;
- hindering other pupils;
- not being punctual;
- making unnecessary non-verbal noise;
- persistently infringing class or school rules;
- getting out of seat without permission;
- verbal abuse towards other pupils;
- general rowdiness, horseplay or mucking about;
- cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses;
- physical aggression towards other pupils;
- verbal abuse towards teacher;
- physical destructiveness; and
- physical aggression towards you (the teacher) (DES, 1989: 224).

While the above categories of behaviour, or actions, can be regarded as 'definitions' of poor discipline, a more in-depth investigation into the meaning of 'discipline', 'control' and 'power' within the theoretical framework will be found in Chapter Two.

1.3 Purpose of the study

School discipline, or the lack thereof, is a topic that regularly features in the media. This is usually within the context of a newsworthy incident relating to a breakdown of discipline. Teachers, parents, educational authorities, politicians and most pupils want the school to be an environment where sound learning takes place. If a lack of discipline impedes this, then this aspect of school life is certainly worth examining. Concerns about school discipline were discussed in the South African National Assembly on 10 October 2006.

From a personal perspective, I am interested in the dynamics of school discipline. Why is it that within one school some teachers seldom, if ever, have disciplinary problems in their classes whilst other teachers continually seem to struggle? Why do some schools operate in a disciplined fashion and others, which may be nearby, and serve the same community, do not? What interactions between the teacher and pupil will result in a disciplined environment where the pupils still feel that they have an input and are part of the process as opposed to being rigidly controlled?

One possible means of alleviating disciplinary issues is that of collaborative rule-making. This is in line with the move in South African schools, and society, towards a more meaningful democracy. The purpose of this study is thus to examine pupil perspectives around the theory and practicalities underpinning school discipline. Their understanding of the disciplinary framework and structures within their own school will be examined. The viability of collaborative rule-making as a possible means of alleviating disciplinary issues will be an essential part of the study.

1.4 Limitations of the study

This study is being carried out in only one school and potential limitations are presented by the nature and the context of that school, namely:

- it is a high school;
- it is a single sex school - boys only; and
- it is a 'wealthy' independent school.

This is certainly not a 'normal' government school. However, South Africa has such a diversity of schools that it would, in fact, be difficult to define a 'normal' school. These 'limitations', or characteristics particular to this school, should not detract from the study – which is to examine pupil perspectives around school

discipline with a focus on collaborative rule-making. South Africa has a vast range of schools and the findings in one type of school may be of relevance to other types as well – this is for further research to explore.

1.5 Organisation of the dissertation

This dissertation is organized as follows: Chapter One outlines the purpose of the study; Chapter Two presents a review of the relevant literature; Chapter Three contains the methodology; Chapter Four presents the interpretation of the data from the research process; and Chapter Five offers the findings and conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter One set out the key issue to be addressed in this dissertation: pupil perspectives around the school disciplinary framework and structures with a focus on collaborative rule-making. The present chapter provides an in-depth setting of the context and issues surrounding school disciplinary issues, and more specifically collaborative rule-making, through a review of the relevant literature.

The meaning of 'discipline', 'control' and 'power' is investigated through examining the thoughts of Foucault (1979), Dewey (1915, 1916) and Bernstein (1971, 1996). Different schools of thought are advocated by Dewey (1915, 1916) and Foucault (1979). Bernstein (1971, 1996) adds value to these thoughts by examining the more intricate functioning of the relationships between different categories through his use of classification and framing. The theoretical framework for the study is grounded in the theories of these three writers.

The move away from corporal punishment is an important process in the whole debate around 'discipline', 'control' and 'power'. Punishments imposed by judicial authorities, over the past two hundred and fifty years, have moved from severe physical damage to the body to a loss of freedom (Foucault, 1979: 11). The changes in punishments in schools have tended to mirror this.

International and local issues surrounding school discipline are reviewed and reveal concern from educational authorities. The causes of poor discipline have been examined in an attempt to understand pupil, teacher and parent perspectives. This allows for greater insight when attempting to find solutions which may alleviate some of the disciplinary issues. Many references in the literature indicate a desire, or need, for pupils to have a greater input into the

manner in which they are governed (Mabeba & Prinsloo: 2000; Schimmel: 2003; Effrat & Schimmel: 2003). This issue of pupil participation in school governance emerges from the theoretical framework.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

Education is not concerned only with the transfer of knowledge; it is a far more complex arrangement. This thesis has the notion of 'school discipline', and more specifically 'collaborative rule-making', as its focus. These notions cannot, however, be seen in isolation, and need to be placed within a broader educational framework. The theoretical framework will be developed through examining the ideas and theories expressed by Dewey (1915, 1916); Foucault (1979) and Bernstein (1971, 1996).

Two schools of thought, seemingly, surround the interpretation of the 'disciplined classroom'. Foucault (1979) and Dewey (1915, 1916), amongst others, express different views on the meaning of 'discipline' and 'control' within society (on a macro level), and in the classroom, (on a micro level).

One school of thought suggests that discipline lies within the hands of the individual - it is largely based within the realm of self-discipline. Dewey, in fact, offers a very clear idea of how he views discipline: "A person who is trained to consider his actions, to undertake them deliberately, is in so far forth disciplined. Add to this ability a power to endure in an intelligently chosen course in the face of distraction, confusion, and difficulty, and you have the essence of discipline" (Dewey, 1916: 129). Here we have a person who can consider his/her actions, decide on a course of action and then persist with this when faced with obstacles – certainly a 'disciplined' individual. The individual in this scenario is attempting to take charge of his/her own destiny and this form of discipline would seem to imply some form of self-determination.

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The other school of thought implies that discipline exists to control and manipulate individuals through the use of power (Foucault, 1979). In this scenario, discipline is externally imposed: "Thus discipline produces subjected and practised bodies, 'docile' bodies'" (Foucault, 1979: 138). Foucault draws a parallel between a prison, which exists to 'retrain and render docile', and a strict school (Foucault, 1979: 233). Furlong (1993: 11) argues in the same vein that power within educational institutions is used to 'shape' pupils, and not merely to attain certain behaviours. The use of this power impacts on a person's humanity through regarding people as objects (Foucault, 1979: 170). It thus becomes easy to impose cruel and unfair conditions and punishments on those within the locus of control.

Thus we have the two notions: one that discipline is enabling and within the hands of the individual, and the other that discipline is externally imposed and implies subservience (Covaleskie, 1994: 6). Which is the 'right' form of discipline that a teacher should attempt to inculcate within the classroom? There are those who argue that the notion of control, through imposed discipline, is detrimental to the educational process: "Control, externally applied, devoid of moral or logical force, upon students, may not only impede the improvement of individuals and their community; it frequently interferes with the effectiveness of the educational project of schools" (Slee, 1995: 24). Slee argues further that discipline aids teaching whereas control implies conflict and disagreement (Slee, 1995: 28). Wilson (1971: 77, cited in Slee, 1995: 27) also comes out strongly in favour of discipline over control: "Both discipline and control are forms of order, but the order in each case is of a logically different kind. In the former case, the order in a 'disciplined' activity is achieved by virtue of reasons implicit in, or for the sake of values intrinsic to, the activity itself. In the latter case, the order of a 'controlled' activity or sequence of events is achieved for reasons unconnected with, or for values extrinsic to, the activity. Thus 'control' is a way of ordering things which is considered necessary for getting something done. By contrast, a discipline is the form of logical and evaluative order which must be learned if one is to understand

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what is involved in doing something". Control, exercised by teachers who take on the impersonal power of their organizations, often results in pupils who harbour feelings of powerlessness and resentment (Wright, 1993: 4). Therefore discipline which is self-directed would seem to be far more effective than externally imposed control (Dewey: 1916; Slee: 1995; Wright: 1993).

The issues of power and control have also been addressed in the writings of Bernstein (1971, 1996). He chose to examine and clarify the relationships between educational codes and the structures of power and social control within the educational environment (Bernstein, 1971: 225). Firstly, he establishes that power creates divisions between different groups and thus operates on the basis of the relationships between different groupings, be they age, race, gender etc. (Bernstein, 1996: 19). In schools which operate a prefect system, this division becomes apparent as soon as the prefects are announced and become 'different' from the rest of their peer group. The concept of 'classification' is used to examine and describe the relationships between groupings or categories (Bernstein, 1971: 205, 1996: 20). The degree of insulation between the groupings determines whether the classifications are strong or weak (Bernstein, 1996: 21). In schools where prefects are given their own separate facilities there will be a stronger classification than if they continue to share the same facilities. Foucault (1979) in his description of the French penal system would certainly have envisaged very strong classifications, as the warders and prisoners would have been two entirely separate groupings. Thus classifications, whatever their strength, establish the power relations between different groups.

Control establishes types of communication relevant to the different groupings (Bernstein, 1996: 19). Framing analyses these types of communication: "framing is about who controls what" (Bernstein, 1996: 27). The nature of the message refers to the "selection, sequence, pacing, criteria and social base" (Bernstein, 1996: 27). Where framing is strong, the person or institution sending the message has control over the manner in which the message is transmitted

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(Bernstein, 1971: 206, 1996: 27). For example, with strong framing, the principal stands up in assembly and announces a new rule to the school – he/she is in control, has the attention of the pupils, and there is no debate. Where the framing is weak the person or institution receiving the message has more control over the message. For example, with weaker framing, the principal proposes a new rule but the Students Representative Forum (SRF), or similar student body, debates this and responds with recommendations.

Bernstein (1971: 225) is of the opinion that the changing nature of society is driving a movement towards weak classification and weak framing. He argues, albeit in a gender-biased manner, that the nineteenth century needed a "submissive and inflexible man" whereas the late twentieth century needs a "conforming but flexible man" (Bernstein, 1971: 225). In addition, he argues that there is also a crisis in society's structures of power and principles of control, and this weakening of classifications and framing is an attempt to change the status quo (Bernstein, 1971: 226). This notion of the changing nature of society is evident in the move towards more democratic structures in education which are elaborated further in this review.

Bernstein (1971: 240) does point out that where categories are mixed there are greater opportunities for pupils to have some degree of self-governance and to have an input into teacher/school management decisions. Bernstein (1996: 7) sets out his model for an effective democracy within the school environment as follows:

Table 1 Pedagogic Rights, Conditions and Levels (Bernstein, 1996 :7)

Rights	Conditions	Levels
Enhancement	Confidence	Individual
Inclusion	Communitas	Social
Participation	Civic Discourse	Political

The first right of enhancement means that the individual should have access to critical understanding and therefore new opportunities should be available to that person (Bernstein, 1996: 6). The second right refers to the social, personal, intellectual and cultural inclusion of the individual into the school community but, most importantly, without losing his or her own identity (Bernstein, 1996: 7). The third right is the right to participate in the operations whereby order is managed within the school environment (Bernstein, 1996: 7). This right of pupil participation receives support from Mabeba & Prinsloo (2000); Verkuyten (2002); Schimmel (2003) and Effrat & Schimmel (2003). This would also go some way towards the suggestion that the challenge in South African education is for educational leaders to move away from bureaucracies based on constraint and control and towards an environment that focuses on results and accountability (Calitz, 2002: 16).

The history of corporal punishment is firmly positioned within the concepts of power, control and discipline. The abolition of corporal punishment in schools in, for example, England 1986 (Farrell, 2006: 29); Western Australia 1987 (Farrell, 2006: 4); South Africa 1996 (Morrell, 2001: 292) and Canada 2004 (Farrell, 2006: 9) within recent years is an important aspect of the changing philosophy of discipline.

2.3 The move away from corporal punishment

There has been much heated debate about the merits of corporal punishment in schools, over the years, by teachers, the public and politicians. Some have argued that corporal punishment sets a bad example and establishes a model of violent conflict resolution; others have argued that it establishes boundaries and is not harmful (Slee, 1995: 33).

The 1990s in South Africa saw the fall of apartheid and a strong new focus on human rights, which were entrenched in the new constitution (Morrell, 2001:

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292). With this change, the issue of corporal punishment came under the spotlight. Corporal punishment was removed as an option in South African schools in 1996, based on the understanding that it was an infringement of an individual's human rights (Morrell, 2001: 292). This change was in line with what had happened in many other countries such as England and Australia.

Foucault (1979) takes us through the process of this change based on his understanding of a sequence of events over the past two hundred and fifty years. Firstly, punishment was removed from the public eye (Foucault, 1979: 7). Secondly, the target of punishment shifted from the body to the soul: "The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it, or to make it work, it is in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded as a right and as property" (Foucault, 1979: 11). Thirdly, he outlines how the notion of 'crime' has changed: " Certainly the 'crimes' and 'offenses' on which judgement is passed are juridical objects defined by the code, but judgement is also passed on the passions, instincts, anomalies, infirmities, maladjustments, effects of environment or heredity" (Foucault, 1979: 17). Lastly, he points out how the act of judgement has changed: "The whole penal operation has taken on extra-juridical elements and personnel" (Foucault, 1979: 22). These extra elements are the psychiatric, psychological and educational experts, amongst others, who may give advice and opinion so as to assist the judges in their decisions (Foucault, 1979: 21).

The abolition of corporal punishment came about through an understanding that it violated human rights. The authorities attempted to fill the space left by the removal of corporal punishment by introducing greater notions of co-operative democracy into schools (Morrell, 2001: 292). This was to be achieved by introducing codes of conduct and by involving parents to a greater degree (Morrell, 2001: 292).

However, despite this new philosophy, little, in reality, has changed. Instead of moving towards more democratic methods of governance, schools merely

replaced corporal punishment with other types of punishment and treatment. Slee (1995: 37) sums it up well: "We move from the theatre of the cane at the front of the room or the private corporal punishment ceremony in the seclusion of the headmaster's office, to token reward-based economies, to contingency contracting, to banishment, to referral to therapeutic centres, to 'whole school' approaches, to medicalization and the classification of indiscipline as sickness". This description ties in with what Foucault (1979) had so aptly described – the punishment has moved from the body to the soul and along with this from a public spectacle to a far more private arrangement.

Through these other punishments, or methods of handling disciplinary issues, the old power relationships are maintained (Slee, 1995: 34). In many instances medical reasons are provided to explain poor behaviour (Furlong, 1993: 7). For example, 'attention deficit disorder' is often used as a justification for poor behaviour and Ritalin may be prescribed for concentration problems. Thus, although there appears to be a new philosophy in dealing with disciplinary issues, there has in fact been little movement from the authoritarian control previously in place (Slee, 1995: 33).

While the nature of the punishments has changed, there is nevertheless still concern about a lack of discipline in schools and thoughts on this will now be examined.

2.4 Current concerns about discipline in schools

These will be examined from both an international and a local perspective.

2.4.1 International perspective

Many Western countries have been expressing concern about school discipline. Media coverage and complaints from teacher organisations have often

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highlighted serious incidents (DES, 1989: 54). This has resulted in extensive research to analyse the reality and the extent of the problems (DES: 1989; Munn et al: 2004; Mabeba & Prinsloo: 2000).

In the United States of America great concern has been expressed about the lack of discipline in its schools. The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the public's attitude toward the public schools is conducted on an annual basis – the 36th poll was published in September 2004. A central theme of these polls has been the identification of the most pressing educational problem with which public schools must deal. The Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup polls have detailed the responses to this question as follows:

- from 1969 to 1985 a lack of discipline came up first each time, except on one occasion (Rose & Gallup: 1999);
- from 1986 to 1998 either drug abuse, a lack of financial support or a lack of discipline topped the list (Rose & Gallup: 1999);
- in 1999 a lack of discipline was again the top problem (Rose & Gallup: 1999); and
- from 2000 to 2004 a lack of financial support for the school took over as the major concern (Rose & Gallup et al: 2004).

A lack of discipline has, however, remained entrenched as one of the most serious issues facing schools over the whole 36-year period that this survey has been operating.

The question of whether disciplinary issues are getting worse is usually hard to answer objectively as it is difficult to measure and involves subjective perceptions. However, the independent research group of the Scottish Executive Education Department conducted a survey of secondary teachers in 1990, 1996 and 2004, using the same questions and the same schools. One of the aims of the survey was to compare disciplinary matters over time. The findings of this research were that the percentage of secondary teachers who saw discipline as a serious or very serious concern was:

- 36% in 1990;
- 34% in 1996; and
- 59% in 2004 (Munn et al, 2004: 6).

The substantial increase between 1996 and 2004 does lend weight to the argument that disciplinary issues are a growing concern for educational authorities.

In England and Wales the Professional Association of Teachers (PAT) expressed a serious concern about school discipline to the government in 1987. Many teachers believed indiscipline was on the increase and a number of teachers had been assaulted by pupils. The PAT requested that the government establish a committee of enquiry into school discipline. In 1988 this enquiry was set up, and the appropriately-named *Discipline in Schools* report (1989) was produced. It was placed under the leadership of Lord Elton and is therefore also known as the 'Elton Report'. This report is one of the most comprehensive enquiries ever made into disciplinary issues and is thus an important component of any such research.

The *Discipline in Schools* report (1989) obtained responses from 3500 teachers in 220 primary schools and 250 secondary schools concerning disciplinary issues. The responses indicated that major disciplinary incidents, such as attacks on teachers, were relatively rare but were widely reported in the press. The major concern expressed by teachers was the continuous incidence of minor discipline problems. These included:

- talking out of turn;
- hindering other pupils;
- making unnecessary (non-verbal) noise;
- calculated idleness or work avoidance;
- showing lack of concern for others;
- unruliness while waiting;
- running in the corridors;
- verbal abuse towards other pupils;

- general rowdiness;
- cheeky or impertinent remarks or responses; and
- physical aggression towards other pupils (DES, 1989: 61-62).

Teachers found the cumulative effect of dealing with these issues on a daily basis to be tiring and this led to stress and teacher burnout. Only 10% of primary school educators and 16% of secondary teachers thought that the disciplinary problems in their school were serious (DES, 1989: 62). These percentages were higher where teachers taught in 'economically disadvantaged areas' or where pupils were of 'below average' abilities (DES, 1989: 62). These figures are substantially lower than those reported in the Scottish survey (Munn et al, 2004: 6).

Despite this comprehensive investigation and the subsequent recommendations, concern is still expressed about discipline in the English schools. This is illustrated by the following statement, made several years after the *Discipline in Schools* report (1989): "Teachers, political leaders and the public have never been more concerned about the behaviour of children in schools. There are almost daily newspaper reports of assaults against teachers and demands for action" (Lund, 1996: 1).

Having explored the international perspective surrounding school discipline, it is useful to examine the South African context and note the similarities and differences that this will expose.

2.4.2 South Africa

Educational authorities are both aware of, and concerned about, the regular
violence
disciplinary problems in many of South Africa's schools: "Daily reports appear in the written and electronic media about high levels of violence, physical and sexual abuse and gang activities. This impacts negatively on education in

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general and on what happens in the school in particular" (Western Cape Education Department (WCED), 2003: 15).

Many of the disciplinary issues in schools are a reflection of the community in which the school is situated and, to take this a step further, a reflection of the political turmoil and injustices that were present in the apartheid system. During the struggle against apartheid there was a definite move to resist authority and this has damaged many relationships in the community – for example, between teacher and pupil and teacher and principal (McLennan & Thurlow, 2003: 1). This is illustrated by Vally (1999: 1): "The high level of violence in our schools reflects a complicated combination of past history and recent stresses - on individual, school, and community levels - in a society marked by the deep inequities and massive uncertainty and change within school operations".

Examples of media headlines, concerning the breakdown in school discipline, read as follows:

- 'Anger and fear cut deep at high school' (Smith, 2005: 3);
- 'Abuse at school tops list of complaints to education call centre' (Hartley, 2005: 4);
- 'Teachers scared to go to class – 25% of Cape schools unsafe' (Kassiem, 2005: 1);
- 'W Cape seeking ways to make schools safer' (Keating, 2005: 2);
- 'High schools battle drug scourge' (Christians, 2005: 1);
- 'Restore discipline, teachers plead' (Anon, 2006: 6);
- 'Pandor wants drug testing in SA schools' (Quintal, 2006: 1);
- 'We all have a duty to make schools safer' (Dugmore, 2006: 17);
- 'Catastrophe in our schools' (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 208); and
- 'Stop the rot in schools' (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 12).

These articles highlight the conflict between teachers and pupils and in many cases teachers are scared and unable to carry out their teaching duties

effectively. Whilst some of these articles mention the impact of gangs and other external criminal elements, there is also a strong concern about an internal lack of discipline. A South African Democratic Teachers Union representative commented that the threat from inside the classroom, namely pupils, is greater than the threat from external sources (Kassiem, 2005: 1).

School discipline is currently a very newsworthy item and there are almost daily reports in newspapers and magazines about this. The *You* magazine, a widely-read weekly magazine in South Africa, ran two major articles about this over two consecutive weeks (26 October 2006 and 2 November 2006). Damning statements are made, such as: "South African schools are a disaster. Discipline has long since flown out of the window, drugs and violence are the order of the day and teachers are leaving the profession in tens of thousands" (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 208). Paul Colditz, chairman of the Federation of Governing Bodies of South Africa, stated "learners are becoming increasingly harder to control" (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 209). Naledi Pandor, the national Minister of Education, made the point that poor quality education, which is affected by poor discipline along with other issues, is the biggest challenge facing South Africa (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 15).

Authorities appear to be taking a firmer stance. Pandor, the national Minister of Education, is investigating a potential change in the law to allow schools to conduct their own weapons and drug raids and for pupils to be subject to random drug tests (Fitzpatrick, 2006: 13; Quintal, 2006: 1). Cameron Dugmore, the Western Cape Education Member of the Executive Council (MEC), recently wrote that the following are non-negotiable: "Tough love in the home; tough stance by the government; tough love and Codes of Conduct in schools" (Dugmore, 2006: 17). While pupils have rights they also have responsibilities and getting this balance correct is proving to be difficult.

To gain a more comprehensive understanding of disciplinary issues, it is crucial that the causes of poor discipline are examined. This will provide information on the attitudes of the different role players.

2.5 Causes of poor discipline

It is interesting to note that studies examining reasons for poor school behaviour from three perspectives, namely teacher, pupil and parent, show discordance in the attribution of the causes of this poor behaviour. Miller et al (2000: 88) points out the conflict this can cause: "varying attributions for the origins of difficult behaviour have the power to exacerbate, rather than reduce, tensions between the different parties..." Getting the various parties to understand other viewpoints is thus crucial in finding a way to move forward.

Teachers are an important group and their attributions need to be examined.

2.5.1 Teacher attributions:

Teacher attribution for disciplinary issues has been widely researched. The findings place the causes for this behaviour very firmly on factors outside of the school (Van Wyk, 2001: 198; Munn et al, 2004: 3). Some teachers blame changes in society which include ideas such as:

- there is a lack of automatic respect for authority;
- there is a greater readiness to challenge adults;
- the existence of a drug culture which meant some children live very chaotic lives; and
- an awareness of rights without a corresponding awareness of responsibilities (Munn et al, 2004: 3).

Teachers did, however, also stress that they were not trained to deal with difficult issues (Munn et al, 2004: 4). In addition teachers pointed out that schools themselves were at fault, on occasion, for not following through on their own policies (Munn et al, 2004: 4).

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A study in Greece did, however, attribute pupil indiscipline more to the school environment and teacher factors than family and pupil factors (Polou & Norwich, 2000: 569). If this is true, then teachers have enormous potential to influence and change pupil behaviour - more than many teachers would think possible.

Having examined teacher attributions, the attributions of a major stakeholder, the pupil, will now be examined.

2.5.2 Pupil attributions:

Pupils have their own opinions as to why there are lapses in discipline. Research has attributed misbehaviour at school to the following causes, in order of strength:

- 'fairness of teachers' actions' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of a teacher acting in an unfair manner.
- 'pupil vulnerability' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of pupils being vulnerable to their own emotional issues: peer conflicts or an inability to cope with the academic expectations.
- 'strictness of the classroom regime' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of the manner in which the teacher manages the classroom and the academic load.
- 'adverse family circumstances' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of family or home shortcomings. For example: substance abuse problems; poor parenting skills or financial problems (Miller et al, 2000: 90).

Pupils are thus inclined to blame elements which, to some degree, are out of their control.

Having examined pupil attributions it is of benefit to gain an understanding of how parents perceive these attributions.

2.5.3 Parent Attributions:

Parents attributed learner misbehaviour at school to the following causes, in order of strength:

- 'fairness of teachers' actions' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of teachers acting in a manner which the pupils interpreted as being unfair. For example: favouritism; rudeness; inconsistency and poor listening skills.
- 'pupil vulnerability to peer influences and adverse family circumstances' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of a negative peer influence and a difficult home environment. For example: a pupil falls in with a bad crowd or becomes part of a gang; there is parental or adult strife in the home, or there is hardship in the home due to parental unemployment.
- 'differentiation of classroom demands and expectations' – this related to poor pupil behaviour as a consequence of: an overly strict classroom environment; the pupil being unable to cope with the required volume and quality of the work, which may be excessive; the pupil needing more one-on-one assistance in the classroom. (Miller et al, 2002: 37).

These findings tend to be more in line with pupil perceptions than teacher perceptions.

Having examined the perceptions of causes of poor discipline of the three main role players, it is important to gain an understanding of the key aspects of effective discipline.

2.6 Key aspects of effective discipline

Two of the essential attributes that a teacher needs in terms of maintaining discipline are good group and individual management skills (DES, 1989: 67). These skills are reflected in teachers who:

- *know their pupils on an individual level;*
- ensure their lessons are well planned and interesting;
- are flexible and able to handle interruptions comfortably;
- are aware of what is happening in their class at all times;
- are aware of their own behaviour and what messages it is sending out;
- treat the pupils with the same politeness and respect that they expect to be treated with;
- accentuate the positive;
- clarify, and explain the rationale for classroom rules at the first lesson;
- *use punishments, or reprimands, sparingly and appropriately; and*
- evaluate, and reflect on, their own performance. (DES, 1989: 71-72).

It is also important that teachers try to recognise and understand pupils as individuals. Pomeroy (1999) conducted research into the views of excluded (expelled) pupils concerning teacher-pupil relationships. These views are most significant as these pupils had clashed with school authority and disciplinary structures to the point where they had been excluded from school. The most common complaint from these young people was that teachers did not listen to them – this implied that their needs were not being met and that their point of view was not valued (Pomeroy, 1999: 470). The pupils acknowledged the need for discipline and its structures in the school and in fact several of the pupils commented that teachers could have been stricter (Pomeroy, 1999: 472). What was, however, crucial to the handling of any disciplinary incident was that the process should be fair; all the sides to an issue should be listened to and considered; there should be calm discussion about the issue and the respective viewpoints; and, lastly, appropriate actions/punishments should be applied

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(Pomeroy, 1999: 473-474). Any shouting, antagonism, humiliation, sarcasm or name-calling implied that pupils were not valued or liked and often resulted in heightened conflict (Pomeroy, 1999: 469). Thus, in summary, this group of pupils felt that three key elements constituted effective discipline, namely: fairness; respectful communications, and that a concern for pupils should underpin the system (Pomeroy, 1999: 475).

Some teachers are inclined to think that respect should only flow upwards, yet Pomeroy (1999: 480) recommended that a model of teacher-pupil relations should be based on mutual respect. This model "recognises that the roles and responsibilities of the two actors are different and unequal, but maintains that this difference does not form a justifiable basis for interactions which transmit a message of disrespect or de-valuing" (Pomeroy, 1999: 480). This idea of mutual respect is endorsed through the *Discipline in Schools* report (DES, 1989: 100) which states that "mutual respect is a useful starting point for policy building". It is further reinforced by Yiamouyiannis (1996: 91): "a child needs respect as do we adults".

Examining the key aspects of discipline leads to the notion of collaborative rule-making, which is one possible means of improving teacher-pupil co-operation.

2.7 Collaborative rule-making

The challenge of social control and of democratic socialization are two key issues facing education at present (Effrat and Schimmel, 2003: 5). The South African democracy is firmly entrenched in the Constitution; however, this is of little consequence if our citizens do not live and practise these values. As Effrat and Schimmel (2003: 4) put it: "our [American] schools and educational systems talk the talk of democracy, but, at best, they limp the walk". There would seem to be a direct parallel with South African schools.

The 'traditional approach' in many schools has been of an autocratic nature (McLennan & Thurlow, 2003: 5). This means that the rules were decided on by the principal, or a few senior people, and were not open to discussion. Depending on the age of the school, many of these rules could be long-standing and in some cases 'dated'. Pupils entering the system are expected to take note of the rules and if they break them, they can expect to be reprimanded and punished. There is little empathy in this approach and pupils are expected to comply. Morrell (2001: 292) makes the point that "reasons for the persistent and illegal use of corporal punishment include ...the legacy of authoritarian education practices".

Many schools, by using an autocratic approach, undermine the legitimacy of their school Codes of Conduct (Schimmel, 2003: 23). Flaws regarding the rules, within this approach, are that they can be:

- restrictive, ambiguous and unexplained;
- authoritarian and illegitimate;
- legalistic and poorly taught; and
- no collaboration and unfairness is perceived (Schimmel, 2003: 18-21).

Codes of conduct that share the above characteristics will have detrimental consequences through undermining:

- the concept and promotion of citizenship;
- the very rules they are meant to support;
- pupil self-discipline; and
- teacher/pupil relationships (Schimmel, 2003: 21-24).

Autocratic and teacher-centred education seems not to be winning the discipline battle as the concerns about disciplinary issues continue to mount. This approach also leaves school leavers unprepared to become citizens who will take on active roles in their communities. In addition, there are questions about the ability of the traditional teacher-centred methods to meet the requirements of

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modern society. Yiamouyiannis (1996) presents an argument that education is currently trying to inculcate in the pupils - those characteristics required of the industrial society worker – obedience and passiveness. He maintains that the skills of "collaboration, participation, initiative, expression, listening to and understanding many voices and many cultures, inherent to the emerging democratic, post-industrial society" are neglected (Yiamouyiannis, 1996: 79).

Research has indicated that pupils prefer participative decision-making and want to contribute meaningfully to school codes of conduct and structures (Mabeba & Prinsloo: 2000; Schimmel: 2003; Effrat & Schimmel: 2003). While the roles and responsibilities of teachers and pupils are obviously different, in terms of discipline, there needs to be mutual respect and communication which attempts to create an understanding of the different perspectives (Pomeroy: 1999; Effrat &Schimmel: 2003). Van Wyk (2001: 200) emphasizes that a "classroom climate based on mutual respect ...will decrease the need for disciplinary action". As Verkuyten (2002: 107) points out, society is changing, and growing egalitarian ideas are promoting more thought about co-operation in the classroom. Steyn et al (2003: 231) say that in searching for answers to the disciplinary problems in South African schools, "a significant part of the answer may be found in the ubuntu ideal of neighbourly love and in the general reformation of society". It is also interesting to note that the South African Schools Act (No. 84 of 1996, point 8.1) supports this idea by stating that "a governing body of a public school must adopt a Code of Conduct for the learners after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school". The concept of power is discussed by Kincheloe, (2004: 8), who proposed that a Critical Pedagogical vision should be "transformative, just and egalitarian". All of these thoughts support the notion of collaborative rule-making.

Principles that underpin collaborative rule-making are: schools should actively encourage input and participation in the formulation and maintenance of school Codes of Conduct and rules; the rationale for rules should be discussed and

understood by all the parties concerned (DES, 1989: 98); school codes should explain the link between responsibilities and rights, and rules should be fair and should have a sound educational purpose (Schimmel, 2003: 24- 30). This approach would involve genuine consultation where pupils can voice their opinions and have an input into school governance (Effrat & Schimmel, 2003: 8).

An example of the effective use of collaborative rule-making is to be found in Kingston High School (USA), which is a high school of 2300 pupils and over 100 teachers. The school has a 'Jefferson Committee' which uses the concept of collaborative rule-making. The community of the school believes that this process inculcates a sense of justice or fairness in the school community and educates pupils in the real workings of a democratic society (Denton, 2003: 83). Having input into the rules promotes commitment to those rules (Denton, 2003: 95). The criticisms of this approach were that it was time-consuming, that communication from the committee to the whole student body was not easy and that a turnover of the school management resulted in new leaders who had to learn about the process afresh each time. However, it was felt that the end result was certainly "worth the trip" (Denton, 2003: 96).

Collaborative rule-making can do more than just promote co-operation in the classroom; it can be a very powerful introduction to the workings of democracy. South African schools tend to run on an autocratic basis and, in fact, many of them still, illegally, mete out corporal punishment (Greenfield: 2004). Along with encouraging defiance, this does little to enhance our new democracy. The 'democratic socialization challenge' is for schools to produce citizens who are equipped to contribute to, participate in, and appreciate the democracy within which their society functions (Effrat and Schimmel, 2003: 5). Cameron Dugmore (2006), the Western Cape Education MEC, recently made the point that school Codes of Conduct need to be revisited and revised. The idea is that the whole school community - parents, pupils and teachers – should go through a process which results in their 'buying' into this Code (Dugmore, 2006: 17). The Code of

Conduct should promote: "respect, tolerance, discipline, non-violence, non-racialism, respect for human rights, democratic practice and community participation" (Dugmore, 2006: 17).

2.8 Conclusion

This literature review has examined many of the key issues surrounding school discipline, and more specifically collaborative rule-making. The study has been placed within the structure of Bernstein's (1996: 7) pedagogic framework which viewed 'participation' as one of the three essential 'rights' of an effective democratic school environment. The notions of discipline and control, as defined by Foucault (1979) and Dewey (1915; 1916), were compared. The changing nature of punishment, from the body to the mind, was traced (Foucault: 1979). In gaining an understanding of the rationale behind poor behaviour, the perspectives of teachers, pupils and parents were examined. The key aspects of effective discipline were noted. This led toward an investigation of the dynamics of pupil input into school governance.

Chapter Three will detail the methodology which was used to investigate pupil perceptions around school discipline and collaborative rule-making.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The aim of this study is to explore pupil perceptions around the concept and framework of school discipline, with a focus on collaborative rule-making. To achieve this, a qualitative approach was used, namely an interview process using open-ended questions. The issues of validity, reliability and ethical considerations were addressed in the design of the instrument.

3.2 Interviews

The instrument chosen to conduct the research was the interview. Investigating pupil perceptions implies giving the pupils an opportunity to express their opinions and it was felt that the interaction of an interview process would provide the right setting for pupils to express themselves.

An interview enables participants to discuss and express their perceptions and interpretations of particular situations (Cohen et al, 2000: 267). This interaction between people is crucial: "the interview is not simply concerned with collecting data about life: it is part of life itself, its human embeddedness is inescapable" (Cohen et al, 2000: 267). There are certainly other methods of collecting information, but Blaxter et al (1996: 153) makes the point that the interview can provide information that methods such as observation or questionnaires would not provide. This information can be obtained through further probing questions as the interview progresses or it may be revealed by a candid and outspoken interviewee.

There are many different types of interview. For example, four basic types are the:
- informal conversational interview;

- interview guide approach;
- standardized open-ended interviews; and
- closed quantitative interviews (Patton: 1980, cited in Cohen et al 2000: 271).

For the purpose of this study it was decided to use the standardized open-ended interview. In this situation the questions are drawn up in advance. All the interviewees are asked the same questions, in the same order, which ensures consistency (Patton, 1980, cited in Cohen, 2000: 271). The benefits of this are that:

- the responses are comparable, as the questions are common;
- there is a full set of data for each interviewee;
- the bias is reduced through common questions;
- the instrument is available for review; and
- the data can organized, grouped and analysed relatively easily (Patton: 1980, cited in Cohen, 2000: 271).

The interviews ranged in time from about 15 minutes to nearly 30 minutes, depending on the interviewee and what he had to offer. In most of the interviews, opportunities arose to ask further questions as the interview unfolded.

3.3 Selection of the school

I decided to select the school at which I teach, as it met the requirements of the study, namely, that it had a prefect system in place. This allowed for the testing of two groups of pupils: a prefect group and a non-prefect group. In addition, I had relatively easy access to the principal, pupils and parents, although the consent of all the parties was nevertheless still required.

The school is an independent all-boys school, situated in the Western Cape, catering from grade 0 to post- matric. There are 1 313 boys in total in the school,

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585 in grades 0 –7, 708 in grades 8-12 (including 136 in grade 12), and 20 in the post-matriculation class.

The study took place in the secondary component of the school. This component operates a house system which has the following characteristics:

- there are 8 Houses in operation;
- there are 3 boarding Houses;
- there are 5 dayboy Houses;
- each House has a Housemaster and assistant Housemasters (teachers); and
- each House has a Head of House (pupil) and House prefects.

The prefect system in operation in grade 12 has the following characteristics:

- there are 33 house prefects in grade 12 ;
- there are 17 school prefects;
- the school prefects have specific portfolios although some portfolios have two prefects attached to them;
- the portfolios include the eight head of house positions; and
- the remaining portfolios are: academic, discipline, sport, cultural, marketing and pastoral/spirituality.

There is also an SRF in place which operates on one representative per House, per grade, excluding grade 8. The grade 12 representatives can be prefects, but often are not, in an attempt to widen the leadership opportunities for pupils. The Head of School, the two deputy heads (being two Heads of Houses) and the school prefect with the pastoral/spirituality portfolio also sit on this forum.

3.4 Selection of pupils

I wanted to examine the thoughts of senior boys who occupied formal leadership positions in the school, namely prefects. The rationale for this being that by virtue

of their position in the school, they would have had experience in dealing with disciplinary issues. In addition, it was of value to contrast these opinions with the thoughts of their grade 12 peers who did not occupy formal leadership positions. Therefore, two groups of senior pupils (grade 12) were interviewed: those that were in elected leadership positions, as school prefects, and those that were not. The non-elected leadership positions applied both to prefectship and to membership of the SRF.

The grade 12 class has 136 pupils. For ethical reasons those pupils that I look after by virtue of my position as a housemaster and those that I teach were excluded from the sample group.

The first group selected consisted of seven grade 12 pupils, who were not in any officially elected leadership positions, out of the 55 pupils who were available. This figure of 55 resulted from the total of 136, minus the 33 prefects, and minus those I looked after in the House system or taught. One pupil was selected from each of the seven available Houses. The rationale for this being that their exposure to a range of different Housemaster styles may have shaped their perceptions around disciplinary issues. These pupils were selected randomly from the Houses, by drawing the names from a hat. One boy per House was chosen. The numbers 1 to 18 were placed in one hat and the first letter of each house in another. Firstly, the name of a House was selected, then the number of a pupil which corresponded to his (alphabetical) number in that House. If the number produced a pupil who did not meet the criteria as listed above, then that number was put aside and another drawn. For the second house, the numbers were replaced so as to restart with a full set. This continued until seven pupils, one from each House, none of whom occupied leadership positions, had been selected.

The second set of pupils interviewed were five school prefects out of the seventeen pupils who fill these positions. By excluding the ineligible boys, the

sample group was reduced to seven school prefects. Their names were written individually on seven pieces of paper and five were selected from the hat.

Certain ethical considerations were commented on above but fuller discussion on this is now warranted.

3.5 Ethics

The essence of ethics within research is that researchers balance the pursuit of information, for their own purposes, with the rights of those to be interviewed (Cohen et al, 2000: 50). In no way should the position of any interviewee be prejudiced through, for example, divulging sensitive information or expressing an unpopular opinion.

The school was not named so as avoid any potential prejudice to its reputation.

I did not envisage much risk to the pupils for the following reasons:
- it was an anonymous process - their names were not used;
- confidentiality was rigorously observed;
- the pupils will have completed their schooling in November 2006 and this research will not have been completed by that point in time; and
- pupils were not asked to comment about any one specific person within the school.

Informed consent is an important component of ethical considerations. This includes four aspects:
- competence;
- voluntarism;
- full information; and
- comprehension (Cohen et al, 2000: 51).

These criteria were met by having an initial group meeting with the pupils who had been selected for the interviews. At this meeting they were given information as to the nature of the research and what was required of them. The information was of a fairly basic nature, namely that it concerned school discipline and their perceptions thereof. This information, while fairly basic, allowed them to comprehend the nature of what was going to be asked of them and allowed them to make an informed decision. In essence they needed to be available for a 20 - 30 minute interview. They were informed that this was a voluntary process and all indicated that they were happy to proceed. To formalise the consent, a letter was sent to their parents expressing what had been discussed at the meeting and requesting their permission to carry out the interview. These letters were all signed and returned. Permission to conduct the research was also sought from the principal, who gave his written consent.

As mentioned under school characteristics, there are 8 Houses. I am the Housemaster of one of the dayboy Houses, and for ethical reasons I have excluded my House from the study. I work closely with the Head of House and have also had interactions with some of the pupils around disciplinary issues. This might have impacted on their responses to me during the interview process. Thus only 7 of the Houses were part of the sample.

In addition, I teach 33 of the 136 matric pupils - 16 of them for the past three years and 17 of them for the past two years. We thus have a longstanding relationship and they might have felt that they know me, and my style of management, and this could have impacted on their responses. These pupils were thus excluded from the sample. The remaining pupils nevertheless still constituted a large enough group to offer up a meaningful sample. The combination of boys that I teach and look after would eliminate 42 boys out of 136.

3.6 Reliability

Reliability measures how well the research has been carried out. Blaxter et al (1996: 200) make the point that reliability would have been achieved if another researcher, conducting the same research, under the same constraints, settings and conditions were to produce similar findings. Ensuring that the results are as objective as possible will contribute to reliability, and this was addressed in the design through attempts to minimise bias and consider ethical issues which could have impacted on responses.

3.7 Validity

Validity refers to whether the researcher has actually measured what he set out to measure (Bell, 1993: 65). This is, understandably, a crucial aspect of the research methodology; non-compliance here would render the research invalid. This study used an interview process to gather data and it was crucial that correct and relevant data were obtained.

It is also important to take cognizance of the fact that an interview process is a social interaction between two people and can be fraught with all kinds of problems. To maximise validity, any potential bias must be minimised (Cohen et al, 2000: 121). These sources of bias could include:

- the attitudes, opinions and expectations of the interviewer;
- a tendency for the interviewer to see the respondent in her own image;
- a tendency for the interviewer to seek answers that support her preconceived notions;
- misperceptions on the part of the interviewer of what the respondent is saying;
- misunderstandings on the part of the respondent of what is being asked;
- race;
- religion;

- status;
- social class;
- age;
- gender; and
- sexual orientation (Cohen et al, 2000: 121).

The research instrument that was used in this study is that of a structured interview. In an attempt to minimise bias, the following precautions were taken, namely:

- the same questions were used;
- the same wording was used;
- the questions were asked in the same order;
- the venue was neutral, namely a room in the School Counselling Unit;
- the venue remained constant;
- the pupils whom I teach or look after were not questioned; and
- the time frame was of a short duration, i.e. all the interviews took place over a ten-day period between July 30 and August 8 2006.

3.8 Interview Schedule

This study was initiated to investigate pupil perceptions of school discipline with a particular focus on collaborative rule-making. However, I considered it both important and relevant to build a framework of their understanding of broader disciplinary issues before focusing on collaborative rule-making.

Seventeen designated questions were asked in the interview. In addition, as the interviews developed with each interviewee, further questions were asked if issues needed to be explored in greater detail or if the interviewee needed to be drawn out on the topic.

3.9 Analysis of data

The pupil responses were grouped together into the following categories: the meaning of school discipline; the state of discipline in this school and recommendations to address problem areas; authority; corporal punishment; power and prefectship; power and non-prefect matrics; prefects and disciplinary perspectives; the prefect system; the fairness of school rules; pupil input into school rules; collaborative rule-making and its viability; advantages; disadvantages and implementation.

The pupils were not given options to choose from in response to questions, apart from question three, and thus their responses were often wide-ranging. However, it was possible in many of the above categories to tabulate and categorise their responses.

3.10 Conclusion

The research has been set up so as to produce meaningful data which can be used to answer the research questions. Validity, reliability and ethical issues have all been considered. While it is impossible to produce totally objective data, an attempt has been made to produce the best possible data within the operating framework. The interpretation of the data appears in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine pupil perspectives around the concept and framework of school discipline, with a particular focus on collaborative rule-making. In addition to examining the overall perspectives of the grade 12 sample group, it was of interest to ascertain if the two sub-groups, namely the non-prefect and the prefect groups, held different opinions on discipline issues. This chapter will present the findings of this study.

As this was a qualitative study conducted through an interview process, responses have often been wide-ranging. Only question three specified options that the pupils could choose in responding to a question. All the other questions were open-ended and the pupils' responses were personal. For example, when pupils were asked what could be done to improve school discipline, their answers were not guided by a choice of scenarios. The responses have, however, been represented in tables in this chapter in an attempt to clarify the responses and the weighting of these opinions. Pupils have been identified as 'non-prefect A-G', or 'prefect 1-5', as they have been assured of confidentiality.

As the whole study revolved around school discipline it was appropriate that pupils began by expressing their understanding of this concept.

4.2 The meaning of school discipline

Pupils were asked to give their understanding of the meaning of school discipline. This is not a formal school subject and they would not have had 'lessons' in this, so their understanding would presumably have come about from their interactions with, and observations of, parental discipline, school disciplinary structures and their own world view. As the prefects are expected to help

maintain discipline in the school it could be assumed that they have given this matter more thought than the non-prefects. There was a wide range of interpretation from the boys around this concept. Some of the boys focused on the fairly narrow elements of control and compliance but others saw this concept in wider terms.

Half of the boys interviewed used terms such as 'control', 'enforcing the rules' and 'the setting of laws'. For example, non-prefect F stated that discipline was to "control the environment that students work in and the way in which they respond to situations in the classroom". Prefect 2 viewed discipline as "the rules and regulations that boys have to abide by". Non-prefect C stated that discipline is "when a school wants to control its pupils".

These thoughts correspond with the dictionary definition of the word 'discipline'. As a noun, discipline can be the "strict training, or the enforcing of rules intended to produce ordered or controlled behaviour in oneself or others"; "the ordered behaviour resulting from this" or "punishment designed to create obedience" (Chambers, 1996: 380). As a verb it is "to train or force, oneself or others, to behave in an ordered and controlled way" or "to punish someone" (Chambers, 1996: 380). The essence of envisaging discipline in these terms is to view it as an externally applied system which requires compliance (Foucault: 1979).

Other pupils, however, expressed a different understanding. Prefect 4 stated that "discipline defines the individual and helps one grow". Non-prefect D said discipline is "to know what is right and wrong". Non-prefect G said it is "to get you ready for life". Non-prefect E expressed discipline as "having respect, care, pride and joy for your school". These thoughts express a wider view of discipline. Aspects such as 'respect' and 'care' form the basis of the normative approach to the management of people.

There did not appear to be any grouping of ideas or different schools of thought between the prefect and non-prefect groups. Rather the opinions seemed to be based on individual paradigms which each pupil had established through life experiences.

The definitions of school discipline offered me valuable insight into how pupils view school discipline and how widely the opinions of this concept vary. In my experience, teachers, and those in management positions, often discuss school discipline and bemoan its deterioration. However, it is clear that pupils do not share a common framework with reference to this notion.

Having gained an understanding of the pupil notion of discipline, their perspective on the current state of school discipline was examined.

4.3 The state of discipline in this school and recommendations to address problem areas

The pupils were asked how they viewed the current state of discipline in the school. Their responses are detailed in table 2.

Table 2 State of discipline in the school

State of current school discipline	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Good, without qualification	0	0	0
Good, but qualified	4	1	5
Reasonable	1	2	3
Varies between houses	1	0	1
Deteriorating	1	1	2
Not good	0	1	1

None of the pupils offered an unequivocal 'good' to this question. Five of the pupils offered a 'good but qualified' response. Some of the qualifications offered were: "it is good but some things do slip by" (non-prefect C); "it is good but it is not as good as my junior school" (non-prefect A); "it is good but they have not got all the areas sorted out – like people bunk lessons and get away with it" (non-prefect G) and "it is good but it could be improved" (prefect 4).

Comment was made about inconsistency of application. Prefect 4 and non-prefect C mentioned an incident where prefects had been involved in drinking on a choir tour but had received no sanction. Management had viewed this as a complicated issue and in the end little, or no, punishment was meted out. However, other pupils had seen this in simpler terms and their conclusion was that the laws were not applied equally. It was summed up by prefect 4: "when the rest of the school hears that nothing happened to those boys it gives them a *licence to break the rules*". Thus pupils expect consistency and are disappointed when it is not applied.

Various other comments were made: non-prefect D mentioned that the discipline depends on the strictness of your housemaster and the nature of your matric group; non-prefect G commented that teachers, or housemasters, turn a blind eye to things that they know about or could discover easily as long as it does not happen in front of them.

There was definitely a difference of opinion between the prefects and non-prefects with respect to this question. Four of the seven non-prefects rated the discipline as 'good but qualified'. However, the prefects, who have been tasked with maintaining school discipline, were not so complimentary. Only one out of five prefects offered a 'good but qualified' assessment.

Eight of the twelve pupils felt that the discipline in the school was reasonable or better; however, none gave it a clean bill of health. The fact that only one prefect

viewed the discipline as 'good but qualified' is of concern, as these young men have helped manage and enforce the disciplinary structures within the school.

Following on from the state of discipline in the school, pupils were asked if they thought the discipline needed improving. These answers are reflected in table 3.

Table 3 Discipline needs improvement

Discipline in the school needs improving	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	4	5	9
Disagree	3	0	3

Nine of the twelve pupils felt that the discipline needed improving and this is a significant proportion of the sample. All of the prefects, who are tasked with assisting in the maintenance of discipline, stated that it needed improving.

The recommendations of the nine pupils who believed that there was room for improvement are shown in table 4.

Table 4 Recommendations to improve discipline

Recommendation	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Teacher/classroom control to improve	2	2	4
More attention to petty discipline issues	1	0	1
Enforce punishment systems more rigorously	0	1	1
Explain the rationale for rules	0	1	1
Greater consistency needed	0	1	1
Instil greater sense of respect for teachers and matrics in younger pupils	1	0	1

Four of the nine pupils felt strongly that teachers should exert more authority in the classroom. Non-prefect A said "classes get quite out of control – teachers

could be more assertive and take more control than they do". Prefect 5 commented that "in my classes most of the teachers hardly have control".

Some other pertinent comments were made. For example, prefect 2 commented that "the punishment system for Saturday detention classes, the Friday work party and the daily detention are all seen as a complete joke". He goes on to say that this is partially the prefects' own fault as not all the prefects can be relied upon. Prefect 1 commented that owing to a lack of consistency from prefects, teachers and housemasters, the system breaks down. He stated that this "won't get corrected until there is a common thread from all prefects, teachers and housemasters".

There was both concern and criticism from the pupils around the standard of discipline in the school and this should ring warning bells for the teaching staff and school management. At no time were the pupils asked directly about what happened in their classrooms and yet several raised concerns about this. There would seem to be an implicit request from the pupils for the teaching staff to take control of their classrooms and for disciplinary structures to be correctly and strictly implemented.

The issue of teacher authority, or the lack thereof, was raised among the disciplinary concerns and this will now be examined in greater detail.

4.4 Authority

The pupils were asked which group carried the most authority in the school. They were given the following groups to choose from: school management (principal and deputies); housemasters; teachers; school prefects; or house prefects.

The school is structured in a hierarchical manner and it would have been logical to assume that the pupils would identify the authority as resting with the top

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management structure. However, many boys chose to make up their own groupings and these are shown in table 5.

Table 5 Group which carries the most authority in the school

GROUP	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Principal	1	0	1
Principal and deputies	0	1	1
Principal and deputies and housemasters	0	1	1
Principal and housemasters	1	1	2
Principal and teachers	1	0	1
Principal and prefects	1	1	2
Housemasters	1	0	1
Housemasters and school prefects	1	1	2
School prefects	1	0	1

Eight out of the twelve pupils identified the principal or a combination of the principal and others as being this group. Five of the pupils identified housemasters, or a combination of the housemasters and others, as being part of this significant group

What would seem to be of interest and concern is that so few boys identified teachers in these groupings. Only one pupil identified teachers, in combination with the principal, as carrying the most authority. Pupils are present in teachers' classes for the bulk of their school day and accordingly this is probably their biggest interaction with staff members. However, housemasters and prefects were seen as carrying far more authority. An implication of this finding is that housemasters and prefects are seen as 'enforcers' and are thus taken more seriously.

There did not appear to be any substantial difference in opinion, on this question, between the prefect and non-prefect group.

4.5 Corporal punishment

While corporal punishment is illegal in South Africa I nevertheless felt it would be useful to find out the pupils' opinions on this topic as it might well have exposed different schools of thought amongst them. Pupils were asked if corporal punishment should be reinstated and their responses are detailed in table 6 below.

Corporal punishment in South Africa has been outlawed since 1996. Considering that these pupils would have started grade 1 in 1995, they should legally never have been subjected to corporal punishment. This was true in that none of the boys had been formally caned in a South African School. However, non-prefect B commented that he had received a clip on the head once or twice and prefect 3 said that a teacher had smacked him in grade 3. This was obviously illegal and these were not formal punishments. These incidents had not been reported or followed up on. Non-prefect G had been caned in Zimbabwe and thus had first-hand knowledge of this form of punishment.

Table 6 Corporal punishment position

Corporal punishment position	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Pupils wanting corporal punishment reinstated	1	1	2
Pupils not wanting corporal punishment reinstated	4	2	6
Pupils indecisive	2	2	4

Half of the pupils were not keen that this punishment should be reinstated. Prefect 3 felt strongly that "he had a bodily right based in our constitution". Non-prefect B stated that "no-one has the right to beat up another person". Two of the pupils felt that it would be a better punishment than some of the present punishments, mainly because they did not think that existing punishments were effective. The other four pupils were indecisive and felt that corporal punishment

held both advantages and disadvantages and thus they could not support its reinstatement. For example, prefect 2 stated that "it could sort out some clear-cut issues but it is impossible to monitor and abuse is too easy". There did not appear to be any difference of opinion between the prefect and non-prefect group with respect to the question on corporal punishment.

Only two pupils supported corporal punishment and this was encouraging, considering that we live in a society which is expected to resolve its issues in a non-violent manner.

Prefects occupy a formal position in the hierarchy and thus the issue of power and prefectship was investigated next.

4.6 Power and prefectship

The prefect position is a formal appointment within the school structure and prefects are allowed to issue certain punishments with the full support of the school. Pupils were asked if they thought that the prefects wielded more power in the school that their non-prefect peers. This, in a way, could almost be seen as a rhetorical question in that, by having a status conferred upon them, it was logical that they would be seen as wielding a certain amount of power. However, this position would mean little if it was not recognised, acknowledged and accepted by the other pupils. There was an almost unanimous positive response to this question and it was clearly accepted that the prefect group wields more power than the non-prefect group (table 7). This was summed up well by prefect 2: "the position and title gives prefects a certain level of authority in the ranks". Non-prefect G said "they have the power to look after the school, to watch discipline".

Table 7 Power and prefectship

Prefects have more power than grade 12 non-prefects	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	6	5	11
Disagree	1	0	1

Prefects are inducted into their positions in a formal school chapel service. They make a pledge, in front of the whole school, to support the values of the school and this is a powerful ritual. The structure that empowers and appoints prefects is definitely working as the prefects are recognised and acknowledged in the school for the role that they play.

The grade 12 non-prefect group is not granted any formal authority and thus it was of interest to establish whether they too wield power in the school.

4.7 Power and non-prefect matrics

Grade 12 non-prefects do not occupy any formal position in the school, yet there was a virtually unanimous opinion that this group has power relative to the grades below them (table 8). This position comes about by virtue of the pupils viewing the school as a hierarchy. Within the pupil ranks, grade 12 is definitely seen to be at the top of this hierarchy. Pupils expressed this through the following comments: "grade 12 is revered" (non-prefect A); "you have this sense of having more authority" (non-prefect F) and "there is an old school level of respect for matrics regardless of whether they are prefects or not" (prefect 2).

There was an idea that boys, particularly those in the junior grades, would, for example, give up their seat for matrics and perform various other menial tasks such as going to the tuck shop. This was qualified in some instances by who was asking for these tasks to be done - some non-prefects carried more influence than others.

There was, however, one prefect (no. 3) who felt that grade 12 non-prefects do not have power as they are frustrated at not being chosen as prefects and this leads to despondency.

Overall, there did not seem to be any substantial disagreement between the two groupings with respect to the issue of power and grade 12 non-prefects.

Table 8 Power and non-prefect matrics

Grade 12 non-prefects do have power relative to other grades	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	7	4	11
Disagree	0	1	1

There is definitely a strong hierarchical system, which implies a 'pecking order', at work in the school. Senior pupils, purely through length of tenure, expect junior pupils to accord them a certain status. This is tied to the nature and traditions of the school. A hierarchical system of respect and privilege can assist in maintaining an orderly environment, providing that senior pupils in turn look after juniors without abusing them. There is a mentoring system in the school where grade 12 pupils look after grade 8 pupils, so this check is in place.

The difference in disciplinary perspectives between the two groups was next to be examined.

4.8 Prefects and disciplinary perspectives

The question was posed as to whether the prefects, as a group, would hold different views on discipline to the rest of the grade 12 class. Out of the twelve pupils questioned, eight felt that the views were different. Non-prefect G

commented that the views would be different because the prefects have "been exposed to all the bad things that happen in the school and have to deal with this". Prefect 4 commented: "from enforcing the rules prefects have gained a different understanding and perspective".

Two prefects did, however, hold the opinion that the views were not different because the grade 12 class had been together for five years and the prefects were in fact representatives of that grade. However, only one of the seven non-prefects held a similar view.

Overall, both groups seem to concur that there are different views. My interest in this question arose through a chicken-versus-egg type debate – what came first? Did the prefects hold different views on discipline to the non-prefects because a certain type of pupil is appointed to the position of prefect, or did their experiences change their thinking? Comments made by the pupils seemed to indicate that experience had lent itself toward creating this difference.

Table 9 Prefects versus non-prefects - views on discipline

Prefects hold different views on discipline to grade 12 non-prefects	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	5	3	8
Disagree	1	2	3
Unsure	1	0	1

Pupil perceptions around the prefect system were examined next.

4.9 The prefect system

Pupils were asked if they believed in the prefect system or would like to see another system in place. Of the twelve pupils, two are happy with the system as it is presently operating, eight believe in the system but would like to see it

amended and two do not believe in the system at all (table 10). There did seem to be a difference in opinion between the prefect and non-prefect group in this section. All the prefects expressed the view that they would like to see changes made to the existing system. Having virtually completed their tenure as prefects they were well placed to make a comment on this.

Table 10 Belief in the prefect system

Pupils believe in the prefect system	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Yes - as is	2	0	2
Yes - with certain reservations	3	5	8
No	2	0	2

The reservations around the prefect system are detailed in table 11 below. As detailed in Chapter Three there are 33 house prefects and 17 college prefects. Out of the 136 pupils in grade 12, 50 are therefore prefects. The large number of prefects stems from each of the eight Houses wanting, or needing, a complement of between 5 and 7 prefects. Much of the reservation surrounding prefectship, both from the prefects and the non-prefects, hinged around the issue of too many prefects. Six of the twelve pupils voiced this concern. Some of the comments made were: "There are way too many prefects – it is supposed to be a special thing but it is given to about one third of the grade" (non-prefect C); "If there were fewer prefects they would have more power and authority" (non-prefect E); "I think that there are so many prefects that it makes way for such incredible incompetence and laziness" (prefect 2); " Everyone wants to be made a prefect and when they are made one they are purposeless in that they don't have much to do" (prefect 5). Many of the prefects were seen to be inefficient and thus added little value to the system.

Two of the pupils were concerned that prefects were chosen based on popularity. There was a belief that there were other pupils who could do a better job but who were not chosen. This essentially aimed criticism at the selection process.

Selection is based on a pupil vote, teacher input at a staff meeting, senior management input at a meeting and, lastly, housemaster judgement. It is, however, true to say that the pupil vote is a significant factor in the selection process. For this reason, the two pupils felt that the popular or most 'visible' pupils, often sportsmen, may well be chosen over less noticeable, but possibly more competent, pupils. There may well be an element of truth in this.

Table 11 Reservations concerning the prefect system

Reservations concerning the prefect system	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
There are too many inefficient House prefects	2	3	5
There are too many inefficient House and College prefects	0	1	1
The pupil vote is based on popularity	2	0	2
Leads to apathy among non-prefects	0	1	1
Prefect punishments not overseen by a teacher/housemaster	1	0	1
Needs changes but not specified	1	0	1
None	1	0	1

The next section deals with pupils' perceptions around the fairness of school rules.

4.10 The fairness of school rules

The pupils were asked to comment on whether they thought the rules were fair or not. Virtually all the pupils thought that the rules were fair and there did not seem to be any significant difference of opinion between the two groups (table 12).

Prefect 4 made a pertinent point when he said "the rules are definitely fair – whether the boys abide by the rules and the punishment is given out for breaking the rules is another story". Prefect 5 commented that the boys think it is a strict

environment but they don't have a benchmark with which to compare this. When this prefect went on a prefect exchange to another school he saw how strict it was there.

Table 12 Fairness of school rules

The school rules are fair	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	6	5	11
Partial agreement	1	0	1
Disagree	0	0	0

Virtually no criticism was aimed at the fairness of the rules and this would imply that the school has got this aspect of school discipline right. Considering that the pupils considered the rules to be fair, they were then asked if pupils have any input into these rules.

4.11 Pupil input into school rules

Pupils were asked if they were able to have an input into school rules and policy. Half of the pupils agreed that that they could possibly have an input and would either try to work through the headmaster, the prefects or the SRF. Three pupils felt that only the prefects were able to have an input and the last three pupils felt that they do not have an input at all. The perspectives of the prefect and non-prefect group did not appear to be significantly different.

Five of the twelve pupils mentioned that the SRF was the correct vehicle through which to have an input. However, there was also fairly strong comment that the SRF was an ineffective body (see table 19)

Table 13 Pupil input into school rules

Pupils can, or do, have an input into the school rules	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree – contact the headmaster or use the prefects	1	0	1
Agree – contact the headmaster or use the SRF	0	1	1
Agree – use SRF or prefects	1	0	1
Agree – use SRF	1	2	3
Agree - but only prefects have an input	2	1	3
Disagree	2	1	3

Pupil input into the school rules is an important component of collaborative rule-making. The fact that the majority of pupils feel that they can, or do, have an input into school rules would imply that this particular school environment is receptive to this form of governance. Perspectives around collaborative rule-making were examined next.

4.12 Collaborative rule-making

This section is divided into the following sub-categories: viability; advantages; disadvantages; and implementation.

4.12.1 Viability

Pupils were asked if collaborative rule-making was possible. Collaborative rule-making was described to them as pupils and teachers working together to draw up the school rules. Agreement was virtually unanimous with respect to this question (table 14). Prefects and non-prefects shared the same opinion.

Table 14 Collaborative rule-making as an option

Collaborative rule-making is possible	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	6	5	11
Disagree	1	0	1

Pupils were then asked if they would support the notion of collaborative rule-making. There was strong support for this with ten of the twelve pupils expressing positive sentiments around this notion (table 15). Again prefects and non-prefects seemed to be in agreement.

Comments made in support of this idea were: "teachers and pupils will be more positive to the whole approach of discipline" (non-prefect A); "there will no longer be this disparity gap of information in the school" (prefect 3) and "it is important to take into consideration the boys' views, especially if you are making rules that they have to abide by" (prefect 5).

Table 15 Support for collaborative rule-making

Support offered for collaborative rule-making	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Yes	6	4	10
No	1	1	2

There was definitely strong support for the notion of collaborative rule-making. Following on from this, the advantages of this notion were examined.

4.12.2 Advantages

Pupils were asked what the advantages of this type of governance could be. Their responses are detailed in table 16. They all seemed to think that there would be some advantages to this system. Some of the pupil comments in support of this were: "it will definitely make the pupils more responsive ... and they would probably be a bit more disciplined" (non-prefect A) and "It would be

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interesting to see how the boys are thinking" (prefect 2). The two pupils who did not support this approach nevertheless still identified possible advantages, these being that pupils will be satisfied (prefect 1) and that there will be a more comfortable environment for pupils (non-prefect 4).

Table 16 Advantages of collaborative rule-making

Advantages of collaborative rule-making	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Improved discipline through pupil ownership of the rules	1	2	3
Greater understanding between pupils and teachers	2	1	3
Pupil opinions taken into consideration	1	1	2
More fairness and justice in the school	2	0	2
Create a more comfortable environment for pupils	1	0	1
Pupils will be satisfied	0	1	1

Every pupil saw potential advantages to this system and reasons such as 'improved discipline through pupil ownership of the rules', 'more fairness and justice in the school' and 'pupil opinions taken into account' certainly provide a strong rationale for this system. We live in a democracy and through collaborative rule-making there is the opportunity to make this a reality for pupils at the school level. It was, however, also appropriate that the disadvantages of this system be examined so as to gain a balanced perspective of pupil perceptions around this notion.

4.12.3 Disadvantages

Pupils were asked to express their opinions on the disadvantages of collaborative rule-making. The main concern, from half of the boys, was that rules could become more lenient. This would come about through pupils negotiating less strict rules to serve their own agendas. For example, non-prefect

A stated "The rules could become more lenient and this might allow pupils to do more stuff than was allowed before, which should not be allowed". The implication of this increased leniency in the rules is that disciplinary standards could slip. There did not appear to be any significant difference of opinion between the prefect and non-prefect groups with respect to this question.

Table 17 Disadvantages of collaborative rule-making

Disadvantages of collaborative rule-making	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Rules could become more lenient	4	2	6
None	1	1	2
Loss of respect for teachers through working too closely together with pupils	1	0	1
Disagreement between pupils over input into rules	1	0	1
Prefects would lose their independence	0	1	1
Boys do not understand certain things	0	1	1

The concern around the erosion of discipline through relaxed rules is a real one but I do not think that it would become a reality. The fact that half of the pupils expressed this concern shows that they, as pupils, would not be in favour of lessening any rules. It is also highly unlikely that the teaching staff would support the weakening of the disciplinary framework.

Having considered the viability, advantages and disadvantages of collaborative rule-making, it was necessary to consider how this system could be implemented.

4.12.4 Implementation

Pupils were asked how agreement on the school rules and the application thereof could be reached between the pupils and teachers if collaborative rule-making was an option. They recommended the structures for implementation as

detailed in table 18. Eleven of the twelve pupils proposed the formation of a committee. The mechanics of the operation of that committee were not detailed in most cases, although some pupils did mention a vote.

Seven of the twelve pupils indicated a committee of teachers and prefects or a committee of teachers and the SRF. This figure moves up to eight when one considers that the Heads of House are also prefects. Thus the choice comes down to these two bodies.

Table 18 Structure for implementation of collaborative rule-making

Structure for implementation	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Teacher/Pupil committee	2	0	2
Teacher/Heads of Houses committee	1	0	1
Teacher/SRF committee	1	2	3
Teacher/Prefect committee	3	1	4
Teacher/Pupil/Parent committee	0	1	1
Teacher/Pupil conference	0	1	1

While the SRF was indicated as a possible mechanism both for pupil input and for collaborative rule-making, there were also concerns about the effectiveness of this body. The effectiveness of the SRF was not one of the designated questions, although it was raised or mentioned by seven pupils. These indications are recorded in table 19 below.

Table 19 Effectiveness of the SRF

SRF is an effective body	Non-prefects	Prefects	Total
Agree	0	1	1
Agree but senior staff control agenda/change	0	1	1
Disagree	3	2	5

The only two pupils who viewed the SRF as effective were two prefects who actually serve on the SRF owing to their portfolio requirements or positions in the school. However prefect (4) did say that "where issues are controversial and might cause a bit of damage to the SRF, or the School, or might lead to change or effort, they just tend to get brushed under the carpet, forgotten about or left off the agenda".

Five pupils viewed the SRF as ineffective. Some of their comments were: "I am not sure how effective they are" (non-prefect F); "I personally think the SRF is a bit of a joke" (prefect 2); "I don't think they have any power – that's just one thing the School wants to show off" (non-prefect D). The SRF, as a democratically appointed student body, was identified as a potentially useful mechanism for discussing pupil opinion with school management. The perception of its lack of effectiveness is, however, seen as a hindrance to its fulfilling its purpose.

Overall, there was strong support for a committee of teachers and pupils to meet and decide on rules. Whether the pupils are drawn from the prefect body, or the SRF, or whether there is another election process to choose the pupil representatives, needs further investigation. It would make sense to me to use one of these bodies, as they are both operational in the school and both have pupil input into their selection. The prefect body appears to carry more weight in the school than the SRF, so this would be a good starting position. The only downfall with using only the prefect body is that there would be no representation from other grades. However, this may well be a good built-in safety mechanism, as matric pupils are well aware of the traditions of the school by this stage of their school careers. My experience has been that senior pupils usually want to protect values and traditions.

4.13 Conclusion

Understanding how senior pupils think and interpret school situations is a valuable tool in the efficient management of a school. In order to gain insight into these perceptions, the following concepts were explored: the meaning of discipline; the state of discipline in this school and recommendations to address this; authority; corporal punishment; power and prefectship; power and non-prefect matrics; prefect versus non-prefect views on discipline; the prefect system; the fairness of school rules; pupil input into school rules; the viability of collaborative rule-making; advantages of collaborative rule-making; disadvantages of collaborative rule-making; and the implementation of collaborative rule-making.

The research into pupil perceptions around school discipline has revealed some useful insights that can be used to manage people and the institution more effectively. The findings and conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further study are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The DOE, in its public school policy guide, stipulates that "provincial departments should train educators in co-operative discipline methods" (South Africa: n.d.). With this in mind, this study undertook to investigate pupil perceptions around the concept and framework of school discipline, with a particular focus on collaborative rule-making. It was felt that it was important to build up a framework of pupil perceptions of wider disciplinary issues before homing in on collaborative rule-making. This study has therefore been wider than just collaborative rule-making, but for sound reasons. Attempting to gauge pupil perceptions on collaborative rule-making, as a potential solution to disciplinary issues, without placing it in the context of a wider understanding would have been of little significance. The findings and conclusions of this study offer insight into how pupils think about these disciplinary concepts and issues. Recommendations were drawn up based on these findings and conclusions, and suggestions for further research have been made.

5.2 Findings and Conclusions

Pupils did not share a common framework with reference to the concept of discipline. Some pupils viewed it as 'rules and regulations' and as a means of controlling people. Others envisaged it in a broader sense where issues such as respect and consideration for others were encompassed.

While most pupils felt that the present state of discipline in this school was at an acceptable level, they did, however, feel that it could improve. There was concern from several pupils around a lack of control in some of their classes, which impacted on the quality of their learning. While pupils may 'test' the teacher, they do expect the teacher to be able to exercise competent classroom

control (Denscombe 1985: 35; Verkuyten, 2002: 119). Pupils are inclined to view disruptive behaviour as a consequence of the teachers' inability to perform one of their basic functions, and thus they hold the teacher accountable (Denscombe, 1985: 35; Verkuyten, 2002: 119).

In addition to a lack of discipline being highlighted in some classes, teachers were barely mentioned as a prominent authoritative group. Around the issue of authority the principal, housemasters and prefects featured most strongly in the minds of the pupils. What was of concern was that teachers barely featured as an important factor for the pupils in this area.

Concern was expressed around the administration of disciplinary structures. It is possible that the structures are in place but that the personnel are not effective. In many instances, punishments are meted out by the teaching staff but the prefects are tasked with the actual implementation and monitoring of the punishments. It is possible that some of the prefects are not capable of doing this, do not take it seriously, or need training. The effectiveness or severity of punishments was also questioned. If punishments were not seen as a deterrent then they were of little benefit.

Comment was also made around the lack of consistency in the application of rules. Those in positions of authority, both prefects and teachers, need to act in as comparable a fashion as possible when applying the school rules. Consistency results in people knowing what to expect and the lack of this can result in confusion and anger (Cowley, 2001: 8). Denscombe (1985: 72) does, however, point out that the 'closed classroom' means that individual teachers and the specific class of pupils formally or informally negotiate the classroom rules. This allows for teacher independence and professionalism but does mean that what is acceptable in one class may be unacceptable in another (Denscombe, 1985: 71-72).

Corporal punishment is illegal in our society and has been for the last decade. In the light of this, it was encouraging to note that none of the pupils had been subjected to physical discipline in South African schools. Several pupils did feel that if it was administered cautiously, and only for minor offences, then it had merit. However, they also pointed out that it was open to abuse and for this reason they would not support its reintroduction. Overall, there was little support for the notion of corporal punishment and it would appear that, in this institution, the pupil mindset is firmly in line with the legal position.

It was clear that the prefects do wield power within the school. The prefects are formally inducted by the school management team in front of the whole school. In addition, they conduct various official ceremonies such as prefect assemblies. They are also entitled to apply certain levels of punishment. This capacity, along with the various rituals and ceremonies, validates their position and status in the school.

The grade 12 non-prefects were also seen to wield power in the school, although less than the prefects. This was based on a hierarchical structure which linked power to seniority in the school. This system is not explicitly endorsed by the school but I think it would be fair to conclude, based on my own observations as a staff member, that the school management is well aware of this ethos and is happy to maintain it. It has benefits in that hierarchies lend themselves more easily to control. As long as seniors and juniors build positive relationships, without the abuse of juniors, it can be of definite value. About seven years ago, in this school, the 'fagging' system, with its negative connotations, was replaced by a mentoring system for precisely this reason.

Although there was definite support for the prefect system, that support was qualified with the need for change. The main criticisms of the prefect system revolved around there being too many prefects, and a related inefficiency. It was

felt that because there are too many prefects they become inefficient through a lack of purposeful activity.

Fairness is a crucial aspect of an effective discipline structure (Pomeroy, 1999: 475; Cowley, 2001: 8). In addition, a lack of fairness is perceived by pupils as being a primary cause of misbehaviour (Miller et al, 2000: 92). The school rules, in this study, were seen as being fair and this pupil perception places the school in a strong moral position. A perception of a lack of fairness would have undermined any disciplinary structure that is in place. What seemed to be more in question was the implementation and enforcement of the rules, and the school needs to ensure that systems are working and that punishments have the intended effect. There was also a strong sentiment that pupils could have an input into school rules if they so desired. No-one actually gave evidence of having had an input into the rules; however, this need was possibly negated by the understanding that the rules were fair.

Bernstein (1996: 7), in his model for an effective democracy within the school environment, outlines the right of pupil participation. The DOE in its public school policy guide states that "Provincial Departments should train educators in co-operative discipline methods" (South Africa: n.d.). Supporting this right, and instruction, is a desire by pupils to be involved in, and contribute to, school codes of conduct and structures (Mabeba & Prinsloo: 2000; Schimmel: 2003; Effrat & Schimmel: 2003). This notion of collaborative rule-making was strongly supported by the pupils within this study. The benefits identified by the pupils were: pupil opinions would be heard and considered; improved discipline through pupil ownership of the rules; more fairness and justice in the school; and a greater understanding between pupils and teachers. These are all important considerations and have support from other sources. The community of Kingston High School, which has a working system of collaborative rule-making, believes that this system inculcates a sense of justice and fairness in the school community (Denton, 2003: 83). Cameron Dugmore (2006: 17), the Western Cape

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Education MEC, recently stated that each school community should go through a process which results in their 'buying' into their school's Code of Conduct. A common complaint from pupils is that teachers do not listen to them (Pomeroy, 1999: 470). This need to be heard would be addressed in collaborative rule-making. Even if the rules are seen as being fair, discussion around these rules would be useful in that all involved would gain a greater understanding of the various viewpoints. It would also be important for the pupil representatives to report back to the pupil body so that other pupils would realize that there is a dialogue.

Fears around pupils trying to create a less strict set of rules in order to favour themselves were a potential issue. However, pupils were aware of this and raised this as a concern. In addition, the school management team and the teaching body would be unlikely to support rules that would weaken the disciplinary structure. As both parties are aware of this potential flaw, or weakness, in the system, it would seem unlikely to happen.

The mechanism whereby collaborative rule-making would be implemented was not totally clear. There was some support for the SRF to serve the role of the pupil representatives in this area as this body was elected democratically by the pupils without any teacher input. There was, however, concern that this body was not seen as effective and was not taken seriously. If the school wants to strengthen the role of this body, ways in which to raise its profile should be considered.

The prefect body was also recommended as providing the representatives for the collaborative rule-making process, and in fact received more support than the SRF. This body would probably be more suitable from the school management perspective as there is a fairly rigorous selection process for the appointment of prefects. While pupils do vote for prefects, teachers and the school management team also have an input. In this way there is some vetting of the pupils and it is

unlikely that anti-establishment pupils would find their way on to the prefect body. Prefects do carry a certain status within the school and the prefect system appears to be respected, so although there is teacher input into their appointment, their status as pupil representatives does not appear to be tainted. This is important, as representatives who lack credibility with the pupils would be of little value to the whole process.

5.3 Recommendations

I would recommend that the concept 'discipline' needs to be explored by all involved in schools. If schools want a 'disciplined' environment in which to operate, they need to question what they mean and how the pupils and teachers interpret this. Does discipline only imply control, management and punishment (Slee, 1995: 59)? Can discipline be seen as an "educational concept and process" (Slee, 1995; 5)? These are pertinent questions and a workshop or conference, involving both pupils and teachers, at which these questions could be explored, is a possible recommendation. A mutual understanding of the concept of discipline would certainly be of benefit to the school ethos.

The school management team should attempt to clarify which teachers are struggling to maintain discipline in their classroom and should offer support, training and advice to these teachers. The skills of effective classroom management can be taught; however, training in this area often falls short and teachers are in need of support (DES, 1989: 70).

The administration of the disciplinary structures needs to be examined by the school management team. It may well be the right structure, but those who are performing certain roles within the structure may not be performing optimally. For example, prefects are tasked with overseeing the execution of many of the punishments. Are they competent to do this, are they correctly supervised and do they need training?

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It would be useful and informative to investigate what types of punishments are seen as deterrents in the eyes of the pupils. If they do not view some of the present punishments as effective, then these punishments are unlikely to act as a deterrent or to amend behaviour.

It is imperative that everyone in positions of authority, namely the prefects, teaching staff and school management team, act in as uniform and consistent a manner as possible with respect to disciplinary structures. Discipline should be part of the portfolio of everyone in a position of authority. Teachers and prefects are abdicating part of their responsibility if they try to avoid this and pass it on to other people. Lund (1996: 4) reinforces this by emphasizing that everyone in the school community should have ownership of the school's Code of Conduct. He encourages the use of a 'whole school behaviour policy' and this should be investigated by the school management team. This particular school does have good policies in place, but an overall review is recommended.

The school management team needs to investigate why the teaching body did not feature strongly in the minds of the pupils with respect to the notion of authority. Have some teachers abdicated this responsibility and shifted the disciplinary mantle to other groups? Have teachers been disempowered by school structures? Are some teachers unable to exert authority in the classroom, despite wanting to? Have changes in society eroded the status of the teacher? The *Discipline in Schools* report (1989) points out that teachers have three kinds of authority: from their status in society; from their skills, knowledge and personality; and from their official appointment as teachers (DES, 1989: 80). However, research indicates that the authority stemming from their status in society has been significantly eroded (DES, 1989: 81). The school management team could consider methods by which to raise the status of teachers in the school. For instance, school assemblies could be used to congratulate both teachers and pupils for achievements, instead of being primarily pupil-based. For

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example, a teacher who is awarded a qualification could be acknowledged in front of the whole school. This encourages and reinforces the notion of life-long learning and enhances the status of the teacher.

The perceived link between the number of prefects and prefect inefficiency needs to be examined. Are the prefects inefficient because there is not enough to keep them busy? Is it possible that they become complacent once they are appointed, as they have achieved their desired status? Does the inefficiency come about through poor supervision and a lack of appraisal? An effective appraisal system would seem to go some way towards monitoring how much work there is for them to do and how effectively they are doing it. If there is, in fact, insufficient meaningful activity for those elected, then the number of prefects should be reduced.

Pupils were firmly of the opinion that teachers and pupils could work together in drawing up the school rules. Thus collaborative rule-making was a definite option. Furthermore, pupils strongly supported the notion of collaborative rule-making. Pupils need to be given an opportunity to discuss, and have input into, the school rules and Code of Conduct as motivated both by the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996) and their own desire to do so.

The actual mechanism whereby collaborative rule-making takes place needs to be examined and clarified if this process is to take place in this school. Most of the pupils proposed that a committee of teachers and pupils should be formed. However, suggestions as to the possible composition of this body differed widely. How exactly would the body be constituted, and what would be the means of arriving at a decision? The school would need to decide how 'democratic' this process would actually be. Would the final decision of a committee be taken by virtue of a vote, with all votes carrying an equal weighting? There would understandably be some teacher concerns around this process. Would this process undermine the authority and status of the teacher? These concerns

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would need to be addressed. The recommendation is that the whole process of collaborative rule-making be explored within the context of the school.

The status of the SRF needs to be examined. This was highlighted by pupils mentioning that this body was potentially a useful vehicle for pupil input. However, it was not taken seriously. This negates the potential advantages of pupil input and suggestions via this body. School management needs to look at ways of increasing the status of the SRF. Suggestions could be to have an induction process similar to that of the prefects and to have pupil feedback into school assemblies. Possibly it could be made compulsory for each pupil to attend, as an observer, at least one meeting per year. This would give pupils more insight into the workings of this body, as many pupils and staff have not seen this body in operation.

5.4 Suggestions for further study

The issue of the effectiveness of certain punishments arose. Punishment should be linked to the nature of the offence and should also be a deterrent to potential transgressors. To get this balance right, there needs to be further investigation into pupil perceptions as to what constitutes fair, equitable, appropriate and effective punishments.

The issue of some teachers lacking authority also arose. If teachers are unable to exercise discipline in their classrooms, then learning will be compromised. This obviously does not apply to all teachers but it would be worth investigating the reasons that pupils perceived some teachers to be lacking in authority. Have teachers been disempowered by school management? Have they been disempowered by government policy? Do they see the exercise of discipline as someone else's role? Is it a personality or strength-of-character issue? Has society changed to such a degree that teachers are no longer respected?

The effectiveness of pupil leadership needs to be monitored and evaluated. Is the appraisal system of relevance here? Is this system being used in schools? What feedback is given to pupils in leadership positions? Do schools simply tolerate poor leaders as their term of office is relatively short?

The idea of schools running both a prefect and an SRF system needs investigating. Should schools run both of these? Can these both work effectively in the same school or will one be overshadowed? Do all the leaders land up in the one group and effectively leave the other body without real leaders and therefore without followers? Could one of these bodies perform the roles required of both?

The DOE has stated that provincial departments should be training teachers in co-operative disciplinary methods (South Africa: n.d.). This whole issue of collaborative rule-making needs further research. Are provincial departments training teachers with respect to this skill? If so, how effective has this been? If schools are using collaborative rule-making, what process and mechanisms are they using and how effective has this been? How collaborative can this process be without teachers losing a degree of authority? Do teachers fear this process? Answers to these questions would offer a greater understanding of the collaborative rule-making process and the concerns around this process. Concerns that have been identified can then be addressed.

5.5 Conclusion

This research has been conducted in one school and therefore many of the findings and recommendations are specific to this institution. It would be fair to say that this is a well run and well resourced institution without many serious disciplinary issues. Nevertheless, concerns have been raised in several areas with respect to discipline and these should be considered. If these concerns are extrapolated to other schools, especially disadvantaged schools, which lack

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resources and possibly expertise, then the potential problems are likely to be larger.

The future of the country depends on an effective schooling system which can produce well-educated and self-disciplined young people. Currently there are strong concerns from the government, the DOE and the public that disciplinary problems, amongst other issues, are undermining this vision. There is an urgent need to conduct further research into disciplinary issues. This research would need to identify problem areas, but, more importantly, would need to try to find long-term solutions to this complex, but vital, aspect of school life.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

19 July 2006

Dear Parent

I am currently engaged in a Masters degree, in Education, at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. My research area focuses on school discipline, with a particular emphasis on the viability of collaborative rule-making. The aim is to investigate pupil perceptions in this area through an interview process. I hereby seek your permission to include your son in the sample to be interviewed.

Two 'groups' of grade 12 learners will be interviewed. The first group will be comprised of five school prefects. The second group will be one pupil from each House who is not an elected leader, in the prefect structure, or the student representative forum.

The interview will take place at school. Your son's name and his House would remain confidential so that any thoughts he may share in the interview would in no way prejudice his position in the school. He would in fact have completed grade 12 by the time this thesis is completed and examined.

I hope that this research will offer insight into how pupils view the notions of school discipline and collaborative rule-making, particularly with respect to the thinking of the two different groupings. This can be of benefit to policy makers in education both on a macro and micro level.

The supervisors of this project are Prof R Chetty and Ms S Johnson.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully

Brad Strauss

I hereby give permission for my son,   , to be
interviewed.

Parent: ....   Date: ....

Appendix 2

19 July 2006

Dear Principal

I am currently engaged in a Masters degree, in Education, at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. My research area focuses on school discipline, with a particular emphasis on the viability of collaborative rule-making. The aim is to investigate pupil perceptions in this area through an interview process. I hereby seek your permission to conduct interviews within the grade 12 class.

Two 'groups' of grade 12 learners will be interviewed. The first group will be comprised of five school prefects. The second group will be one pupil from each House who is not an elected leader, in the prefect structure, or the student representative forum.

The interview will take place at school. Individual and House identities would remain anonymous so that any thoughts a pupil may share in the interview would in no way prejudice his position in the school. Pupils would in fact have completed grade 12 by the time this thesis is completed and examined.

I hope that this research will offer insight into how pupils view the notions of school discipline and collaborative rule-making, particularly with respect to the thinking of the two different groupings. This can be of benefit to policy makers in education both on a macro and micro level.

The supervisors of this project are Prof R Chetty and Ms S Johnson.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours faithfully
Brad Strauss

I hereby give permission for the interviews to be conducted.

Principal : ....   Date: ....

Appendix 3

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this interview.

To give you some background:

- I am completing a masters degree in education and this is my research component;
- Please realize that what you say here is in total confidence;
- The interview will be recorded so that it can be written up but no names will be mentioned in the thesis;
- Do not feel that you have to give any particular answer or type of answer to satisfy me in any way; and
- I am interested in your thoughts and opinions and there are no right or wrong answers

1. How would you define the term school discipline – what does it mean to you?

2. How do you view the state of discipline in this school?

3. Which group in the school carries the most authority – school management (headmaster and deputies); housemasters; teachers; school prefects or house prefects?

4. Have you ever received corporal punishment at school i.e. been caned or smacked by a teacher? If yes, when did this happen?

5. Do you think corporal punishment should be reinstated and why?

6. Do you believe that the prefects wield more power in the school than non-prefects who are also in grade 12? If yes, give me an example.

7. Do the grade 12 non-prefects have any power relative to other grades?

8. Do you think that the prefects, as a group, would hold different views on discipline from the rest of the grade 12 class and why?

9, Do you believe in the prefect system or would you like to see another system in place?

10. Do you think the current school rules are fair or unfair? Could you justify your answer?

11. Do you think that discipline needs improving in this school? If yes, what do you think could be done to improve the state of school discipline?

12. Do pupils have any input into school rules and policy? If yes, what is this input?

13. If I had to use the term collaborative rule-making – which implies that the pupils and teachers work together in drawing up the school rules - do you think that this is possible and how could it be done?

14. What benefits could this approach have?

15. What disadvantages could this approach have?

16. Would you support the idea of collaborative rule-making and what would be your justification?

17. How would one get the teachers and pupils to agree on the rules if collaborative rule-making was a possibility?

Thank you for participating and sharing your thoughts.

Appendix 4

<u>Sample Group</u>

Non-prefect A

Non-prefect B

Non-prefect C

Non-prefect D

Non-prefect E

Non-prefect F

Non-prefect G

Prefect 1

Prefect 2

Prefect 3

Prefect 4

Prefect 5