A Qualitative Exploration of Lesotho Educators' Disciplinary Practices

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Samevatting

Die studie in hierdie artikel is deel van 'n internasionale navorsingsprojek oor leerderwangedrag en dissiplinêre praktyke. Die navorsingsinstrument was 'n vraelys. Die artikel lewer verslag oor die bevindinge van die tematiese inhoudanalise van 'n oopeinde vraag wat deur Lesotho opvoeders voltooi is. Die deelnemers is gevra om te beskryf hoe hulle pro-aktief poog om 'n gedissiplineerde klaskameratmosfeer te skep. Twee hooftemas, naamlik voor-komende en vergeldende dissiplinêre strategieë, is geïdentifiseer. Opvoeders wat voorkomende strategieë gebruik, beklemtoon die noodsaaklikheid van effektiewe klaskamerbestuur, positiewe opvoeder-leerderverhoudinge, die opvoeder as rolmodel, waarde-onderwys, portuurgroepleierskap, die betrokkenheid van kollegas en ouers by die dissiplinering van leerders, asook die sogenaamde "vergoedingstelsel". Opvoeders wat strafmaatreëls inspan, gebruik fisieke en verbale tug omdat hulle glo dit is 'n effektiewe afskrikmiddel.

1. Introduction

One of the most important educational issues that is of concern to educators worldwide is classroom indiscipline (Mokhele, 2006:155; Strahan, Cope, Hundley & Faircloth, 2005: 25; Oosthuizen, Wolhuter & Du Toit, 2003a:458; Steyn, Wolhuter, Oosthuizen & Van der Walt, 2003:225; Zounhia, Hatzharistos & Emmanouel, 2003:289). In Kounin's (1970, in Cotton, 1999:6) seminal work, entitled *Discipline and group*

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management in classrooms, effective managers are equated to educators whose classrooms are orderly, have a minimum of learner misbehaviour, and have high levels of time-on-task. Numerous studies have found that educators believe that a well-behaved class is one of the most important indications of successful teaching and learning (Pedato, 2007:163; Buluc, 2006:30; Mokhele, 2006:155; Zounhia *et al.*, 2003:289; Cotton, 1999:6).

It is therefore imperative that a country whose Department of Education's vision is that all its citizens "shall be a functionally literate … with well-grounded moral and ethical values; adequate social, scientific and technical knowledge and skills by the year 2020" (Kingdom of Lesotho, s.a.:1), should strive to create and maintain conditions for effective teaching and learning. This involves orderly and civil behaviour among learners, as well as between learners and educators. These sentiments are supported by Lesotho's Minister of Education and Training, Mamphono Khaketla, quoted by Moetsana (2007:56). She said that discipline in Lesotho should "promote learning and positive behaviour change". However, given the frequency and nature of discipline problems in Lesotho schools (cf. De Wet & Jacobs, 2009), it seems as if educators need to reflect on their disciplinary practices. We consequently deemed it necessary to explore practices Lesotho educators use to proactively encourage disciplined classroom behaviour. The aim of this article is, accordingly, to report on findings extracted from qualitative data from a study on learner misbehaviour and educators' disciplinary practices in Lesotho. These findings will be presented against the backdrop of a short literary overview of approaches to discipline.

2. Approaches to classroom discipline

Traditionally, educators have reacted to unacceptable behaviour by shaming, verbally reprimanding, threatening, embarrassing, suspending or expelling the misbehaving learner, as well as using corporal punishment (Adams, 2000:145; Geiger, 2000:384). According to Geiger (2000:384), these punitive methods often stigmatised learners as "bad" or "crazy". Re-searchers (Geiger, 2000:384; Adams, 2000:144; Cotton, 1999:6) believe that the focus of discipline moved from punishment and retribution to conflict resolution and guidance during the 1970s. These new approaches aimed to establish a nurturing learning environment by using positive ways of intervention; for example, the formulation of proactive rules and behaviour management techniques.

The subsequent exposition of Zounhia *et al.* (2003), Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003a), Maag (2001) and Pienaar's (2003) discussions of approaches to discipline unfortunately show that despite a growing emphasis on positive

disciplinary practices and the rights of children (Adams, 2000:151), derogatory and punitive practices still prevail.

Based on a literary study, Zounhia *et al.* (2003:291), identified two categories of strategies educators use to face disciplinary problems. The first category refers to strategies based on the notion that educators can maintain order in the class by rewarding appropriate behaviours and preventing or punishing misbehaviours. This category promotes external reasons for behaving appropriately in class. The second category refers to strategies that help children take responsibility for their own behaviour; in other words to increase their self-determination.

According to Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003a:458-476) there are two major disciplinary paradigms, namely preventive and punitive. According to them security measures, aesthetic considerations, organisational arrangements and positive discipline may be categorised as preventive measures. A code of conduct, referrals by the governing body, suspension, expulsion and criminalisation are categorised as punitive methods. Preventive methods are designed to deter or avoid the incidence of disciplinary problems, while punitive measures are those measures adopted by a school and/or an educator to punish or curb the misconduct of a learner.

Maag (2001:176-182) distinguishes between punishment and positive reinforcement as ways to address learner misbehaviour. According to him, a punishment approach has evolved since biblical times and is reflected in the proverb "Spare the rod and spoil the child". Most punishment techniques – e.g. corporal punishment, verbal reprimands, removals from classroom, fines, restitution activities, in-school and out-of-school suspension – produce a rapid, often temporary suppression in learners' inappropriate behaviour (Maag, 2001:176). For this reason Maag (2001:181) advocates positive reinforcement as a way to encourage positive learner behaviour. According to him, positive reinforcement is more than superficial "rewards". It includes analysing behaviour, deciding what to change, collecting information on the behaviours of concern, using schedules of reinforcements and monitoring progress (Maag, 2001:181). The implications for classroom educators are the following: (1) acknowledge good behaviour, (2) create a positive classroom climate through classroom rules that spell out appropriate behaviour, keep learners academically engaged, not allow learners with challenging behaviour sit next to one another and spend as much time as possible walking around the classroom to monitor learners' behaviours; and (3) use peer influence.

Pienaar (2003:263-265) differentiates between "constructive, corrective, rights-based, positive educative practices (and) actions which are per-

ceived as punitive, destructive and negative". Pienaar (2003:263) lists aspects of the classroom management (e.g. well-prepared lessons, educator's self-discipline, involving learners in the establishment of classroom rules, positive relations with learners, keeping learners busy) and classroom policy as positive educative practices. Counselling, verbal and written warnings, community service, menial tasks, additional work, detention, suspension and expulsion are listed as punitive measures.

All of the foregoing researchers distinguish between two approaches or paradigms or categories of discipline. A comparative analysis of these researchers' expositions reveals a discipline continuum with positive and preventative actions at the one end of the scale and negative and punitive actions at the other. These researchers sometimes differ in where on this continuum certain disciplinary strategies (e.g. classroom rules and coun-selling) should be slotted in. These differences emphasise the complexity of discipline: classroom rules are supposed to be preventive, but may also be indicative of autocratic, belittling disciplinary practices.

The strategies educators use to discipline learners will depend on their approach to discipline and their perception of what it entails.

3. What is discipline?

Educators have to reckon with the presence of misbehaviour. According to the Bible, the child is not naturally inclined to be good and innocent in the presence of God and his/her fellow human beings. This explains the presence of misconduct, deviant behaviour and disciplinary problems in the lives of human beings in general, and of children in particular (Rossouw, 2003:419). It is therefore not wise to educate according to the nature of the child or to allow the "natural potential or aptitude" of the child to run its "natural course". Despite the fall into sin the child remains educable. From a Christian perspective education is not only required to help children to become mature adults, but to equip them for their service of God and fellow human beings, based on their love for God and fellow human beings (Rossouw, 2003:419). Education thus means to "recognise the original, authentic, serving discipleship according to the intent of God" (Oosthuizen, Roux & Van der Walt, 2003b:375).

"Discipling" in biblical/educational context refers to the act of guiding and equipping the child not only to recognise the regularities (i.e. the lawful order in and of creation), but also to conform in his/her own life to God's will (his laws and injunctions). "Discipling" can be regarded as the overarching goal and purpose of schooling: it entails guiding learners not only to hear God's will for creation but also to do His will. It also means

guiding them on the right road, to correct deviant behaviour in a loving and caring way, and to warn and support where necessary (Van Dyk, 2000, cited in Oosthuizen *et al*., 2003b:375).

De Klerk and Rens (2003:358) use Van Rensburg and Landman's (1992) definition to give a biblical perspective on discipline: God has set boundaries and the person endowed with authority (in the classroom this will be the educator) should remain within these boundaries. The educator is a called being with the authority given to him/her by God and who has the duty to use his/her authority responsibly and with respect. Learners on the other hand, have the responsibility to be obedient toward the order and structure in the classroom.

Van Rensburg and Landman (1992) and De Klerk & Rens (2003:357) define pedagogic discipline as the child's voluntary acceptance of the influence and teaching of the normed adult educator, and the child's personal appropriation of the knowledge, dispositions and ideals of the educator. In a narrower sense, pedagogic discipline represents order, governance and the keeping of order so that the activity or work will not only continue smoothly, but will also show progress in order to reach the desired aim. In a broader sense, discipline implies not only external discipline, but also inner discipline by the acceptance of being obedient to rules and regulations. Discipline from a biblical perspective is thus restorative and corrective.

According to the *American heritage dictionary* (Maag, 2001:178), discipline refers to "training that is expected to produce a specific character or pattern of behaviour, especially training that produces moral or mental improvement". According to Maag (2001:178) a key word in this definition is *improvement* that means "to increase, development, or enhance".

The foregoing discussion emphasise the positive, educative and restorative character of discipline. Discipline should ideally lead to self-discipline under the guidance of an adult educator.

Cameron's (2006:219) definition is in sharp contrast with the preceding and may be seen as indicative of the punitive approach. He defines school discipline as

> school policies and actions taken by school personnel with students to prevent or intervene with unwanted behaviour, primarily focusing on school conduct codes and security methods, suspension from school, corporal punishment, and teachers' methods of managing students' actions in class.

The subsequent analysis of disciplinary practices in Lesotho will illustrate that both punitive and positive disciplinary practices are common in this country.

4. Research method

4.1 Research instrument

This study is part of an international collaborative research project on learner misbehaviour. We were invited to do the study on learner misbehaviour in Lesotho. A questionnaire was prepared by the project leaders[2] Whilst the questions on the nature and frequency of learner misbehaviour,[3] as well as the perceptions of the effectiveness of identified disciplinary measures, methods used to maintain discipline[4] were identical for the different countries and the demographic details were particularised to take into consideration the uniqueness of each county[5]. The following open-ended question was also posed: "Please write down which arrangements you make to try to avoid lack of discipline in your classes. In other words, how are you proactively at work in creating a disciplined class environment?" A concurrent mixed method approach, in which the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study were conducted simultaneously, was thus followed in the umbrella project (Onwuegbuzie, 2002:526). The focus of this article will be on the findings extracted from the qualitative portion of the study.

4.2 Sample and data collection

The studied population was educators from schools in Lesotho. The accessibility of schools by taxi in this mountainous kingdom with its poor infrastructure influenced the sample selection. However, according to Cooper and Schindler (2003:201), a convenient sample may be used in exploratory studies on topics and/or amongst populations in which little research has been conducted. Two Lesotho citizens, who were engaged in further studies at the University of the Free State, were responsible for the administration of the questionnaires. They personally distributed the questionnaires to educators in Lesotho at the beginning of November 2007. Although prior arrangements were made by them to collect the completed questionnaires during the last week of November, they were forced to revisit a large number of schools during December to try to collect the outstanding questionnaires. This notwithstanding, only 511 of the 800 questionnaires that were distributed were returned, and of these, 497 could be used.

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2   I.J. Oosthuizen and C.C. Wolhuter.
3   Cf. De Wet & Jacobs, 2009.
4   Results are reported in an article that is currently under review with another journal.
5   We wish to thank Ms. M.A. Matsela from the National University of Lesotho for her insightful comments in this regard.

4.3 Data analysis

Thematic content analysis was used to analyse the responses to the open-ended question. A coding frame was drawn up, also providing for verbatim reporting where applicable. From the codes (categories), patterns and themes were identified and described. The identification of emergent themes and categories allowed the information to be related to the literature. All three researchers read and coded the responses of the participants. Consensus discussions between the researchers were held in order to determine the final findings of the research (Lichtman, 2006:167; Patton, 2002:453).

4.4 Literature study

A literature study was undertaken to support the findings and to compare the findings with those of previous research studies, in order to establish differences, similarities, gaps and unique contributions (Poggenpoel, 1993:3).

4.5 Measures to ensure trustworthiness

Guba's model for qualitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:233-244) was applied in order to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. Attention was paid to the following principles:
- credibility (checking the truth value of the findings),
- transferability (ensuring the applicability of the findings),
- dependability (ensuring the consistency of the findings), and
- conformability (which was accomplished by a review of the whole research process, reflexive analysis and triangulation).

The following types of triangulation were used to strengthen the study:
- Data triangulation (a literature study and participants' descriptions of how they try to avoid learner indiscipline in their classrooms),
- Investigator triangulation (all three researchers read and coded the responses of the participants and participated in consensus discussions),
- Theory triangulation (the use of multiple perspectives on discipline to interpret the data) (Patton, 2002:247).

4.6 Ethical measures

Care was taken to adhere to ethical measures during the research on a topic that may have been sensitive to some educators. In order to ensure the safety and rights of the participants, they were informed in writing of the

prevailing ethical considerations (Busher & James, 2007:111), e.g. the school and the participants' voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure confidentiality, educators were asked to return their completed questionnaires in sealed envelopes.

4.7 Findings and discussion

In section C of the questionnaire participants were asked to describe the arrangements that they make to avoid indiscipline in their classes. A relatively high percentage of the participants (63,47%) complied with this request. From the participants' descriptions two major themes, namely preventative and punitive disciplinary practices, as well as sub-themes and categories could be identified. These are discussed and supported by direct quotations from the educators, as well as by references to the literature.

An analysis of the participants' answers to the open-ended question revealed that a large number of participants, in their quest to deter learner misbehaviour focus on the reinforcement of acceptable behaviour and on actions conducive to self-discipline. There are however, also others who resort to external, belittling and/or authoritarian practices. These differences will be highlighted whilst discussing the different themes.

Theme 1: Preventative disciplinary practices

Sub-theme 1.1: Classroom management

The content analysis revealed that classroom management is a key factor for preventing indiscipline. The ensuing data analysis will reveal that the participants see educators' teaching and learning practices as important determinates that will either enhance or hinder positive learner behaviour.

Management of teaching and learning

A large number of participants acknowledge that high-quality, well-planned instruction is an effective way to manage classroom behaviour and instil self-discipline. The following three narratives may be seen as a synopsis of this stance.

> Well organised classroom, planned lesson plan with relevant materials used, i.e. knowing what you teach. Use of discovery method and child-centred method to help to keep pupils busy. Above all, love your pupils and your work!
>
> ... thorough planning. Give learners clearly defined tasks. Keep them busy and monitor that work is being done.
>
> I try to be prepared and organised. Interesting activities at a level that is appropriate, but challenging to pupils.

Some of the value-laden words extracted from the foregoing three information-rich descriptions (e.g. organised, planned, relevant, discovery method, child-centred, clearly defined tasks, busy, monitor, prepared, organised, interesting, appropriate, challenging) or their synonyms will be again be highlighted in subsequent discussions.

In linking with the preceding quotation one of the participants described how he/she tries to avoid monotony and disciplinary problems by addressing the differentiating intellectual abilities and interests of learners:

> I plan my lessons in such a way that I cater for slow learners and fast learners. I keep the intelligent pupils occupied by giving them extra work while progressing slower with slow learners, so that fast learners do not feel bored. I also vary my teaching methods.

Another educator explains how he/she uses these differentiating intellectual abilities to his/her and the learners' advantage by "creating a working routine which keeps learners actively engaged. Those who finish first sometimes tutor their colleagues who are slow".

Several participants emphasise the importance of high levels of time-on-task. Two of the participants motivate the use of this practice as follows:

> I make sure that they always have a lot of work to do so that they have no time to play.
> Students normally misbehave in class if they have nothing to do. My lessons are mostly student centred. In that way students are always busy doing certain tasks.

A number of participants corroborate the foregoing stance that learner centred education, which demands the full participation of all learners, is an important preventative strategy. The following narrative also illustrates this view:

> … involving the learners in class activities. This triggers their interest and causes less indiscipline.

It furthermore seems as if educators who come to class well prepared and know their subject and the learners are able to capture their learners' interest and thus avoid misbehaviour:

> Well planned lessons that will capture their attention and arouse their interest … know my job – subject matter and students.
> Well prepared lessons are essential but flexibility is also important: for example, a game at the end of a lesson when learners are tired can help a lot.

Participants also emphasised the necessity of the physical presence of the educator as an important deterrent to misbehaviour. One of the participants wrote that he/she is always present during group discussions "to ensure that everybody is participating in his/her discussions". Another participant concurred: "I am always there during my classes".

A golden thread that links the foregoing narratives and the literature (Pedato, 2007:163; Babkie, 2006:184-186; Buluc, 2006:31; Mokhele, 2006:154; Marshall, 2005:51; Shectman & Leichtentritt, 2004:329) is that educators must be well prepared, organised, consistent and punctual professionals, who know their subject(s) and their learners. It seems as if learners are attentive and well behaved if educators create a learner centred learning environment with a high level of time-on-task. Lessons should not be too easy or too difficult, ineffective or non-stimulating, as this may lead to learner misbehaviour. According to Strahan *et al.* (2005:26) effective classroom management promotes self-discipline and academic achievement. The importance of innovative learner centred teaching methods to curb misbehaviour, also correspond with findings by Zounhia *et al.* (2003:299). The aforementioned researchers found that Greek learners are well-behaved in the classes that they find pleasant and enjoyable. According to them, intrinsic motivation should be seen as the key to well-behaved classes. In linking with the foregoing, Shectman and Leichtentritt (2004:329) found that flexible teaching methods which focus on the learners and their interests and needs, "raises the motivation to learn and naturally may reduce misbehaviour".

Classroom rules

Participants stress that classroom rules play a vital role in effective classroom management. In their narratives the following three categories pertaining to classroom rules were identified:

- Learners should play an important role in setting up the rules.
- Learners should know the rules and the consequences of breaking the rules.
- Specific classroom rules.

The content analysis revealed a pattern of participants who believe in participatory classroom discipline. Several participants wrote that they involve learners in establishing classroom rules. The following quotations exemplify this practice:

> I let the learners make the rules…help them to do what they have agreed upon.
> I try to negotiate ground rules with pupils so that they understand what behaviour is acceptable and expected.
> At the beginning of the year I usually make students formulate their own rules besides school rules and regulations.

If seems as if one of the participants believes that if learners take co-responsibility for making the rules, they will be morally obliged to follow them:

> I let them draw up classroom regulations which will control them … they must abide by them since they were the ones who drew them up.

Some of the participants think that participatory classroom management entails more than just the setting up of rules. These participants involve learners in spelling out the possible consequences of non-compliance with classroom rules:

> I let students set their own … rules and regulations. Let them suggest the relevant and proper punishment to go with the breach of such rules and regulations.
> Allowing learners to be involved in the classroom's rule setting and even prescribing what ought to be done with the one who breaks the rules.

Not all the participants are in favour of learner input. Some, as suggested by the following quotations, are in favour of an authoritarian approach:

> First of all I introduce classroom rules. No-one should come late into my classroom, nobody should neglect his/her duty, no lies should be told, never be absent, should always tidy both clothes and body together with the classroom [sic]; no improper language should be practiced; if the child does not participate and is always playing, isolation takes place.
> I usually state the rules in my class for pupils to follow.
> Setting boundaries and letting learners know of the outcome if they cross those boundaries.

Several participants recognise the necessity for learners to know the rules. Whilst some participants explain rules once a year ("I talk to students on the first day of our meeting, making them aware of my likes and dislikes"), others do it on a daily basis ("We remind them of their responsibilities every day before we start our work") or post the rules up (learners … write them [rules] where everybody can see them" and "display the rules in class and let the learners read the prescribed rules weekly").

Participants see seating arrangements as an effective method of deterring learners from acting defiantly ("I arrange the students in my class in such a way that it is easier for me to control any negative behaviour in my class", "pupils are grouped"). This may, according to some of the participants, imply moving disruptive learners to the front of the class ("those who talk or play a lot should sit in front"; "students in the class are arranged in such a way that the troublesome ones are in the front row, i.e. next to the teacher") or separating them from their friends ("I place them as girl and boy on the desk [sic]"; "by arranging a seating plan, where boy sits with girl"; "pairing them, … in one desk there is a girl and a boy") or isolation ("if one misbehaves I isolate him/her within the classroom"; "I provide a desk so that he/she sits alone; in that case he/she will have nobody to talk to").

Educators sometimes use language as a way of deterring learners from speaking to one another. A few participants wrote that learners are not allowed to speak Sesotho in their classes. The next two extracts from the narratives may be seen as motivation for this rule:

> They should speak English to avoid speaking freely.
>
> I try any means to discourage speaking Sesotho in my class. This was after realising that when they are allowed to seek Sesotho they end up passing abusive comments to others. This destroys the good atmosphere in the class.

Rules are thus important for effective classroom management. They provide learners with a sense of what to expect from the educator. According to Buluc (2006:32) rules attempt to prevent behaviour problems from occurring. Sometimes learners misbehave because they do not understand what is expected of them. Buluc (2006:32) mentions that it is important that rules should be broad and fairly general so that a few rules apply to many situations. Barkie (2006:184) and Buluc (2006:32) emphasise that it is important that educators take time to explain the rules to the learners. Buluc (2006:33) agrees that learners should be co-responsible for making the rules: "If rules are made by the students, they will be seen as fairer and the students will not complain about them." Barkie (2006:184) suggests that rules should tell learners what to do rather than what not to do. This allows for a focus on praise rather than on punishment. The effectiveness of one of the two specific rules mentioned by the participants, namely seating arrangements, is confirmed by the literature. According to Pedato (2007:163) seating plans will not only deter indiscipline, but will enhance administrative tasks. A reading of the foregoing content analysis reveals that while some of the participants approach rule setting from a pedagogical, preventative perspective by co-operatively setting boundaries, others emphasise the punitive character of classroom discipline (e.g. "isolation takes place").

Geiger (2000:385) rightly comments that rules alone will not stop misbehaviour unless they are "integrated within a positive and warm classroom atmosphere." Attention will therefore now be given to the importance of positive educator-learner relationships to enhance disciplined behaviour.

Sub-theme 1.2: Educator-learner relationships

The content analysis revealed that educator-learner relationships are an integral feature in the management of discipline in classrooms. According to some of the participants, positive relationships are the key to positive learner behaviour. One of the participants verbalised his/her relationship

with his/her learners as one of "tolerance, acceptance, love and care for all pupils in class". Other participants gave more detailed descriptions of this relationship:

> By showing the learners that I care about them – by advising, giving examples of great men, by giving encouragement where it is needed, by being strict when needs be.
>
> Allow some of the learners to relax by letting them talk about what they like/dislike, showing interest in what is going on in their lives and perhaps mine (e.g. I have just told them I'm getting married).

Such a relationship should be built on love ("give them love "), trust ("learners have to be shown that they are trustworthy by giving them a lot of responsibility" and "convince them that I really trust them"), empathy ("show concern", "be kind to students" and "I speak to them gently") and respect ("I always talk to learners about their importance as people" and "sometimes I tell them not to think of themselves as inferior so as to maintain oneness and respect for everyone"). It furthermore seems that participants deem it important that educators show interest in their learners' problems ("sometimes sit down with your learners to listen to their problems" and "I always advise pupils to talk about their problems during the religion period"), have enough time to get to know them better ("It will be of great use if I have time to be with my students, not only talking about schoolwork but also about life in general. Be there for them") and acknowledge them as individuals ("each case has its own merit/address each offender on his/her own" and "talk to individual students about their behaviours") with their own culture identity ("make them aware of their traditions [and] values"). The importance of open two-way communication as a basis for positive educator-learner relationships is expressed as follows by one of the participants:

> It is very important to tell learners what you expect from them and what they should expect from you. This will create a good learner-teacher relationship that will enhance trust and respect from both of them.

These educators see the importance of building a loving and caring relationship with the learners. The foregoing confirms the premises that it is not difficult to lead learners to self-discipline in an environment of mutual trust, love and respect (Babkie, 2006:187; Geiger, 2000:385).

Sub-theme 1.3: The educator as role model

In studying the participants' descriptions it became obvious that the role of the educator is paramount in preventing misbehaviour. Two of the parti-

cipants expressed the view that educators should act as role models as follows:

> Always try to be a good teacher as they are copy-cats. Once they discover one thing that is bad, they will do it.

> The teacher should try to be a role model. He/she should be firm but friendly. She/he should be trustworthy in order for learners to be willing to obey the class rules.

While one of the participants also postulates that "the teacher should be … caring and have ethics", others wrote that educators should "[always] act professionally… by dressing formally and using professional language" and emulate "accepted norms and values". Educators should thus be the living example of the kind of behaviour they expect from their learners.

Oosthuizen *et al*. (2003a:467) and Mokhele (2006:156) concur with the foregoing. According to Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003a:467) the duty of the educator is "not only … to establish a model environment, but also to model true discipleship for the learners to emulate". Lemmer, Meier and Van Wyk (2006:123) write: "Learners often do as we *do*, not as we say."

Sub-theme 1.4: The use of value-embedded teaching to deter misbehaviour

The ensuing analysis of the data will, by implication, support De Klerk and Rens's (2003:359) stance that the absence of internalised values based on a specific life-view perspective may be seen as one of the root causes of disciplinary problems. It will surface from the subsequent examples that several of the participants give practical embodiment to De Klerk and Rens's (2003) appeal for the instilling of values based on a Christian life-view perspective: "teaching of religious education in schools may be of great help", "I explain what kind of people God wants", "we teach the word of God and tell the pupils to imitate what is in the Word" and "learners are encouraged to pray. Learners should be encouraged to have good relations with God." The following two quotations exemplify the view of some of the participants; namely, that the internalising of positive life-values will lead to self-discipline:

> …teachers should use living values for children, e.g. love, peace, respect, etc. so that they adapt them in their daily basis at school or class for that will mould their inner person.
> Sometimes I relate stories to pupils about bad and good behaviour so that one will make self- evaluation.

The foregoing is also an embodiment of what Oosthuizen *et al*. (2003b:375) call a Biblical/reformational perspective on discipline;

namely, that discipline should be corrective. According to these authors Christian educators should

> guide them [learners] on the right way, … correct deviant behaviour in a loving and caring way, and … warn and support where necessary.

The explicit Christian attitude of the participants may, amongst others, be explained by the fact that formal European-style education arrived in Lesotho with missionaries in the nineteenth century and that the churches still own and operate over 90% of schools in the country (Mturi, 2003:493). A Christian ethos should therefore be reflected in all school and classroom activities, as well as in the disciplinary practices of the educators.

Sub-theme 1.5: Peer leadership

A recurring theme that was evident while analysing the data is that educators often use learners to help them maintain discipline in their classrooms. The subsequent comments are exemplars of how participants use group leaders proactively:

> Arranging pupils in groups of four so that pupils are seated with their peers ... for each group there is a leader who is accountable for everything, so he/she helps me to manage the whole class.
> I divide my learners into groups and one of them becomes a group leader for a week. They exchange the leadership and then at the end we select the best leader for the month.
> …dividing them into groups and letting the group leaders see that their groups are neither talking nor doing mischievous things and then I reward the best disciplined group weekly.

Other participants make use of class rather than group leaders:

> Let them choose their class prefects so that before they report to their teachers their prefect should discipline them first.
> Class must have prefects. Monitors.

The next two quotations exemplify how participants use deviant learners as class/group leaders in the belief that this responsibility will prevent them from misbehaving:

> There are pupils who are ring leaders. I try to make them group leaders to minimise their negative behaviour in the classroom.
> The so-called troublesome learners I give more responsibilities so that they feel wanted and responsible.

It seems as if the class/group leaders have several responsibilities. They need to maintain discipline and reprimand deviant learners in the educator's absence ("the class monitors always reprimand fellow learners

in teachers' absence") or presence ("when uncalled for behaviour erupts in class, the class lesson is stopped and the disciplinary committee (learners) immediately reprimand the person or culprit") and promote a diligent, academic atmosphere ("leaders … encourage other pupils to learn on their own" and "…see that every pupil takes part when working").

Some participants wrote that the class as a whole is responsible for monitoring one another's behaviour. One of the participants wrote that he/she "involves all pupils to help me to control the discipline in the class". Another participant wrote that learners in his/her class "report anyone who goes against the rules".

From the foregoing quotations it seems as if some participants appoint group/class leaders, while others let fellow-learners democratically elect their leaders. It furthermore seems as if some peer leaders are appointed/elected for a relatively long period while others rotate on a regular basis. Whilst some of the narratives reflect a punitive approach (e.g. "their prefect should discipline them first" and "immediately reprimand the person or culprit"), others reflect a positive, preventive approach (e.g. "feel wanted and responsible" and "encourage other pupils to learn on their own"). They are however, all in agreement that the use of class/group leaders enhances positive behaviour. Mokhele (2006:154) found that educators encourages mutual respect and dignity in classrooms if they involve learners in establishing classroom rules (cf. sub-theme 1.1) and allow them to take leadership roles.

Sub-theme 1.6: The involvement of colleagues and parents in disciplining learners

A sub-theme that may be directly linked to the foregoing sub-theme on peer leadership is that educators should not try to address disciplinary problems on their own. Participants noted that a holistic approach, incorporating relevant role players, may enhance classroom discipline. One of the participants gave the following detailed description:

> Class teachers work hand-in-hand with monitors and prefects in each class. In case of failure, parents of students concerned are called to school to give a hand. There is also a disciplinary committee which does not only sit and take care of cases, but also advises students on how to avoid violating school rules.

Participants also mentioned that they work closely together with colleagues regarding incidences of learner misbehaviour (e.g. "I co-operate well with the rest of the staff") or refer learners with deviant behaviour to school management (e.g. "occasionally sent them to the head/deputy

headmaster for bad behaviour"). One of the participants mentioned that her/his school has counsellors addressing learners on a regular basis. Several participants wrote that they work with the parents of their learners as a way of encouraging positive learner behaviour ("We usually have parent meetings … where we discuss school problems"; "I think parents should be involved in school committees because punishing is not a solution" and "we should work hand-in-hand with their parents to avoid the lack of discipline in our classes") and to keep parents informed of their children misbehaving ("call parents of those who do not behave well"; "hold meetings with their parents" and "visit their homes").

The foregoing quotations once again confirm that the same strategy – involvement of role-players - may be a reflection of opposing disciplinary approaches. Some of the participants use colleagues and parents to punish transgressors ("sent to the head/deputy headmaster for bad behaviour" and "in the case of failure, parents ... are called to school to give a hand"), whilst others use them to instil positive behaviour ("parents should be involved ... because punishing is not a solution").

Lemmer *et al.* (2006:127), Mokhele (2006:156) and Steyn *et al.* (2003:229) confirm that involving parents, peers and other educators close to the learners will enhance positive behaviour. Mokhele (2006:156) contends that parents should also teach their children to accept educators as *in loco parentis* or at least, as guardians. Steyn *et al.* (2003:229) suggest that parents should take co-responsibility for their children's misbehaviour.

Sub-theme 1.7: Reward system

A sub-theme that crystallised while analysing the data is that a "reward system" may prevent learner misbehaviour. This reward may, according to the participants, take the form of gifts, incentives, praise, "some privileges", "merits (stars) for good work" and "rewards [for] the best disciplined group, weekly". Maag (2001:181-182) critiqued practices such as the foregoing as inappropriate and superficial. According to him, positive reinforcement is a challenging, long-term and time-consuming process to change learners' behaviour. Lemmer *et al.* (2006:124) distinguish between planned and spontaneous rewards. According to them, planned reward may inhibit learners' ability to develop responsibility for their own behaviour, as they rely on the control of the reward rather than their own internal controls to do what is right. Spontaneous reward, on the other hand, sends a message that the educator cares about them and that their efforts are appreciated.

Theme 2: Physical and verbal punitive disciplinary measures

Whist the foregoing discussion underwrites the premises that educators may proactively create a teaching and learning environment that will enhance positive learner behaviour, the ensuing discussion will reveal the stance of educators who believe that if you punish learners (severely) for wrongdoings, they will not repeat the unacceptable behaviour in future (cf. the open-ended question and Cameron, 2006:219).

An analysis of the qualitative data revealed that corporal punishment is but one of several forms of the punitive measures used to address wrongdoing. The following quotations were extracted from the narratives:

> We punish the children by either making them clean the loo, sweep the classroom, do push-ups or administer corporal punishment – normally with sticks.
> … for late coming, learners are made to collect stones after school [and] for serious transgressions, we use corporal punishment which seems effective.
> I ask them to keep their mouths shut, but if they do not want to do so, those who are making a noise, I ask to kneel on the floor.
> … sometimes beaten.

Participants also scold misbehaving learners ("The pupils are pulled up orally … for disruptive behaviour").

Corporal punishment is permissible in Lesotho. De Wet (2006:23) and Monyooe (1996:121-122; 1986:58) found that corporal punishment is a popular form of punishment in Lesotho. In her study on educator violence in Lesotho, De Wet (2006:23) found evidence of degrading administrations of corporal punishment by educators. Monyooe (1986:58) furthermore found that "most of the rules that govern corporal punishment in schools were violated" by Lesotho educators. In the light of the foregoing findings, as well as evidence from our study, cognisance should be taken of Cameron's (2006:221) observations. According to him, corporal punishment has often been defended as a necessary and appropriate last resort for disciplining violent learners with records of serious behaviour transgressions. Nevertheless, he found that corporal punishment is most often used with learners as a response to non-aggressive behaviour and that corporal punishment may cause serious injuries to learners, as well as emotional and psychological harm. Demeaning verbal reprimands, lecturing and persistent nagging may achieve short-term compliance, but fail to eliminate learner misbehaviour in the long term (Cameron, 2006:222).

5. Conclusion

Research indicated that classroom indiscipline is a worldwide problem and that well-behaved classes are an important indicator of successful teaching and learning. It is therefore not surprising that educators do their utmost to proactively enhance learner behaviour. Our study identified two major themes regarding Lesotho educators' proactive disciplinary strategies, namely preventative and punitive strategies. Educators, who use preventive strategies, emphasised the importance of the educator as a professional classroom manager and role model who acknowledges the importance of educator-learner relationships built on respect and values, the involvement of learners in establishing classroom rules and allowing learners to take leadership roles, rewarding positive behaviour and recognising parents and colleagues as partners. Educators, who utilise punitive strategies, employ physical and verbal punitive measures because they believe that these measures will deter future misbehaviour. Whilst some educators use and develop preventative strategies (e.g. classroom rules) with the aim of encouraging self-discipline, others use them in a dictatorial manner. This will fail to eliminate misbehaviour in the long run.

The aim of this research article was not to give guidelines to educators on how to enhance classroom discipline. The linking of our findings with those of other researchers nevertheless highlighted positive and negative aspects of disciplinary practises in Lesotho and in the rest of the world. Educators, who view themselves as professional, normed adults and take their calling seriously, should thus strive to develop self-discipline in learners through the use of strategies that can be considered constructive, corrective and pre-ventative. We believe that this will only be possible if an educator's classroom management practices are a reflection of Christian norms and values of truth, humaneness, self-discipline and responsibility. Educators should guide learners to not only hear God's will for creation, but also to do His will.

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