

An Educator Approach towards Learner Discipline as a Prerequisite in Dealing with Learner Misconduct

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Samevatting

Daar is deur die eeue heen gedebatteer oor die effektiwiteit van verskillende dissipline-metodes. Twee denkrigtings wat die impak van leerderdissipline beïnvloed, word bespreek. Die reformatief-pedagogiese denkrigting (gegrond op Christelike beginsels) word met die humanistiese denkrigting vergelyk. Die bespreking van beide die denkrigtings het ten doel om die mees funksionele hanteringsmetodes van leerderwangedrag te bepaal.

Die vraag ontstaan nou hoe die opvoeder leerderwangedrag vanuit 'n onderwys-regtelike raamwerk kan benader as hy/sy eintlik aan 'n reformatief-pedagogiese

denkrigting glo. Daar sal veral op die rol van die opvoeder in die hantering van leerderwangedrag vanuit beide denkrigtings gefokus word. Die rol van die opvoeder sal ook aan die hand van Suid-Afrikaanse wetgewing bespreek word. Die algemene persepsie van die Suid-Afrikaanse wetgewing is dat leer nie sal kan plaasvind as leerders hulle aan leerderwangedrag skuldig maak nie. Die rol van die opvoeder in die gebruik van dissiplinemetodes wat leerderwangedrag bevorder, word ondersoek.

Die vraag word deur middel van empiriese bevindinge wat die opvoeder-leerder-verhouding ondersoek het, beantwoord. Die bevindinge van die literatuuroorsig asook die empiriese ondersoek sal vanuit die reformatories-pedagogiese en humanistiese denkrigting geëvalueer word. Aanbevelings word veral met betrekking tot vakkennis en die benadering van die opvoeder gemaak.

1. Problem statement

The philosophy of education suggests that the educationist's theory of the educational aim, curriculum and teaching methods as well as discipline methods are grounded and defined by the educator's world view (Van Loggerenberg & Jooste, 1980:15). This is also true in the case of learner discipline. Different perspectives on learner discipline had been established through the ages. In the Biblical times, the educational aim focused on the concept of one God, the Bible and general principles for ethical conduct. In terms of discipline, the Israelites believed that the correction of child and adult alike would save them from eternal punishment (McCole Wilson, 1997). The Israelites were not as strict on punishment as other cultures. They had applied the rule of "punishing with the one hand and consoling the child with both hands" (Wilds & Lottich, 1970:81).

In comparison with the ancient times, the 21st Century or the Post-Modernist times had centered around a Humanistic perspective in which the needs of the learner is central in the learning process. According to Bluestein (1998:21) the learner has more freedom to choose and to control his own learning. The learner's participation in the class depends on his own expectations of personal motivation. Bluestein (1998:21) also mentions that the educator-learner relationship is more pro-active in nature. The educator normally expects participation from the learner in order to have a win-win situation in the learning process. Human rights also influence the educator-learner relationship. From an education law perspective the human rights culture emphasizes the interaction between the rights and the responsibilities of learners and educators which affect learner discipline.

The human rights culture, which exists in especially South African schools, is the result of the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (Act 108 of 1996), the supreme law of South Africa. The issue of the Constitution and the human rights culture in South African schools implies that the educator can not only take action against learner misconduct on the basis of his personal world view (Van Loggerenberg & Jooste, 1980:15), but should also consider the *Constitution* (1996a) when he decides on the correct discipline method for learner's misconduct. The question one can ask regarding the relation between the different perspectives and learner discipline is in which way could an educator deal with learner misconduct within an education law framework when he only believes in a reformational-pedagogical perspective or a humanistic approach. In this regard, the article will focus on:

- the education law framework with the Constitution as focus point; and
- the reformational-pedagogical perspective which emphasizes the key role played by the teacher as educator.

The research reported in this article revolved around the question of educator-related aspects which is considered as a contributor to further learner misconduct.

2. Objectives of this article

This article will discuss the influence of the educator approach to learner discipline on the maintenance of discipline in schools within the framework of education legislation. It will be contended that the educator's knowledge of discipline and legislation will affect the educator's approach of maintaining learner discipline. The following aspects of learner discipline will be explored in this article:

- the role of the educator;
- South African legislation relevant to learner discipline; and
- the educator approach to learner discipline.

The focus of this article will emphasize the educator-related findings of the empirical study as well as the perspectives of the learners and educators on contributing factors of learner misconduct. The findings with respect to all these investigations will be subjected to evaluation from a reformational-pedagogical vantage point.

3. An educator approach to learner misconduct

In order to describe the importance of a disciplinary approach to learner discipline, one must first analyse two key elements of learner discipline, namely the role of the educator as well as relevant legislation regarding learner discipline.

3.1 The role of the educator

The reformational-pedagogical perspective emphasizes the key role played by the teacher as educator, and correctly points out that education in the complete sense of the word is more than just instruction and teaching, but comprises of the development of the *educand* (the learner) as a complete person (Van der Walt, Dekker & Van der Walt, 1983:13). It entails the guiding, equipping, enabling and disciplining of the *educand* until s/he has reached optimal levels of maturity as a human being. Eloff extend the task of the educator as: the influencing of the child while he is developing physically, psychologically and intellectually in order to reach self-actualisation and adulthood (Eloff, 2009:24). According to Van Loggerenberg *et al.* (1980:514) this process means that learners should be lead to voluntary collaboration in order to form acceptable behavioural patterns to benefit society.

From a humanistic perspective, Gunther, Estes en Schwab (2003:342) describe the educator, amongst other things, as “the professional responsible for keeping the class focused on what is being taught and maintaining discipline in a fair and consistent manner”. This process of teaching as well as maintaining discipline also relates with the humanistic point of view. Section 28(2) of the Constitution states that: “a child’s best interests are of *paramount* importance in every matter concerning the child” (*Constitution*, 1996a). Yet Coetzee, Van Niekerk en Wydeman (2008:215) warns that there should be a balance between the need for a secure and orderly environment and the learner’s right to freedom and fair discipline practices.

This definition emphasizes the educator-related factors that may affect the maintenance of learnerdiscipline. According to Mentz, Wolhuter en Steyn (2003:398) the two main aspects in this regard are:

- a) the competence of educator; and
- b) the educator approach to learner discipline.

a) Competence of the educator

From a reformational-pedagogical view knowledge is perceived as an integral part of education according to Van der Walt *et al.* (1983:197). Van der Walt argues that knowledge is the foundation and prerequisite for spiritual development of the learner. The author also indicates that formal education came into being so that children could be taught by professional educators who prepare them for the future by means of conveyance of knowledge. *The Norms and standards document* (SA: 2000) also refers to the professional educator as a competent person. Miller and Pedro (2006:295) define a competent person as someone who is well-

read and who is able to deal with situations from a knowledge base or from insight. Seven roles of the educator are described in the *Norms and standards document* (SA: 2000) in order to depict the educator as a competent person. For the purpose of the research reported on in this article, the notion of the competence of the educator was divided into teaching competence and competence in dealing with learner misconduct.

Teaching competence refers to the necessary abilities, authority, knowledge and skills in order to teach. In South Africa it is reported that there are currently 30 000 unqualified teachers in South African schools (Human Rights Commission, 2008). However, in contrast with this number, the Department of Education report of 2009 (DOE, 2009) indicated that the improvement of the qualifications of educators had increased with 94.4%. According to this report an educator in South Africa is considered to be appropriately qualified if the educator has obtained a senior certificate or has a minimum of three years appropriate training. An educator who has not obtained a senior certificate, has three years of training, or has received training outside of the field of education, is considered to be unqualified or under-qualified.

In the case of competence in dealing with learner misconduct, the educator should have knowledge of discipline methods as well as the skill to use different methods for different circumstances. In the Old Testament (Bible, 2002) the law of retaliation “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Ex 21:24) does not refer to personal revenge, but protection from harsher punishment which do not fit the offence. Jesus Christ teaches in the New Testament that revenge is forbidden (Mathew 5:38-41). Christ urges Christians to act in a positive manner to personal insult and legal contention.

The same principle is used by South African schools with the contemporary approach to learner discipline which has been introduced by the Department of Education (Mangena, 2002:8). Roos (2003:506) states that any school, which is an organ of the state, should promote the fundamental rights of learners. In the matter of the maintenance of learner discipline an educator should therefore be sure that the disciplinary methods he uses for learner misconduct do not infringe the learner’s fundamental rights.

b) Educator approaches to discipline

The second element which Mentz *et al.* (2003:398) identify as an aspect which may affect learner discipline, is the educator approach. Oosthuizen (2006:469) distinguish between pro-active and reactive disciplinary approaches. According to Oosthuizen (2003:73) the re-active approach means to take action against learner

misconduct. Oosthuizen and Van Staden (2007:363) define the following methods as reactive methods:

- corporal punishment;
- detention;
- disciplinary hearings by the school governing body; and
- suspension and expulsion.

Van Wyk (2001:198) found that educators with a lack of knowledge of disciplinary methods tend to use reactive, punitive and humiliating methods to curb learner misconduct. Ferreira, Badenhorst and Wilkenson (2007:73) found that methods such as detention, intimidation, corporal punishment, verbal assault and humiliation are used to deal with learner misconduct.

In contrast with the reactive approach that the result of a positive environment would consequently modify learner conduct, the pro-active approach is the more favoured method for changing the learning - and school environment into a positive environment. The pro-active disciplinary approach is more associated with the humanistic point of view.

Oosthuizen *et al.*, (2007:363) identify the adaptation of school rules, the preparation of the educator, the educator's knowledge on the subject as well as positive discipline as forms of pro-active disciplinary methods. One of the pro-active approaches that can be utilised is positive discipline. Rogers (2006:31) explains the effect of positive discipline on the educator-learner relationship as follows:

If it is our intention to enable a student to take responsibility for his behaviour and to actively consider others' rights, and if our discipline has that as its aim, the child will more likely see that intention in the kind of language and manner we use. The degree of cooperation, even compliance, in student behaviour, also depends on the kind of relationship existing between teacher and student.

Coetzee *et al.*, (2008:71) agree that it is very important to establish good relationships because relationships with learners make it easier to provide leadership or even maintain discipline. The *South African council for educators act* (2000) provides guidelines for the kind of relationship between educator and learner which Rogers refers to. Some of these guidelines in the *South African council for educators act* (2000) include the following:

An educator:

- exercises authority with compassion;
- strives to enable learners to develop a set of values consistent with the fundamental rights contained in the Constitution of South Africa;
- avoids any form of humiliation and refrains from any form of abuse; physical or psychological; and

- is not negligent or indolent in the performance of his or her professional duties.

3.2 Legislation relevant to learner discipline

The education law perspective will be discussed through the means of South African legislation in order to clarify the Humanistic approach. The *Constitution* (1996a) as well as education specific legislation will be discussed.

a) The Constitution

Since the adaptation of the Bill of Rights (*Constitution*, 1996a) and the abolishment of corporal punishment, a human rights culture has emerged in schools. Mangena (2002:8) points out that with the abolishment of corporal punishment, the Department of Education put new disciplinary measures into place that would take learners' fundamental rights into account. In the case of disciplinary measures the following rights as stated in the *Constitution* (1996a), should be taken into account

- the right to human dignity (section 10);
- the right to equality (section 9);
- the right to privacy (section 14);
- the right to freedom and security of the person (section 12); and
- the right to education (section 29).

Educators are now required to deal with learner misconduct without infringing the offender's rights. Section 28(2) of the *Constitution* (1996a) provides that a child's best interests are of paramount importance in every matter concerning the child. In the case of dealing with learner misconduct, the right to administrative justice (*Constitution*, 1996a: section 33) should be read with section 28. Section 33 regulates the legal relationship between the educator, the person in authority and the learner. The said right could be applied in discipline matters. This right, according to Coetzee *et al.* (2008:204) maintain that the educator's action against learner misconduct should be reasonable, lawful and fair. Therefore one can conclude that the educator approach in dealing with misconduct should not contribute to learner misconduct.

b) Education-specific legislation

Three legislative documents which are based on the *Constitution* (1996a) and which have specific directives on learner discipline will be discussed.

The South African schools act

The objective of the *Schools Act* (1996b), proposes to provide for a uniform system for the organization and governance of schools where it will uphold the

rights of learners, parents and educators and promote their acceptance of the responsibility for the organization and governance of the schools. *The Schools Act* (1996b) provides that each school should adopt a code of conduct which according to section 8(2) of the Act should “aim at establishing a disciplined and purposeful school environment, dedicated to the improvement and maintenance of the quality of the learning process”.

The preamble of the act mentions that it is necessary to set uniform norms and standards for the education of learners at schools throughout the Republic of South Africa. That may imply that the use of a *Code of conduct* is mandatory for all schools in South Africa.

Guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in adopting a code of conduct for learners

The *Guidelines for the consideration of governing bodies in adopting a code of conduct* (1998) is a schedule to the South African Schools Act which can be used to apply Section 8 of the *Schools Act* (1996b) in terms of a code of conduct for learners. The purpose of a Code of Conduct is to promote positive discipline and exemplary conduct among learners as they learn and observe the educators. *Guidelines* (1998) explain the educators’ role in the maintenance of learner discipline by means of a code of conduct.

First the educator is empowered by the Code of Conduct to control and discipline the learner according to the Code of Conduct during the time that the learner attends at the school (*Guidelines*, 1998: section 3.6). That implies that the educator has full authority and responsibility to correct the behaviour of learners whenever such correction is necessary. The *Guidelines* (1998) also describes the form of action that should be taken if learners are guilty of misconduct.

The deduction that one can make is that legislation can be used by the educator as a pro-active instrument to maintain learner discipline in the classroom. Practical guidelines are given about how to deal with both less serious learner misconduct and serious learner misconduct. Yet Roos (2003: 482) argues that educators, learners and parents seem to be uncertain about what is permitted or prohibited by the directives in a code of conduct. The legal framework in South Africa within which educators teach and ‘dispense’ discipline can furthermore be lauded from a reformational-pedagogical perspective. It not only emphasizes the need for respecting the rights of the educands but also stresses the importance of acting in the interests of the learners. It also provides for a consistent form of school education for the entire country. However, as Roos pointed out, some educators still seem to be uncertain with regard to what is permitted and what not with respect to conduct. Some of the findings of the study that was done in the Southern

region of the North-West Province (2009:79) may shed light on the uncertainty on the part of the various shareholders.

4. Empirical investigation

4.1 Purpose of the empirical investigation

The study will be used to compare the perspectives of the respondent groups (the learners and the educators) on the most common educator-related contributors to learner misconduct.

4.2 Research design

The research design of the study was a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative design was used to identify the frequency of learner mis-conduct as well as the contributing factors that lead to learner misconduct. The qualitative information that was obtained through an open-ended question forming part of the questionnaire, was used to critically analyse the perspectives of the learners as well as the educators.

4.3 Methodology

The empirical investigation was based on a literature study. The literature review resulted in the development of a theoretical and conceptual framework (see 1 above). Use was made of databases such as EBSCO-Host and Eric. The following key words were used: misconduct, human rights, school discipline, learner discipline, classroom management.

4.4 Sampling

The population consisted of Grade 9 learners ($n = 735$) and their educators ($n = 29$) in 14 secondary schools in the Potchefstroom-district which form part of the Southern region of the North West province. Two Grade 9 classes from each school were randomly chosen. The learners consisted of 53% girls and 47% boys.

In the case of the educator respondents two or more educators per school, who were willing to participate, took part in the study. The age of the educator respondents (58.62% male and 41.38% female) ranged from 23 to 60 years. The teaching experience of the educators ranged from 1 to 21 years and longer. The age and the teaching experience impacted on the disciplinary methods that are used. Perceptions in connection with dealing with learner misconduct of both learners and educators were compared with each other.

4.5 Measuring instruments

With regards to the empirical study (Eloff, 2009:78), a structured questionnaire was handed out at participating schools where both the learner and educator respondents had to answer the same questions on learner misconduct. The questions included aspects such as the most common aspects that may affect learner misconduct as well as the identification of effective and ineffective disciplinary methods that were currently used in their schools. Respondents had to indicate the degree of efficacy of disciplinary methods on a four point Likert-scale. The data of the questionnaires were analysed by the Statistical Consultative Service at the North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus) to assist with the interpretation of the data. Statistical techniques that were used, comprise the determination of frequencies and the averages of responses. In addition, a factor analysis of both respondent groups (the learners and the educators) was conducted in order to establish the relation between the different forms of learner misconduct that were indicated on the questionnaires.

Qualitative information regarding learners' needs that could have a positive effect on dealing with learner misconduct was collected by means of an open-ended question that both of the respondent groups had to answer. The qualitative information gives some insight on how learners perceived the current disciplinary methods that are used in secondary schools.

4.6 Statistical techniques

A factor analysis using principal components was used to determine underlying factors to the questions of the questionnaire. The reliability of the resulting factors was measured by means of the Cronbach-alpha coefficient. The SAS programme (SAS Institute Inc., 2003) was used for statistical analysis.

4.7 Ethical aspects

Firstly, permission was obtained from the North-West University to conduct the research. Secondly, permission was asked from the Education Department to conclude an empirical research in secondary schools in the Southern region of the North West Province. Each principal of the participating schools were contacted and received a summary of the research proposal with the permission letter from the Department. No person was forced to take part in the study. The privacy of the respondents was respected throughout the empirical research.

5. Findings

The factor analysis identified educator-related contributors as the only factor which contributes to learner misconduct (See Table 1). It has been established

with the Kaiser Criterion that Factor 1 has an *eigenvalue* greater than 1 which proves that this factor is valid (See Table 1). Factor 1 also has a Cronbach-alpha value of 0.77 which indicates that the data is reliable.

TABLE 1: Factor analysis: The authority of the educator as contributor to further learner misconduct.

FACTOR	ITEMNR	CONTRIBUTORS	LOADING	EIGEN VALUE	% VARIANCE EXPLAINED
Factor 1	12.1	Do not set boundaries for learners.	0.56		
The authority of the educator as contributor to learner misconduct	12.2	Come to school unprepared.	0.60		
	12.3	Few educators can function as role models.	0.50	3.150	35%
	12.4	Are not equipped to maintain discipline.	0.64		
	12.5	Experience problems with the curriculum.	0.59		
	12.6	Inconsistent use of disciplinary methods.	0.61		
	12.7	Experience problems with the educator-learner relationship.	0.62		
	12.8	Makes him/herself guilty of learner misconduct.	0.61		
	12.9	Wavering (uncertain) educators do have an effect on learner discipline.	0.59		

The responses of the learners (Table 2(a)) and educators (Table 2(b)) on the most common educator-related contributors to learner misconduct will be explored. Table 2(a) indicates the learners' perceptions of the contributors that may have a negative influence on learner discipline, while Table 2(b) focuses on the educator responses regarding the contributors to learner misconduct.

The factor analysis identified the authority of the educator as the factor that contributes to learner misconduct (See Table 1). Nine items were identified as aspects which relate to the authority of the educator. The statistical technique, the Kaiser Criterion identified Factor 1 as valid seeing that the said factor has an *eigenvalue* greater than 1 (see Table 1). According to the Cronbach-alpha value of 0.77, the data of Factor 1 is reliable.

The responses of the learners (Table 2(a)) and educators (Table 2(b)) on the most common educator-related contributors to learner misconduct will be explored. Table 2(a) indicates the learners' perceptions on the contributors that may have a negative influence on learner discipline, while Table 2(b) focuses on the educator responses regarding the contributors to learner misconduct. A comparison will be made between the ranking lists of the learners and the educators.

TABLE 2(a): Learner responses: Factor 1: The authority of the educator as a contributor to learner misconduct

LEARNER RESPONSE			PERCENTAGES						
RANK	QUESTION	SCALE VALUE	QUESTION NR	DISAGREE COMPLETELY	DISAGREE IN A CERTAIN EXTENT	DISAGREE IN A GREAT EXTENT 1+2	AGREE IN A CERTAIN EXTENT	AGREE COMPLETELY	AGREE IN A GREAT EXTENT 3+4
1	There are a few educators who can function as role models.	2.59	12.3	26.99	18.89	45.88	22.16	31.96	54.12
2	Educator uncertainty does have an effect on learner discipline.	2.55	12.9	24.96	24.38	49.34	21.17	29.49	50.66
3	Educators have problems with educator-learner relationships.	2.50	12.7	29.83	19.32	49.15	21.73	29.12	50.85
4	Educators are inconsistent with disciplinary methods.	2.38	12.6	29.93	24.53	54.45	23.65	21.90	45.55
5	Educators experience problems with the curriculum.	2.36	12.5	30.99	25.54	56.53	20.09	23.39	43.48
6	Educators make themselves guilty of misconduct.	2.22	12.8	37.99	20.67	58.66	22.49	18.84	41.33
7	Educators do not set boundaries for learners.	2.21	12.17	39.86	20.43	60.29	18.42	21.29	39.71
8	Educators are not equipped to maintain discipline.	2.21	12.4	36.40	25.07	61.47	19.41	19.12	38.53
9	Educators come to school unprepared.	2.07	12.2	47.89	15.35	63.24	19.01	17.75	36.76

TABLE 2(b): Educator responses: Factor 1: The authority of the educator as contributor to further learner misconduct

EDUCATOR RESPONSE			PERCENTAGES						
RANK	QUESTION	SCALE VALUE	QUESTION NR	DISAGREE COMPLETELY	DISAGREE IN A CERTAIN EXTENT	DISAGREE IN A GREAT EXTENT 1+2	AGREE IN A CERTAIN EXTENT	AGREE COMPLETELY	AGREE IN A GREAT EXTENT 3+4
1	Educators who experience problems with the curriculum.	2.83	12.5	17.24	17.24	34.48	31.03	34.48	65.51
2	Educator uncertainty does have an effect on learner discipline.	2.69	12.9	24.14	13.79	37.93	31.03	31.03	62.06
3	Educators are inconsistent with disciplinary methods.	2.54	12.6	28.57	17.86	46.43	25.00	28.57	53.57
4	Educators have problems with the educator-learner relationship.	2.28	12.7	27.59	27.59	55.17	34.48	10.34	44.82
5	Educators do not set boundaries for learners	2.24	12.1	37.93	24.14	62.07	13.79	24.14	37.93
6	Educators are not equipped to maintain discipline.	1.97	12.4	48.28	20.69	68.97	17.24	13.79	31.03
7	There are a few educators who can function as role models.	1.79	12.3	55.17	24.14	79.31	6.90	13.79	20.69
8	Educators come to school unprepared.	1.55	12.2	62.07	24.14	86.21	10.34	3.45	13.79
9	Educators make themselves guilty of misconduct.	1.55	12.8	68.97	13.79	82.76	10.34	6.90	17.24

The learner respondents identified the six most common contributors that pertain to learner misconduct as:

- there are a few educators who can function as role models (1st position);
- educator uncertainty does have an effect on learner discipline (2nd position);
- educators who have problems with the educator-learner relationship (3rd position);
- educators who are inconsistent with disciplinary methods (4th position);
- educators who experience problems with the curriculum (5th position) and;
- educators who make themselves guilty of learner misconduct (6th position).

In comparison with the learners, the educators identified the following as contributors to learner misconduct:

- educators who experience problems with the curriculum (1st position);
- educator uncertainty do have an effect on learner discipline (2nd position);
- educators who are inconsistent with disciplinary methods (3rd position);
- educators who have problems with the educator-learner relationship (4th position);
- educators who do not set boundaries for learners (5th position); and
- educators who are not equipped to maintain discipline (6th position).

5.1 Shared perceptions on contributors to learner misconduct

The shared contributors of learners and educators which appeared in the top six positions were:

- uncertain educators (item 12.8 in Table 2);
- educators who experience problems with the curriculum (item 12.5 in Table 2);
- educators who experience problems with the educator-learner relationship (item 12.7 in Table 2); and
- educators who are inconsistent with disciplinary methods (item 12.6 in Table 2).

Uncertain educators

The first shared contributor is uncertain educators (item 12.8 in Table 2) and is placed by both respondent groups in the second place in the ranking order (See Table 2(a) and (b)). The majority of the educators (62.06%) and learners (50.66%) agreed that the uncertainty of educators contributes to learner misconduct.

The contributor, uncertain educators, correlates with Mentz *et al.* (2003:398) who states that competence of the educator affects learner discipline in the classroom.

Educators that experience problems with the curriculum

With regards to the second shared contributor, the experiencing of problems with the curriculum (item 12.5 in Table 2), educators placed the aspect as the most common aspect that contributes to learner misconduct, while the learners placed this contributor in the 5th position. The reason for the placement of this contributor in the educator responses may be because of the training of educators. The educators may realise their shortcomings and uncertainty of the new curriculum. It should be understood that most of the educator respondents that

took part in the study have been already teaching when the new curriculum had been introduced. Fifty percent of the participants had an education diploma (Eloff, 2009:93). The educators who had 0-10 years of teaching experience were thus in the minority.

Educators that experience problems with the educator- learner relationship

The third shared contributor which is among the six most common factors that contribute to learner misconduct, is the experiencing of problems with the educator-learner relationship (item 12.7 in Table 2). In this case, more learners (50.85%) than educators (44.82%) believed that a negative educator-learner relationship may lead to learner misconduct. A possible deduction may be that there is a stronger need from the learners' perspective to have a positive educator-learner relationship as the *South African council for educators act* (2000) requires.

The fourth shared contributor to learner misconduct is identified as inconsistent disciplinary methods (item 12.6 in Table 2). Learner respondents ranked this contributor as third most common contributor, while the educators placed it in fourth place of the ranking order. The low frequency level of the learners indicates their ignorance of the importance of consistent action. Inconsistent action may be seen as an unreasonable form of discrimination ((section 7 and 9 of the *Constitution* (1996a)).

The four contributors which were identified in the ranking lists of both the respondent groups are significant, seeing that the mentioned contributors correlate with literature (see div. 1.1). All four contributors may relate to the basic principles of the *Constitution* (1996a) and the *South African council for educators act* (2000).

5.2 Contrasting perceptions of learners and educators on contributors to learner misconduct

The findings show that the ranking lists of the learners and the educators sometimes differ in terms of the most common contributors to learner misconduct (see Table 2 (a) and (b)). For the purposes of the article the items that are placed in the first 6 positions are seen as the most common contributors to learner misconduct. The following contributors which are identified by either the educators or the learners will be discussed consequently. According to the empirical study, the following contributors have either been identified in the first 6 places in the ranking order of either the learner or the educator respondents:

- few educators who can function as role models (item 12.3 in Table 2);
- educators who make themselves guilty of learner misconduct (item 12.8

in Table 2);

- educators who do not set boundaries for the learners (item 12.1); and
- educators who are not equipped to maintain discipline (item 12.4 in Table 2).

The learners

The learner respondents include few educators who can function as role models (item 12.3 in Table 2) and educators that make themselves guilty of misconduct (item 12.2 in Table 2)) in their ranking list. Even though the majority of the learners (54.12%) indicated that a lack of role models in the school may promote learner misconduct, the minority of the educators (20.69%) agreed with the statement.

In the matter of educators who make themselves guilty of misconduct, 41.33% learners had indicated that this kind of conduct by the educator may lead to learner misconduct while 17.24% of the educators agreed with this statement. A lack of respect for the educators' misbehaviour may possibly lead to problems with the educator-learner relationship. This aspect may also relate to the lack of role models in schools. It is noteworthy that only 17.24% of educators realise that their misconduct have a negative effect on learner discipline.

The educators

The contributors that have only appeared on the educators' ranking list, are: educators who do not set boundaries for learners (ranked 5th position) and educators who are not equipped to maintain discipline (6th position). It is interesting to note that the setting of boundaries was placed under the first 6 positions of the educators' ranking lists, while only 37.93% educators agreed with this aspect as contributor. This may imply that some educators know the importance of boundaries in learner discipline. It actually correlates with the finding that educators are not equipped to maintain discipline. The frequency results show that the majority of learners (61.47%) and the majority of the educators (68.97%) disagreed that this contributor may promote learner misconduct.

The last contributor which has been identified as one of the most common contributors to learner misconduct is the contributor "educators who are not equipped to deal with learner discipline" (item 12.4 in Table 2). According to the empirical findings both of the respondents (the learners and the educators) disagreed with this contributor as contributing factor to learner misconduct. This may imply that aspects such as the educators' confidence and his/her knowledge

in his/her field may be more important than knowledge of disciplinary methods. The unprepared educator as contributor to learner misconduct (item 12.2 in Table 2) is the only item which is not identified as one of the top six contributors by either the learner or the educator respondents. Yet it is noteworthy that both the respondent groups did not seem to think that an unprepared educator could be seen as a contributing factor to learner misconduct.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of this article was firstly to explore the relation between the reformational-pedagogical perspective and the humanistic point of view in the literature study. These two perspectives were analysed in terms of the role of the educator in learner discipline (see subdiv. 3.1). The humanistic point of view was discussed in terms of the South African Constitution which educators must adhere to when dealing with learner misconduct. The question that was raised in the literature study was which framework the educator would utilise when he is confronted with disruptive behaviour in his classroom.

In the empirical study the perceptions of educators and learners regarding educator-related contributors to further learner misconduct were researched to establish the role of the educator in learner discipline. With regards to the question, educators and learners had to indicate in the empirical study which aspects of the educator may contribute most to further learner misconduct. These contributors resonate with the competence of the educator which was discussed in the literature study. According to the findings, the key educator-related contributors to learner misconduct can be summarised as:

- uncertainty of educators;
- educators who experience problems with the curriculum;
- educators who are not equipped to maintain discipline; and
- the educator-learner relationship.

Uncertain educators could be described as the key element of all the contributors which was identified in the findings. The conclusion one can make is that educators who are uncertain about the subject or the curriculum may lead to learner misconduct or the breaking down of the educator-learner relationship. These concepts were discussed in the literature study where it was stated that it is required from educators to have knowledge (see subdiv. 3.1). The same argument could be used for educators who are uncertain of the disciplinary methods one can use in a human rights culture. Educators would either violate the learners' rights and contravene legislation or just cause a breach in the educator-learner relationship. A breached relationship would mean that the educator would not fulfil his/her role

as an educator nor be true to his/her profession.

As it was indicated in the literature, a framework is needed to educate learners. The educator should have a philosophy (a reformational-pedagogical – or humanistic point of view) on the educator-learner relationship as well as knowledge on justifiable disciplinary methods. Knowledge of education law, especially of the Constitution, is also needed to integrate principles of one's own world view as well as the directives of South African legislation to take the correct action against learner misconduct. To conclude one can say that the *Constitution* (1996a) is broad enough to apply one's personal world view when dealing with learner misconduct inside the framework of the Constitution.

7. Recommendations

The research findings have identified educator-related aspects as contributors to learner misconduct, but the educator related approach cannot be isolated when dealing with solutions to the problem of learner misconduct in secondary schools. The situation has reached a problematic stage where South Africa loses 30 000 qualified educators per year which affects the country heavily (Human Rights Commission, 2008). As indicated in legislation, all stakeholders must play their roles effectively so that intervention can take place. The preamble of the *Schools Act* (1996b) states that South Africa requires a school system which upholds the rights of all learners, parents and educators and promote their acceptance of responsibility for the organization, governance and funding for the schools in partnership with the state. For this reason, recommendations will be made which will not solely focus on the educator to deal with learner misconduct, but all stakeholders in the school.

Firstly, it is recommended that a whole school approach in terms of educator approaches to maintaining learner discipline should be followed. The source of the whole school approach should be grounded in legislation such as the *Schools Act* (1996b) and the *Guidelines* (1998). The *Guidelines* (1998) describe learners, parents, educators and non-educators at the school as stakeholders which should be involved in the implementation of the Code of conduct when dealing with learner discipline. The Code of conduct as it is proposed by the *Guidelines* (1998), could be the instrument which co-ordinate legislation with the educator's individual approach towards learner discipline. The implication is that all schools in the country should have a code of conduct as well as a strategic plan to implement the code of conduct.

Secondly, educators should be informed about the different approaches as well as when to use the different disciplinary methods. The focus should be on a uniform approach to maintain discipline in the classroom. The integration of the Code of

conduct with the class rules would be an effective guideline. A possible suggestion is that the principal could consider that his/her educators' knowledge on discipline approaches be on the same level. Professional and personal supporting services should be available for educators that need advice on the curriculum, disciplinary methods and the educator-learner relationship. It is also recommended that training on disciplinary methods along with fundamental rights to all stakeholders should be given by universities in the form of courses.

Thirdly, there should be a balance in the application of pro-active and reactive disciplinary methods as well as the circumstances when it is used. Research is needed in the legal aspects of the application of different reactive disciplinary methods. Further research can also be done in the educator-learner relationship when dealing with the different forms of learner misconduct.

From a Christian scholarship's perspective, lecturers have the right and the responsibility to teach their students different perspectives in order to critically analyse different world views. It is thus recommended that lecturers would be urged to have different debates in their classes on world events. The students would be able to decide for themselves how they can incorporate personal world views with discipline methods in schools.

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