

**Informal and Non-Formal Learning amongst Teachers
in Relation
to the Management of Classroom Discipline at a
Primary School**

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Abstract

South Africa has undergone major transformation after the election of the first democratic government in 1994. The acceptance of a humane constitution as well as equal rights for all its citizens necessitated the banning of corporal punishment in all schools under the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996. Accordingly, this change in the education policy as well as a change in society regarding equal rights for all citizens required teachers to adjust and improve their practices related to classroom management and discipline. The abolition of corporal punishment in 1996 (South African Schools Act 84 of 1996) can thus be regarded as such a changed aspect which required teachers to find alternative ways of keeping discipline in schools. It is expected from teachers to manage learning in classrooms, while at the same time practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards the development of a sense of respect and responsibility amongst learners. It is with this in mind that one should remember that classroom locations and environments are complex as well as dynamic. Learners can now use their rights in a court of law while at the same time become more unruly, disruptive and at times even violent. Teachers on the other hand are left with limited alternative procedures or guidelines to manage unruly learners. As such, teachers now rely on their own informal learning in order to deal with such learners since alternatives to manage ill-disciplined learners are not included in formative teacher training courses.

This study therefore concerns itself with the way teachers acquire classroom management skills in the absence of corporal punishment and learn how to deal with behavioural problems in order to carry on with day-to-day classroom activities. This is essentially viewed as informal learning. Because of the absence of much-needed training and support from educational authorities, teachers adjust and improve their practice, relying on hands-on experience in classrooms since they only incidentally receive opportunities to engage in ongoing formal professional development. This study explores the nature and content of informal/incidental as well as non-formal (courses not leading to formal accreditation) teachers' learning related to managing classroom discipline in the absence of corporal punishment and investigates how skills, to

manage classroom discipline, impact on the learning and teaching enterprise.

A qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm was followed throughout this study. Unstructured interviews were used to gather data which resulted in the gaining of rich detailed descriptions of participants' responses to acquiring classroom management skills. This qualitative investigation included a literature review that explored and analysed different perspectives on the learning process.

This study confirms that teachers acquire classroom management and discipline skills through workplace learning, initiated by themselves as well as collaboratively through interaction with colleagues and learners. Learning within the workplace was possible due to the opportunities they were afforded within the working context they found themselves in.



DECLARATION

I declare that “Informal and Non-Formal Learning Amongst Teachers In Relation To the Management of Classroom Discipline at a Primary School” is my own work, that it has not been submitted for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by complete referencing.

Full names: Selwyn Damonse Date: Signed.....



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Section One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This section focuses on the rationale for the study before moving on to the statement of the problem. After listing the guiding objectives of the study, a discussion of the purpose of the study follows, which leads to the provision of background information that includes the socio-economic issues that might have a bearing on the problem under investigation. The introductory section concludes by defining key terms used in this study.

In essence, this study explores and analyses the different ways through which teachers acquire classroom management skills in the absence of corporal punishment as well as how they learn to deal with behavioural problems in order to carry on with the day-to-day classroom activities. According to the Nuffield Foundation MetaGlossary (2002), classroom management is defined as “the ways of organizing the resources, pupils and helpers in a classroom so that teachers and learners can both proceed in an efficient and safe manner.” My understanding of the concept of classroom management will be guided throughout this research by this definition.

Before the promulgation of the National Education Policy Act No 84 (1996) that banned corporal punishment at school (Government Gazette 175790), teachers could still, as a last resort, revert to caning or the threat of it, in order to stem the tide of unruly learners who tested the limits of reasonable behaviour. This changed with the enactment of the Act and teachers were required to re-skill themselves in order to deal with behavioural problems as well as improve their knowledge about classroom management and discipline in general. This prompted the research question that guides this study: *“how and why are teachers in disadvantaged communities learning to deal with class discipline and behavioral problems in the absence of resorting to corporal punishment?”*

1.2 Rationale for the study

Even though teachers' formative education and training programmes do not focus on techniques and strategies to maintain classroom discipline, the contexts they work under require that they gain these skills in order to teach effectively. Katherine Sellgren points out that psychologists and unions agree that teacher-training courses do not cover enough ground on classroom management. She suggests that "courses should also contain modules on child development as well as child psychology", in order to equip teachers to deal with behavior problems (Sellgren, 2010). However, the current practising teachers are forced to learn 'on the job' as they confront disciplinary problems. Accordingly, the focus of this study is the question: "*how, why and what do teachers learn about classroom management and discipline?*"

High levels of disruptive behaviour, discipline referrals and suspensions are the order of the day in schools. According to the Western Cape Education Department (Circular 0095/2002: 1), there is a proliferation of corporal punishment complaints being registered against teachers. Since discipline is necessary and essential for the proper functioning of schools and realizing that indiscipline disrupts effective teaching in most schools, it is important to hear views expressed by teachers on their on-going attempts to restore discipline.

In the process of learning about effective classroom management and discipline, teachers use different strategies. The aim of this study is to identify and describe these strategies which could serve as a model for learning at work. Furthermore, drawing on this study, school principals can facilitate opportunities for learning in the work place.

Current educational policies put significant pressure on school teachers to modify their practices in many areas. This requires professional development and teachers have to employ their knowledge and skills more effectively and develop approaches necessary for learning to teach in an ever-changing reality. This research endeavours to explore the ways in which some teachers find creative ways of approaching classroom discipline. Some teachers, including the researcher, struggle to find effective solutions to eradicate the on-going practice of corporal punishment in primary school especially in sub-economic areas and in particular the Lavis Town area (situated

in the Cape Peninsula in the southern part of the Western Cape Province in South Africa) while some schools in other areas are more successful. In some schools, it appears as if the problem of disruptive behaviour is further compounded by the low socio-economic levels of communities. For this reason, this study is set to be undertaken in a working class community whose geographical location is Lavis Town or Bishop Lavis. This factor might have a bearing on how teachers learn different skills in dealing with disruptive behaviour.

1.3 Statement of the problem

Maintaining discipline in schools and in the classroom is essential for the creation of an atmosphere that encourages optimal learning and teaching. In the past, teachers made use of coercive methods such as corporal punishment to maintain discipline and to prevent the disruptive behaviour of learners from having a negative impact on classroom management and learning.

However, with the abolition of corporal punishment by the South African Schools Act (Act 84 of 1996), teachers were left with a sense of being disempowered, de-skilled and de-motivated. (Researcher's personal observation during discussions amongst teachers in workshops and meetings from 2005-2008.)

While the Schools Act ensures the constitutional rights of all learners it fails to respond to the realities of teachers' experience, as well as the social contexts of poor learners. Learners experience a variety of problems on a daily basis which include domestic violence, hunger, physical and emotional abuse, and general neglect. Their unhappiness and frustration spill over to the classroom setting and they give vent to their feelings by becoming unruly, disruptive and sometimes violent, evident in the subsequent examples of learner insubordination. Teachers found themselves at the receiving end of this malignant cycle and they needed to deal with it, whether ill-equipped or not. Unruly behaviour at times impacted on teachers directly. For example, a teacher was stabbed by a 14-year-old learner and the teacher could not return to the school because he feared for his life (*Cape Argus*, 22/8/2008). In another incident of school violence, a school bully was stabbed and bled to death (*Cape Argus*, 13/3/ 2008).

The realization that the situation had gone out of control led Judith Cohen (a parliamentary officer) to remark: "When trained teachers are not equipped with the skills to address violence at

schools, they possibly need to be taught conflict resolution skills” (*Cape Argus*, 17/3/ 2008).

The inability of teachers to deal with the situation of violent and disruptive learners was acknowledged by Professor Kader Asmal, the then Minister of Education:

Many teachers found have themselves in a position of not knowing what to do in the absence of corporal punishment. These educators are not alone in their struggle; even those educators who are committed to this change sometimes find themselves in a difficult situation (Asmal, 2000: 1)

This quote is from Asmal’s preface to a document on alternatives to corporate punishment, issued by the Western Cape Education Department. (Asmal, 2000: 1). The document was made available to teachers in order to guide, motivate and inspire them to use alternative methods instead of resorting to corporal punishment. However on close analysis of the document, it became evident that the guidelines are mediocre rhetoric which mostly spells out implications for those teachers failing to comply with the requirements of the Schools Act of 1996.

Despite the inability on the part of a lot of teachers to conform to the protocol of the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), many found and devised ingenious ways and means to deal with disciplinary problems, inspiring their colleagues to do the same instead of reverting to corporal punishment. However, most teachers still struggle in their search for alternatives in order to restore discipline, as confirmed by Asmal: “The reality of the situation is that many educators face daily struggles in their school environment with issues of discipline” (Asmal, 2000). It is also evident that although the practice of corporal punishment is no longer legally accepted in schools, it is nonetheless a widespread practice (Pillay, 2002).

The resultant increase in disruptive behaviour, especially in under-resourced schools (with limited support from the Education Department), is notable and has a negative impact on the morale of teachers with regard to positive classroom management. These are some of the issues which prompted this study.

1.4 Purpose and Objectives of the study

The purpose of this study is to identify, describe and analyse the non-formal and informal aspects of teachers' workplace learning, particularly the ways in which they learn at work to improve their practices and skills in order to maintain classroom discipline in the absence of coercive methods such as corporal punishment.

The broad objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To explore the nature and content of informal and non-formal teachers' learning in relation to the management of classroom discipline.
2. To investigate how classroom management and discipline skills impact on the learning and teaching enterprises.

1.5 Historical context of Corporal punishment

Before 1994 the maintaining of discipline within classrooms was accompanied by corporal punishment which included caning, spanking, or other forms of punishment such as detention. Kubeka (2004: 52) reports that corporal punishment was administered to restore a culture of learning in schools and as a way to deal with difficult or disruptive learners. Morrell (2001: 292) stated that historically, corporal punishment was used by the educator to "maintain discipline". In other words, corporal punishment was used to exercise authority and provide the necessary order for learning to take place.

The acceptance of a new constitution in 1994, stating that everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way, paved the way for the enforcement of the South African Schools Act (1996) laying the ground rules that must be adhered to by all.

Gladwell (1999: 31) draws our attention to the following prohibitions with regard to corporal punishment, as contained in Chapter Two of the SA Schools Act of 1996 (10):

- (1) No person may administer corporal punishment at a school to a learner.
- (2) Any person who contravenes subsection 1 is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence which could be imposed for assault.

Furthermore, “corporal punishment is generally understood to be a disciplinary method in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a child in response to a child’s unacceptable behaviour and/or inappropriate language” (Maree, 1994: 69; Andero & Stewart, 1996: 90). Corporal punishment includes a wide variety of methods such as “hitting, slapping, spanking, punching, shaking, shoving, choking,” and may involve the use of various objects including “wooden paddles, belts, sticks, pins, or others” (Society for Adolescent Medicine, 2003: 385). Other methods of punishment may include the subjection of learners to “painful body postures (such as placing the child in an enclosed space),” [the] “use of electric shock methods,” [the] “use of excessive exercise drills, or prevention of urine or stool elimination”.

1.6 Background information on the Lavis Town community

The location of the current study is the Lavis Town area on the Cape Flats, a suburb 14 kilometres outside Cape Town. Lavis Town is situated off Modderdam Road which separates it from the Cape Town International Airport industrial area. It is about two to three kilometres away from the airport itself and is flanked by two other sub-economic areas - Valhalla Park and Nooitgedacht - with an informal settlement known as Freedom Farm on the left side.

Most residents of Lavis Town are formerly from the surrounding areas of Cape Town. Their grandparents were forced out of the former Goodwood Acres (Edgemead/Bothasig/Goodwood) during the late 1960s as part of the Apartheid legislation that had a system of reserving different residential areas for separate racial groups (Group Areas Act, Act no 41 of 1950).

Bishop Lavis, as it was known after 1960, is named after the late Anglican Bishop of Cape Town, Bishop Sidney Warren Lavis who campaigned for the improvement of slum conditions throughout the Peninsula in the early 1900s. The population of Lavis Town at the time of the 2001 census was estimated to be about 44,419 inhabitants (City of Cape Town Census of 2001).

According to the City of Cape Town (Census 2001), approximately 54% of employed people in Bishop Lavis earn up to R 1,600 per month, whilst 43% earn up to R 6,400 per month. About 3% earn more than R 6,400 per month. Besides an unemployment total of 33.77 percent, Bishop Lavis also deals with issues like poverty and squatter camps (City of Cape Town, 2001: 1).

Crime and violence in this area are a way of life. Learners experience these on a daily basis. According to Leggett (2007), “the Western Cape and the Northern Cape have the country’s highest rates of arrest for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, as well as the highest rate of recorded drug crimes.” Leggett is of the opinion that “it is likely that alcohol and drugs also play a role in the violence in the Cape”. The Western Cape is also known to have “one of the highest incidences of fetal alcohol syndrome in the world [and] individuals with fetal alcohol syndrome may become involved in crime [...] due to poor judgment and a low frustration threshold”. As in the rest of the Western Cape, crime in Lavis Town is also considered to be a serious problem. South African Police Service Crime Statistics for the Western Cape (2003/2004 to 2009/2010) show that drug-related crimes in Lavis Town increased from 499 during April to March 2003/ 2004 to 1,759 in 2009/2010. The large number of illegal shebeens trading in alcohol and dealing in drugs is related and can be linked to crime in the Bishop Lavis neighbourhood. Socio-economic factors such as unemployment and poverty, gangsterism, a lack of guidance, and recreation for the youth are concerns for community members. Learners are faced with a myriad of social and economic problems.

Through systematic informal investigation at a number of schools in Lavis Town, it was found that most people live in two- or three-roomed flats or in brick houses with up to three families, in some cases, crammed into the same house. Others live in backyards in wooden structures in very poor conditions (Informal School Survey, 2005).

The current study assumes that the socio-economic conditions of communities greatly affect discipline and violence patterns in schools. The boundaries between discipline in schools and the communities are fluid since violence is endemic to a community such as Lavis Town. People within this community react to violence with more violence which spills over into the school environment.

A large number of families experience social problems regarding income, unemployment, substance abuse and violence. These impact negatively on the development of a large number of children who do not attend school regularly, commit crimes and start using drugs. Their parents are usually unemployed, or receive a state allowance and have a history of substance abuse.

According to Borbely, children of alcoholic and substance abusing parents “are likely to have

lower self-esteem and internal locus of control [and] commonly experience difficulty in school, including inability to concentrate on academic tasks” due to the conflicts and tensions at home. They are also “more likely than their peers to have learning disabilities, be truant, repeat more grades, transfer schools and be expelled”(2007: 10). Capaldi alludes to this, saying that these conduct disorders “can be apparent in children with a substance abusing parent, [with] behaviors consisting of temper tantrums, emotional outbursts, no control of behavior, aggression, stealing and lying. Hyperactivity with a short attention span, inability to sit still and impulsivity can occur in these children” (2008: 9). These conduct disorders also include behavior problems such as “talking back, not following directions and refusal to comply.” (ibid, 2009: 19)

Sher (1991) and Zucker (1994) are of the opinion that parent alcoholism “and drug abuse may operate in part by raising [the] risk for early conduct problems or ‘externalizing’ behaviours” in learners (Chassin, Pitts, DeLucia and Todd: 1999). It is further suggested “offspring of alcoholic fathers have more conduct problems than do children of non-alcoholics, even in the preschool years” (Chassin, Pitts, DeLucia and Todd, 1999: 106). It thus appears that parental substance abuse interrupts a child’s normal development, which places these youngsters at higher risk for emotional, physical and mental health problems.

The above socio-economic factors are closely linked to violence in the community which spills over into the schools and impacts on the behavioural patterns of learners in classrooms. The state of the community in which the child lives, including crime, violence and substance abuse, increases the stress on the child and therefore on the caregiver and teacher.

1.7 Clarification of terms

The following terms are important to this study and therefore are defined in order to clarify how they are being used in the study:

Corporal punishment: the Oxford English Dictionary describes corporal punishment as, “to abuse or inflict a severe blow on an opponent. Corporal punishment is inflicted on the body especially by beating” (1990). The South African Department of Education (2000:6) in a document entitled *Alternatives to Corporal Punishment, a Practical Guide for Educators* defines corporal punishment as “any deliberate act against a child that inflicts pain or physical discomfort to punish or contain him or her”.

Discipline: to conform to rules and regulations in line with good behaviour such as not disrupting classroom procedures. According to Howard (1996) in *Paediatrics* (1998: 723), the term “discipline” is based on the Latin word “disciplinare” which means to teach or instruct, referring to a system of teaching and nurturing that prepares children to achieve competence, self-control, self-direction, and caring for others.

Informal learning: according to Conner (1997-2009), informal learning is “a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educational influences and resources in his or her environment; from family; neighbours; through work and play; from the market place; the library and the mass media.”

An alternative definition (Conner: 1997-2009) refers to informal learning as the acquisition of skills and knowledge outside of learning events through reading and discussion which are now facilitated by web sites and on-line discussion groups. The more structured types of informal learning are sometimes considered to be “knowledge management”.

Non-formal learning: Conner (1997) defines non-formal as any “organized educational activity outside the established formal system whether operating separately or as an important feature of some broader activity intended to serve identifiable learning objectives”.

For the purposes of this study, informal learning refers to incidental learning, or the acquisition of skills in the workplace, while non-formal learning refers to planned learning interventions that do not lead to formal accreditation.

1.8 Conclusion

Section one presents the principal issues of the research. It provides the rationale and purpose of the study as well as a statement of the research problem. This is followed by background information regarding the history, location, and socio-economic conditions that prevail in those communities and areas that surround the chosen research site that is the schools under investigation.



Section Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This section presents a review of literature which the researcher found relevant to this study. It focuses on how people learn, particularly in the workplace. Specifically, this section reviews literature that deals with the problems of discipline at school and how teachers have learnt to respond to such challenges.

2.2 Formal, informal and non-formal learning

According to Conner (2009), formal learning includes the hierarchically structured school system that runs from primary school to the university and includes organized school-like programmes created in business for technical and professional training. Learning facilitated by formal learning programmes is often the most valued form of learning among the elites (Conner, 2009). Conversely, informal learning is unplanned or accidental learning and refers to a lifelong process whereby individuals acquire attitudes, values, skills and knowledge from daily experience and the educational influences and resources in their environment. Conner (2009:1) states that “informal learning accounts for over 75% of the learning taking place in organisations today [and] often, the most valuable learning [taking] place serendipitously, by random chance”. Concurring with Conner (2009), Coombs and Ahmed refer to informal education as:

“...the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment – at home, at work, at play: from the example and attitude of families and friends; from travel, reading newspapers and books; listening to the radio, television and viewing films. Generally informal education is unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person’s total lifetime learning – including that of a highly ‘schooled’ person.” (Coombs & Ahmed 1974: 8)

In contrast to the definition given on page 17, it is evident in some literature that not all learning theorists classify the terms formal, non-formal or informal learning in clearly distinctive terminology (Billet 2001; Eraut 2000; Smith 2001). Definitions from these theorists seem to have overlapping boundaries.

Eraut (2000), prefers the term non-formal to informal, since most such learning takes place outside of formal learning institutions, for instance in the workplace, where situation, dress code, and context are more loosely structured. Without defining non-formal learning more clearly, Eraut (2000: 12) presents five features of formal learning: a prescribed learning framework; an organized learning event/package; a designated teacher/trainer; formal accreditation and the specification of outcomes. These five features exclude any possible connection or reference to non-formal learning. Eraut hence suggests that by “strong implication, any significant learning that is not of [the above] type” is non-formal.

While challenging the above categorization of learning, Billett (2001a) questions whether it is correct to refer to learning as informal. According to Billett, learning is a necessary aspect in all human activity. Like Eraut, he argues that most learning takes place outside formal educational settings. Billett (2001a) argues that all learning takes place within social organizations or communities that have formalised structures, as in workplace learning, which is structured by the formal arrangements of the workplace.

The main focus of the current study takes its bearings from the ideas of Eraut (2000) and Billett (2001a) on workplace learning. A complete picture of the learning approach adopted by an organization can be obtained considering all learning approaches within the work environment. Learning in most organizations normally includes a variety of strategies and approaches in order to improve learning opportunities for everyone. That includes strategies for managing and sharing what everyone ought to know.

Teachers learning about classroom management and discipline are mostly incidental and normally categorized as informal. Beckett and Hager (2002) and Eraut (2000) in analyzing workplace learning, describe it as predominantly informal. Billett (2001a) confirms that a large part of teachers' learning is informal as far as the content, purpose, and reasons for learning, and

the locale, are concerned. However, Colley, Hodkinson, and Malcolm (2002) found that, teachers' workplace learning, which normally is regarded as straightforwardly informal in nature, includes some formal elements. A blend of formal and informal features by which it presented itself was significant to teachers' workplace learning, rather than a separation of features concerning formal and informal learning. These findings support the likelihood that formal and informal learning boundaries are not fixed, but that features may overlap depending on the context and situation of the learning that is taking place. Billet agrees that "there are always added formalized dimensions to what is often characterized as informal learning" (2001a: 27).

2.3 Experiential learning

Experiential learning is normally associated with informal learning. Experiential learning, according to Houle (1980: 221), results from "direct participation in the events of life". However, Kolb points out that experience is not equivalent to learning, but rather "learning ... is achieved through [systematic] reflection upon everyday experiences" (1984: 1).

Knowledge acquired experientially is often tacit according to Kolb (1984: 1) who suggests that those who have learnt experientially "may well have various rules of thumb or generalizations about what to do in different situations. They will be able to say what action to take when there is tension between two people in a group but they are not able to verbalize their actions in psychodynamic or sociological terms".

2.4 Workplace learning

This study examines the nature of teachers' engagement with issues associated with school and classroom discipline. It also focuses on how teachers support and guide one another on matters involving school discipline.

Illeris (2002:18) suggests that learning may be categorised into skill-based learning, emotional learning and social learning. Skill-based learning occurs through a "cognitive process", while learning based on emotion involves a psychological process, which may be based on "feelings, emotions, and motivations". Social-based learning occurs through the "interaction of an

individual and his/her surroundings”. From the insight suggested by Illeris, learning to deal with maintaining discipline in a classroom environment involves cognitive, psychological and social processes. The literature suggests that workplaces are rich social environments for skill-based, emotional and social learning. An examination of the theorisation of workplace learning follows.

Workplace learning theorists generally hold the view that workers develop vocational and professional knowledge through their participation in work-based practices (Billet 2002; Colin 2006; Hager 2004). The conceptual theorisation of the phenomenon of *workplace learning*, however, remains highly contested with divergent thoughts abounding. Some theorists view workplace learning as “informal, incidental and practice-bound” (Colin 2006: 404) whilst others such as Billet (2002) criticise the usefulness of defining workplace learning through the environment in which learning occurs. Billet (2002) is of the view that describing learning at work as ‘informal’ is erroneous since the “structuring of workplace activities” has dimensions of learning that are “inherently pedagogical”. Accordingly, it would be incorrect to define the one social practice as informal and the other as formal. Work is a social practice which may be considered similar to schooling but different in purpose. It is important to note that knowledge which is generated through the processes of purposeful work cannot be conceptualised as ‘non-formal’. Hager (2004:23), whilst recognising that certain work arrangements might hinder learning at work, concludes that work-based learning is “sufficiently rich”. Furthermore, the notion of labeling workplace learning environments as ‘informal’ and perhaps understood as being less valuable than formal education through an educational institution cannot be accepted or as Billet puts it, should be viewed as “negative, inaccurate and ill-focused” (Billet 2002: 56). Describing workplace learning as informal does not help us to understand its value, character or quality. The absence of a written curriculum does not mean that the day to day activities in the workplace do not afford teachers the opportunity to learn. The workplace consists and offers various hands-on work-related learning opportunities which are goal-directed and can provide a richer base in order to conceptualize workplace learning experiences than that offered by learning in an educational institution. This makes teachers not mere recipients of directed learning, but active participants in the learning process. Workplaces as learning environments offer learning activities and as such, one can assume that the goals of workplace learning also influence the constructing and acquisition of knowledge although this learning occurs in a different setting. Workplace learning also has educational value and perhaps in some instances

slightly more so than formal institutions since it offers hands-on experience which is in most cases not offered by formal training. Some individuals cannot afford lengthy formal training courses and rely on the recognition of prior learning opportunities or, after completing initial basic studies, have to opt immediately for a job as the only or most viable alternative to initially learn and develop their vocational ambition through practice in the workplace. In these instances, workplaces afford individuals such opportunities which become important in elevating workplace learning to the valuable role it plays in offering individuals work activities, support and guidance in obtaining credentials as an experienced employee. The above arguments refute assumptions that learning in workplaces can always be considered as inferior or weaker in foundation to that which occurs in educational institutions. Consequently, assumptions that are based on educational institutions may not be useful in discussing learning in workplaces, since workplace learning is also aimed at assisting the development of skills through learning by tasks which become increasingly difficult or require more responsibility.

Conversely to the idea that workplace learning is “informal”, Billet (2001: 63) proposes that the key goal of workplace pedagogy is to “help develop robust vocational knowledge - knowledge that offers the prospect of transfer across situations and circumstances, in which the vocation is practiced”. A difference then between learning at institutions such as colleges, and work-based learning, is that work-based learning occurs through participation in goal-directed work tasks, through “direct guidance” provided by co-workers “and indirect guidance” by the workplace itself (Billet 2001: 64). Learning is realised within the workplace when individuals at work are “afforded” opportunities to learn.

Consistent with Billet (2002), Casey (1995: 74, in Guile and Young, 1998: 175) argues that “work is an educational site in which pedagogical and learning practices” occur. It can thus be assumed that work is seen as a learning experience that should not be mistaken with an informal or by-the-way activity. The quality of workplaces according to Guile and Young should rather be “evaluated in terms of the educational opportunities and the learning environment they provide for workers” (1998: 175).

Recognising that valuable learning occurs at work, Billet cautions that not all individuals have access to the same learning opportunities. This is because not all learning opportunities are

enabled by the “inequitable distribution of opportunities to engage in novel work activities”. Some learning opportunities are constrained by the unwillingness of “experienced workers to provide guidance and support” (Billet 2001: 64).

In the nature of teachers’ engagement with issues associated with school and classroom discipline, it also stands to reason that teachers may or may not support and guide colleagues on matters involving school discipline. Learning opportunities associated with school discipline may thus be confronted with numerous barriers, causing difficulty in assessing how teachers have made use of those opportunities.

From the literature it is evident that, even though there might be opportunities for learning to occur in the workplace, different workers may experience differential access activities that lead to valuable learning (Billet, 2001: 64). This study examines how teachers make use of the learning opportunities afforded in acquiring knowledge about classroom management and discipline. The research of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991) has contributed significantly to the development and growing awareness of the alternative ‘social’ view of learning. They have drawn on other work such as Vygotsky’s (1978) ‘social’ view of learning. Billet (2001, 2002) has used a ‘social’ view of learning as a starting point for his research into processes of learning through work.

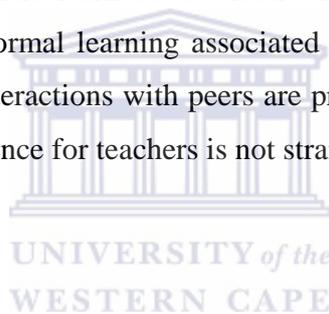
Notwithstanding Billet’s convincing argument that all learning has a social purpose, (Billet 2001, 2002) learning theorists continue to categorise learning as formal, informal and non-formal. Wenger (1998:45) maintains that workplace expertise develops informally through social participation. Learning may occur during community-based activities as observed in apprenticeship programmes, collaborations, mediation, and traditional educational settings or institutions at work. In other words learning and expertise development happens not only in formal educational and training facilities, but also in the workplace. Casey’s insight that “work is an educational site in which pedagogical and learning practices have always taken place”, suggests that learning in the workplace can offer additional or more comprehensive benefit as a learning environment since the workplace offers situated learning opportunities (1995: 74). Furthermore, from a perspective of communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and the zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978) workplace learning confirms that learning depends on a mutual exchange of ideas and insights.

According to Guile and Young (1998) learning is a natural process that occurs via observation; assimilation and emulation, which happens over time without any substantial intervention from more experienced individuals. This conception of learning concurs with Billet's insight (2002), saying that expertise develops through experience under guidance and interaction with knowledgeable others.

This study supports Billet's conception that learning occurs in collaboration with others and is dependent on the context and purpose of the learning (2002).

2.5 Conclusion

This section explores different learning theories that provide a conceptual framework, in order to investigate and analyse how teachers learn about classroom management and discipline. The review focuses on formal and informal learning associated with, and underpinning, workplace learning. Even though informal interactions with peers are predominant ways of learning within the workplace, the learning experience for teachers is not straightforwardly informal in nature.



Section Three

Methodology and Data Collection

3.1 Introduction

Methodology “refers to the choices we make about cases to study, methods of data gathering, forms of data analysis, etc. In planning and executing a research study “it establishes how one goes “about studying a phenomenon” (Silverman, 2006:15). This section discusses the methodology selected for the study. The study primarily uses a qualitative approach to collect data, since qualitative research examines a subject by looking at opinions and values instead of measuring quantifiable data which would not be appropriate. Qualitative research is usually loosely structured, often relying on verbal data. Qualitative research “tries to use first-hand familiarity with different settings to induce hypotheses” (Seale, 2004: 53). Open-ended or semi-structured interviews are commonly used for collecting data as in the case of this study.

Myers supports the use of qualitative research methods whenever social and cultural phenomena are being examined (2002:2). One of the main strengths of qualitative research methodology is that it gives the researcher deep insights into how social, environmental and cultural contexts influence human behaviour. Brannon and Fiest (1997) allude to this when they argue that the primary advantage of qualitative research is that data can yield valuable insights into the lives and experiences of participants, as it provides a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under investigation. Since language is the main medium of analysis, it enables one to examine the feelings and perceptions of participants, clarifying the cultural and social contexts within which people interact and express meaning. It therefore suits the investigation of “how and why are teachers in disadvantaged communities learning to deal with class discipline and behavioral problems in the absence of resorting to corporal punishment”.

When investigating cultural or social phenomena, quantitative research methodology may have major limitations since the quantification of textual data results in the loss of the particular social and institutional contexts within which the social phenomenon takes place (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994: 47). Troyna (1994:5-6) in Halpin and Troyna, (1994) also criticises the quantitative approach to social research in that this approach has a technicist conception of research and

focuses purely and simply on how to attend to empirical projects. The limitation of the quantitative approach in the social sciences is that to some extent “the technicalities of research are no longer artificially detached from the political, ethical and social arena”, because we need to acknowledge especially during "data collection" that “research is a social activity, which intrudes on peoples’ lives” (Halpin and Troyna, 1994: 5-6). Conversely, Huysamen. (1994) cautions that in qualitative research it is more difficult and time-consuming to collect, analyse, and categorise research data.

3.2 Methods used to collect data

A qualitative approach is followed throughout the study and is guided and anchored within the interpretive paradigm. The interpretive paradigm promotes an inductive mode of enquiry and encourages the use of a variety of data collection techniques. McMillan and Schumacher (2001: 395) describe interactive qualitative research as “an enquiry in which the researcher collects data in face-to-face situations by reacting with selected persons in their settings”. Qualitative research describes and analyses people's individual and collective social actions, beliefs, thoughts and perceptions. This study interprets the perspectives and views of the participants regarding classroom discipline problems and how they solved them individually. The chosen data collection methods mainly include unstructured interviews regarding informal learning in its natural context.

Data collection strategies enabled the researcher to gain rich detailed descriptions of the participants' response to classroom management skill development. This qualitative investigation includes a literature review to relate to relevant literature about adult learning.

3.3 The interview subjects

Unstructured interviews were conducted with ten subjects. The researcher ensured that a relaxed atmosphere was created in order to make the interviewees feel at ease. The interviewees were selected from teachers who are teaching in the Lavis Town area. The interviewees are predominantly middle-aged, married teachers with families of their own and in the process of raising children. Two teachers are unmarried and in their mid-twenties. All of them grew up in working class families which meant that they were to some extent familiar with the conditions

learners find themselves in.

Each interview session lasted between 20-30 minutes and was in the form of a conversation. Detailed notes of the interviews were made by the researcher and later checked with the interviewees.

Further detailed information on management and discipline was obtained by engaging with senior educators who, in the process, clearly outlined their strategies. An interview guide was used to conduct the interviews. Seale (2004: 165) points out that an interview guide or schedule is usually non-standardised, which means that the interviewer works with a set of topics that must be covered although the exact order in which questions are asked and the wording of questions can vary. The essence is that such interviews make room for flexibility, greater depth, and more sensitivity to contextual variations in meaning than is generally the case in classic survey research using a standardised interview or questionnaire. Firstly, this method was adopted because it encourages the participants to say what is on their minds. Secondly, the presence of an interviewer allows for complex questions to be explained, if necessary, to the interviewee. Thirdly, interviews can generally be longer than when self-completion techniques are used, as interviewees are less likely to be put off by the length or to give up halfway through.

3.4 General profile of interviewees

TABLE 1

General characteristics of teachers interviewed			
	Gender	Approximate years of experience	Date of interview
1	male	3	05 August 2007
2	male	19	07 August 2007
3	male	23	18 August 2007
4	female	11	17 August 2007
5	male	9	23 September 2007
6	female	4	25 September 2007
7	female	16	01 October 2007
8	male	1	07 October 2007
9	female	3	10 November 2007
10	male	1	19 November 2007

3.5 Ethical issues

On requesting permission to participate in the study, the researcher assured interviewees that their anonymity would be protected. To this effect the researcher ensured that individual participants would not be identified when findings were to be presented; interviewees would not be named nor would their schools be identified. Accordingly interviewees are anonymous and are allocated numbers for purposes of reporting on this study. Confidentiality has been maintained throughout this study.

3.6 Data collection

Data was collected from teachers over a period of slightly less than five months. Interview data were collected to gain insight into teachers' conscious learning activities. After initial interviews, teachers were contacted on a casual basis to enquire whether their learning mode changed drastically from the initial observation or whether it remained more or less unchanged. None of them reported any remarkable changes in the mode of their learning patterns except for those

who never really relied on collaboration, but started to use it extensively. The researcher decided to focus on certain questions and to limit the data collection to those activities pertaining to the concern of discipline and classroom management. In this study, classroom management is understood as a particular point of interest and a concern which consciously receives attention from the teacher, and which has been a worrying factor and a challenge to the majority of the teaching fraternity. The researcher focussed on the changing role this problem required them to adopt and this is why this concern-related activity can be considered as a potential learning activity. Teachers normally elaborated on certain questions when asked about their concerns and challenges. These observations were included in the data collection.

3.7 Data analysis and interpretation

Researchers normally subject their findings to interpretation and analysis by using deduction and induction, thus moving from ideas to data and back to ideas. In this study, a comparative analysis of all the respondents or participant responses during the data analysis was carried out. Seale (2004: 424), states that it is good practice to report basic demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity, region, employment or social class), especially in the analysis of qualitative data. Since a qualitative technique was used, it would be prudent to analyse the background of the participants because the demographic qualities have the potential to influence the research and its interpretation.

Generally, it is important to note that in a research context, participants could hold back some vital information from the researcher or overemphasise certain points. This was taken into account into by the researcher and efforts were further made to ensure that the interviews were conducted in a relaxed, conversational atmosphere with the least possible strain on participants.

Initially data was categorised accordingly to themes suggested in the literature. In a few cases the data suggested specific themes for categorisation. The analysis of the data made use of the conceptual framework developed in the literature review as a tool to arrive at findings.

3.8 Interview Schedule

Six unstructured research questions guided the interview process:

RQ1. Why and how have you acquired skills to maintain classroom discipline that can allow you to teach in the way you want to teach?

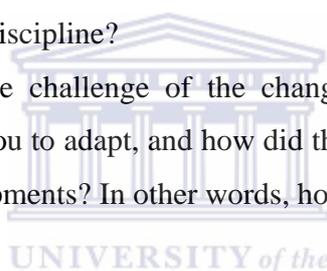
RQ2. What teaching activities and methods of discipline do you engage in to improve your teaching, and are those effective?

RQ3. What other activities are teachers using to manage classes to maintain discipline?

RQ4. Do you seek support by collaborating with colleagues in seeking ideas to improve your classroom management skills and discipline? and are you experimenting with these ideas in your classroom?

RQ5. Can interdependency between teachers by means of observation of different classroom techniques, promote learning and discipline?

RQ6. How did you deal with the challenge of the changing role of the teacher regarding discipline reform which requires you to adapt, and how did those learning activities and methods help you to keep abreast of developments? In other words, how have you learnt? (Appendix 1)



Guiding and constructing the core of this research was the concern relating on how and why teachers in disadvantaged communities learn to deal with class discipline and behavioural problems in the absence of having to resort to corporal punishment.

3.9 Limitations

A limitation of this study is that in a naturally occurring informal learning environment, teachers are not normally interviewed about their learning experiences. Teachers normally do not really take time to consider and reflect on workplace learning. This study is an indication of how teachers learn and respond if they are asked about their learning experiences. This may be as close as we can get to studying teachers' everyday learning in an informal setting.

Another limitation of this study was that it focused only on one sub-economic area, namely schools in the Lavis Town area which are socio-economic specific and may not necessarily be transferable to schools in other sub-economic or even more affluent areas where parents are willing to become involved in the discipline of learners or where there are positive role models

and where crime levels are lower.

3.10 Conclusion

This section discussed the methodology selected for the study. A qualitative research approach, loosely structured, relying on verbal interviews to generate data has been followed.

Open-ended or semi-structured interviews were used for collecting the data. This study interprets the perspectives and views of the participants regarding classroom discipline problems, and how they solved them individually. The chosen data collection methods include mainly unstructured interviews regarding informal learning in its natural context. Unstructured interviews were conducted with ten subjects, with each interview session lasting between 20-30 minutes and in the form of a conversation. The general profile of interviewees was supplied together with the research questions, and limitations and ethical issues have been considered as well as how the data was collected.



Section Four

Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

The focus of this study is to investigate and identify the nature of teachers' learning as they grapple with class discipline as well as behavioural problems at school, in the absence of corporal punishment. Focussing on the above concern, the question that guides this research is: *“How and why are teachers learning to deal with class discipline and behavioural problems in the absence of resorting to corporal punishment?”*

Data generated during this investigation suggests that teachers use a variety of ways and approaches when they learn to adjust to the changing conditions of classroom management in order to maintain discipline at school. The findings, based on interviews with teachers, suggest that teachers learn through collaboration. This includes collaboration by sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues, and through conversations with the community and parents as well as via informal conversation with fellow teachers from other schools. A second category involves observation of others, for instance senior teachers and peers during the process of Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS), an appraisal system where teachers' work is evaluated; as well as the observation of the response from learners while interacting with them during a classroom session or lesson. Teachers further also learn through deliberate exploration by “trial and error”; by reflecting on past experiences; and by attending conferences and workshops which focus on professional development and enrichment. Lastly according to this research, they also learn by sporadic reviews of literature, which include searching the internet as a source of information as well as systematic investigation by reading educational journals and magazines. Teachers' engagement with these different learning opportunities will be elaborated in more detail in the rest of this section.

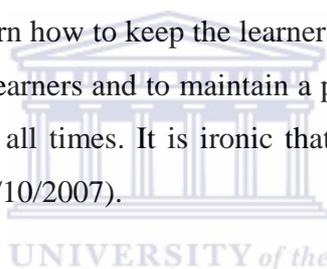
Teachers are obligated to solve and negotiate the daily discipline problems arising between learners as a result of the interaction between them, to ensure that teaching and learning continue. This implies that learners who really want to give their co-operation are not to be neglected whilst simultaneously learners with behavioural problems are also inspired to learn.

What follows is an analysis of the different ways or strategies teachers use to learn in the workplace to respond to ill-discipline at school amongst learners.

4.2 Formative learning versus learning at work

Teachers who participated in this study made a distinction between learning during their formal professional training, and learning within the workplace, which is at school. For example, one teacher was of the opinion that “training at college is a far cry from the hands-on experience that one encounters in the workplace” (Interviewee 4: 17/8/2007). Another teacher, recently out of college, stated that:

“Even after my practice teaching sessions at a school during my final year of study, I still did not fully comprehend the complex task of being a teacher. [At school] I quickly had to learn how to keep the learners busy at all times, to handle unruly and argumentative learners and to maintain a positive learning atmosphere while staying in control at all times. It is ironic that none of this was taught at college” (Interviewee 8: 07/10/2007).



Interviewee 8, a female with only one year of teaching experience, critically observed, “everyday during my teaching activities, in and outside of the classroom, I learn something new that I was not told during my studies or workshops arranged by the Western Cape Education Department (WCED)” (7/10/2007).

One of the reasons why institutional learning might be different from learning in the workplace is that at training institutions, teaching curricula – which are mainly theoretical in their nature - are determined by the training institution whilst the personal curricula of the practising teachers at schools as workplaces *per se* are contextually bound and situated.

Accordingly, the teacher needs to respond to changes in the physical, social and emotional environments based on multiple contextual factors. It is difficult to predetermine these factors in a development programme or course, as Interviewee 4 explains: “The work of the teacher is unnecessarily made cumbersome by having to act as an administrative clerk, social worker,

policeman, nurse, counsellor as well as parent” (17/8/2007).

It seems that teachers experience their learning at schools, their workplaces, as more complex since it is influenced by a host of other contextual factors such as the unique cultural practices and history within which the schools are situated, the magnitude of administrative work that the Department of Education (DoE) expects from teachers, as well as the socio-economic circumstances such as poverty, unemployment, and crime that prevail in the immediate communities served by schools.

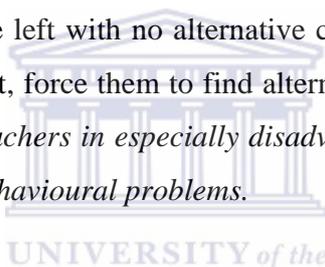
The results of this study indicated that teachers from Bishops Lavis, a disadvantaged community, with a wide range of socio economic dilemmas, find classroom and school discipline a challenge since teachers’ formal professional development did not prepare them for situations where pupil indiscipline has become the norm. Teachers in this study, and in particular the respondents who were not so long ago still at college, came to the conclusion that learning also takes place in and through engagement with or during work activities. Billet (2001:63) alludes to this, stating that “[a] key goal for a workplace pedagogy is to help develop robust vocational knowledge [which] benefits both individuals and workplaces” in order to assist employees to “conduct routine work and respond optimally to novel workplace tasks”. This suggests that engagement in work-related activities affords these teachers the opportunity to develop some vocational skills as well as extending their learning activities or development beyond tertiary institutions into their workplaces.

It is furthermore evident that the site of this research being located in working class communities that experience numerous socio-economic challenges, affords the teachers involved in these communities the opportunity to learn how to deal with problematic discipline issues. Some of these challenges include poverty and unemployment, crime and violence coupled with substance abuse. The conditions of most of the communities and households are characterized by negligent and poor parental supervision which is exacerbated by verbal, emotional, and physical abuse, domestic violence, and alcohol abuse among family members. These, factors as well as the effects of a “community being plagued by gangsterism and drug abuse, with a high rate of violent crime (seven murders per 10000)” according to De la Cornillere (2007; 3), spill over to

the schools and impact negatively on behavioural patterns of learners in classrooms. However, as said earlier, these challenges afford teachers the opportunity to actively learn how to negotiate and teach around these obstacles.

Learning through active participation in work activities coincides with Billet's view that learning is realised within the workplace, when individuals at work are "afforded" the opportunity to learn (2001:63-64). In this case, the opportunities were plenty since teachers, in this study, were constantly confronted with how to bring order in their classrooms and how to discipline unruly behaviour.

The changing nature of schools, where the teachers' workload and responsibility increases all of the time, force teachers to adapt through a variety of strategies and methods. The changing nature of education, while they are left with no alternative classroom management strategies in the absence of corporal punishment, force them to find alternative measures to discipline unruly learners. This is the reason *why teachers in especially disadvantaged communities need to learn to deal with class discipline and behavioural problems.*



The different ways in which this takes place will now be discussed in more detail.

4.3 Learning through collaboration

Teachers in this study acted and worked together in a variety of ways with one another as well as with teachers from different schools in order to share and exchange viewpoints, give advice and share strategies, related to school discipline as explained in this section. This cooperative way of working and interacting is defined in this study as collaboration. Dillenbourg (1999) in *Wikipedia* defines collaborative learning as a situation in which two or more people learn or attempt to learn something together, or based on a model of knowledge that is created within a population where members actively interact by sharing ideas and experiences and take on asymmetric roles. Collaborative learning potentially allows for "knowledge" to emerge and be restructured or reconstituted as individuals with differing levels of experiences, viewpoints and prior knowledge either transfer knowledge in a process of sharing, or negotiate meaning. Haller, et al, (2000), in supporting this perspective, are of the view that diversity operates within groups,

in terms of prior knowledge, social status, situational role, gender, interpretive frameworks and other social factors, which is a necessary condition for new “knowledge” to emerge. It will be evident that the diversity amongst the teachers in this study facilitated the process of collaborative learning.

4.3.1 Collaboration by sharing ideas and experiences

This study found that one of the ways through which teachers learn is by exchanging or sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues. “Hardly a day passes without conferring with colleagues on problem areas regarding the work, particularly [classroom] disciplinary problems, and sharing the happenings of that day [with colleagues]” (Interviewee 3: 18/8/2007). In general, the informants acknowledge that they rely a great deal on colleagues whilst learning in the workplace. While learning from colleagues at school applies to most aspects of the teaching role, one teacher highlighted the value of sharing in relation to classroom discipline: “The problem is that dealing with ill-disciplined pupils can sometimes take up to three quarters of the teaching and learning time. Without the sharing of useful hints from colleagues, I would have given up long ago” (Interviewee 7: 1/10/2007).

Some of the ideas that the interviewees mentioned were: “Not to lose your temper” (Interviewee 2), since a whole classroom full of students is watching you. In addition, losing one’s temper conveys a message that you have given up your position of authority and lowered yourself to the student’s level (Interviewee 2: 7/8/2007). Interviewee 3 learnt not to resort to “yelling and screaming”, but to “stay calm” (Interviewee 3: 18/8/2007). Interviewee 4 learnt that it is better to leave the classroom and “take a break until you can regain your composure” (Interviewee 4: 17/8/2007).

All of the above points to the fact that by not staying calm when unruly learners cause problems, the teacher losing his or her temper only contribute to the situation getting worse. Instead, interviewee 7 said that she learnt that the strategy of “talking softly and staying calm” helps the teacher to stay in control of the situation and in so doing, will “appear less confrontational”(Interviewee7:1/10/2007).

She also learnt not to involve other students in a confrontation since it becomes counterproductive. She cautions to rather speak privately to the student outside of the classroom or at the end of a period since by doing so, one recognises and admits that the student is upset and can then endeavour to calmly determine the best solution to the problem. She also experienced that it is best to rather send learners to the office when one realises that the situation is getting out of control or even violent. It also helps to call a colleague to assist and assess the situation and in addition to refer the learner so that the parents can be contacted (Interviewee 7: 1/10/2007). Interviewees reported that the above ideas are frequently exchanged when teachers reflect amongst each other after one or more of them experienced situations involving a lack of discipline within the classroom.

Teachers also learnt collaboratively by intentionally seeking collegial support and guidance. Knowledge transfer is evidently the dominant mode of learning since one can provide guidance to the rest, or vice versa. A more senior teacher such as a subject head or experienced teacher would be approached in these instances. "I rely a great deal on the senior teachers for guidance. Without doing so, I am confused and without direction" (Interviewee 3, 18/8/2007). Interviewee 9 described her dilemma in a staff meeting to her colleagues as follows. "I try and make the assignments interesting and relevant to learners' every-day lives but they do not seem to take their assignments seriously. They are not bothered about handing in any work. Am I doing something wrong? I seldom get reasonable quality writing and research from them." Her colleagues then advised her about setting the criteria beforehand. She should then concentrate on the assessment objective, explain it thoroughly to all learners and work optimally with the learners who are really committed. She should also advise those learners who normally waste time with bad behaviour, to see her after hours if they are still interested in catching up with their work (Interviewee 9: 10 /11/2007). In this case, conversations amongst colleagues can afford significant opportunities for learning when dealing with disciplinary problems.

Everyday talk normally goes unnoticed, since social conversation is mostly viewed as a tool for socialising and not "learning". However, according to all interviewees, informal talk for them contained significant opportunities for learning since they continuously confer with colleagues and share the happenings of the day. "We normally exchange small talk about unrelated issues

but eventually end up discussing the challenges as well as possible solutions at work” (Interviewee 9: 13/11/2007). “Even though our social conversation does not follow logically, one idea upon the other, the one who seeks advice or knowledge normally initiates the conversation and the more knowledgeable person would offer some insight and ideas from his or her past experience” (Interviewee 2: 7/8/2007). This idea coincides with Billet’s perspective that workplace learning occurs through participation in goal-directed work tasks; through guidance provided by co-workers and the workplace (2001: 64). So learning is realised within the workplace when individuals at work are “afforded” opportunities to learn. Teachers need indirect guidance to observe and practice participation in a community; they need to be assigned to a variety of tasks and increasing scope of responsibility and they need time for reflection and dialogue. Such conditions do not always arise naturally or equitably for every worker. As part of senior teachers and head of department’s duty in schools, they should ensure equitable distribution of such opportunities, and enhance every teacher’s learning potential by ensuring adequate support resources and guidance, and reasonable learning time.

Billet proposes that the key goal of workplace pedagogy is to “help develop robust vocational knowledge [...] that offers the prospect of knowledge transfer across situations and circumstances, wherein the vocation is practiced”. (2001: 63). Knowledge transfer thus refers to the process where the more experienced teacher can transfer insights by drawing on his or her experiential learning. Interviewee 7 states that “Some of the teachers generally know more than others, so it is likely that we will learn from them even in everyday conversation. It is natural for one person to explain a topic to another person, is it not?” (Interviewee 7: 1/10/2007).

Following on the above, it is also during normal or everyday conversation, that questions are asked and we respond to such questions by offering answers or knowledge. Conversely, in the nature of teachers’ engagement with issues associated with school and classroom discipline, it also stands to reason that teachers may or may not support and guide colleagues on matters involving school discipline. Interviewee 9 relates that some of the colleagues she worked with in the past, wilfully withheld information like important dates for submission of learners’ work and important administrative documents, from her in order to get her into trouble with the principal. (Interviewee 9: 10 /11/2007). This may be because of previous misunderstanding between the

colleagues involved. Lack of support can vary from personal indifference to unresolved conflict between staff members. Learning opportunities associated with school discipline may thus be confronted by such barriers, causing difficulty in assessing how teachers have made use of those opportunities.

When teachers participate in ongoing conversations about teaching and learning, they engage in the practice of reflective thinking about their beliefs, assumptions, and practices. Collegial feedback and critical analysis of student behaviour will create a culture that supports continuous learning. This also according to Wenger (1999: 4 & 263) can build a sense of community or teambuilding among teachers and develop a culture of shared responsibility and problem solving and demonstrate the power of focussing multiple perspectives on a single issue like problem children whilst generating solutions.

4.3.2 Collaboration with the community and parents

In order for schools to successfully deal with behavioural problems, they need to understand the background conditions or milieu of the community they are situated in, and be connected to local residents as a community school. According to Interviewee 4, brief home visits after hours or when the teacher is not occupied in a class while busy with administrative duties may be outdated but she has learnt that it can still be used as a tool of immense value. Her informal “visits to parents of learners who are absent from school for prolonged periods of time, has been found to establish a close and warm feeling of acceptance from parents which makes the parent feel important and valued as a role-player”. As an added benefit, she learnt and experienced that “by connecting to parents at home and when they are on their own turf so to speak and at ease, paves the way for the initiation of projects that can benefit the whole community and will get parents to work with and in benefit of the school as opposed to against the teachers” (Interviewee 4: 17/8/2007).

According to Interviewee 4, she and a number of teachers agreed that:

“They have learnt that parents who are involved in school activities, have a far better understanding of learner behaviour at school than parents who are not. Because they have more contact with their children during school hours, they can see when their own kids display deviant behavioural patterns, and then intervene to remedy a situation that may possibly get out of hand” (Interviewee 4: 17/8/2007).

In addition to the above statement, she is also of the opinion that such parents, being regularly involved and engaged with school activities and projects, have a better impact and can make a better contribution to the overall discipline of the school. She found that it is normally such parents that “can assist with discipline problems of their own kids as well as other learners. They do so by informing parents they are acquainted with (with children at risk of becoming a problem), even before the class teacher uses valuable time to do so. It follows that parental involvement, and parents assisting teachers with non-administrative duties at school, leads to a better understanding between parents and teachers in promoting and developing a more efficient code of conduct. (Interviewee 4, 17/8/2007)

Even though the above examples show how teachers learnt to involve parents in decision-making processes that can enhance and aid in the streamlining of disciplinary procedures, it was also found that some parents can be difficult to work with. When evidence against the child is overwhelming, the parent will rather side with the child instead of admitting that the learner is the cause of the problem. Interviewee 5 experienced that “some parents do not want to admit that students could often be rude, disrespectful and disruptive and that these problems could not be solved with a little redirection here and there or simply with a positive attitude”. Interviewee 5 experienced during a number of instances how certain parents can become excessively verbally abusive when called to the school to resolve a learner's ill-behaviour and especially when it appears that their child has been dealt with too harshly. Teachers learnt in such cases that parents want them to be fair, consistent and to take other factors into consideration when deciding on action. These factors include being a single parent who works long hours and cannot ensure that

the learner fulfils commitments such as completing homework and projects after school; dysfunctional homes where substance abuse is rife and infringes on the disciplining of the child; poverty and unemployment which hinder their financial obligation towards the school, to name but a few. Despite these challenges, after meeting and deliberation, some parents actually came up with really constructive advice. According to Interviewee 3, some parents reminded him of the importance of body language and the tone of voice while communicating with learners since they can feel threatened by abusive and unnecessary loud verbal reprimanding. Some also reminded teachers that the parent and teacher must be role-models for appropriate behaviour by courteously, but firmly, asking the child to "please" do something. The importance of giving a time frame to a child when a command is given was also stated and in the case when the child or adolescent still does not respond, action needs to be taken. Consequences must be gauged by the age of the child and the type of misdemeanour, for example, a toddler may be instructed to go to her or his room, while a teenager may have some of his or her pocket money deducted or restricted from watching their favourite television programme.

Healthy habits should also be created, for example doing their homework and studying. Children should learn to accept their responsibility. Parents suggested that they are willing to assist children in establishing specific time frames and areas when and where homework is done each day but should at least get a note from teachers, explaining what the homework involves (Interviewee 3: 18/8/2007).

There are cases where the child needs psychological counselling and needs to be referred to the relevant services with the DoE. Some learners, however, are wilful in their attempt to disrupt classes. In such cases, Interviewee 5 learnt to “tackle the ringleader or the troublemaker, by contacting the parents regularly, calmly and firmly, and to be ready with a penalty that the learner cares about” and especially “to keep religiously, a record of learner insubordinate behaviour occurrences as well as school visits by parents together with their promises of interventions (in a special log book) and call such parents in” to discuss future interventions. The log book then serves as proof of learner offences and the parent and learner have little or no grounds for arguing but become receptive and willing to resolve the issue.

Some of these parents admitted to him that the reason why they are on the defensive is because it “can be intimidating to meet with their child’s teacher as teachers normally carry an air of authority, causing them to react in such a way by being on the defensive and ready with an excuse to justify or explain the reason for their child’s misbehaviour”. The teacher learnt to take the initiative and “put the parent’s concerns at rest by explaining that the purpose of the meeting is to find a way to remedy the situation by corrective action and to help the learner adjust in order to fit into the classroom unit or atmosphere, instead of digging up past misdemeanours or resorting to punitive action”. He has learnt to let the parents know that together “they can form a team in search of the most suitable intervention in the best interest of his/her child”. He found that it is normally the “un-cooperative parent who seldom visits the school during parent evenings or when called-in to see the principal when their child has caused problems that hardly ever turn up. Such parents are also seldom willing or never available to come and take care of a class for a short period (as is the practise at some schools) during times when teachers are on workshops or absent due to ill health and no-one else is available” (Interviewee 5: 23/9/2007).

Interviewee 5 remarks further that he “has learnt never to wait until a problem with a learner gets out of hand but rather to arrange to make contact with parents early in the year or school term and not only when there is a classroom issue to be addressed, as this will almost all the time result in someone being on the defensive”. Interviewee 6 also invites parents of troublesome learners to sit in during some lessons in order to see how cumbersome it is to work in overcrowded classrooms of 45-60 learners at a time and try and persuade them to offer their help as parent volunteers. She experienced that such parents simultaneously get a better understanding of the teachers’ dilemma in dealing with classroom management as well as the mammoth task of teaching troublesome learners and classes. “When a parent helper can help assist some learners to read or just attend a class session once a month, everyone benefits. Their presence will also boost the self esteem of their own kids, provided that they do not interfere with teaching and learning as well as the discipline function since this can cause many problems in the classroom.” Some parents in any case already “help with class parties, decorations at functions and concerts and other tasks”.

To a great extent, teachers use cues from the environment such as the conditions in the communities they are working in as well as family circumstances and the commitment and contribution of parents in deciding how to address behavioural problems. “I never contemplated even that one can achieve so much more by just getting parents and the community on board and on your side” (Interviewee 6: 25/9/2007). It thus appears vital to firstly get to know the parent and be genuinely interested in their family’s well-being.

Interviewees 5, 7 and 8 agreed that it was not until they “started working and planning together” (with parents), while at the same time “keeping in mind the contribution that parents can make” (Interviewee 5: 23/9/2007), including working with “school governing bodies on a code of conduct for learners which clearly spells out unacceptable behaviour and its consequences”, (Interviewee 7:1/10/2007), that the whole process of addressing behavioural problems started to come together (interviews conducted between 23/9/2007 and –7/10/2007).

It seems that working and planning together with parents resulted in a new understanding which involved a collaborative process between teachers and parents and this collaborative element allowed both teachers and parents to create new meaning and success in the process. There seemed to be “one predictable piece which is collaboration between teachers and parents.” It acts like glue that holds the different efforts from teachers and parents together and allows teachers to come to new meaning while getting to solutions (Interviewee 8: 7/10/2007).

4.3.3 Collaboration with colleagues from other schools

Teachers occasionally contact other schools for information regarding learning area requirements but also extramural activities, departmental requirements, and deadlines regarding administrative duties and chores, or simply just to find out the latest developments around matters of concern in their learning areas or areas of responsibility. A senior teacher remarked, “Without keeping in touch with neighbouring schools, I sometimes lose out on vital information. By keeping in touch and exchanging information one can save oneself a lot of trouble in honouring deadlines and other important dates” (Interviewee 5: 23/9/2007). Apart from this, teachers also exchange best practices, like what is the most suitable time for doing mental math or a reading period for the whole school or for instance how to adjust the disciplining of learners, since different schools use

different systems. Some schools still use corporal punishment in extreme cases when urged by disheartened parents. They normally use detention, or as Interviewee 7 explained, “we sometimes use detention, coupled with menial tasks such as sweeping of classrooms, cleaning of the school yard, cleaning of toilets - which learners of course hate - and the writing out of repeated lines, to keep them busy”(Interviewee 7: 1/10/2007).

Schools at the upper scale of development of codes of conduct may use demerit systems as a strategy to control unruly learners. Learners get demerit points for infringements like not doing homework or for unacceptable behaviour. It is encouraging when “we see how the learners start getting excited when we deduct demerit points when their behaviour begins to improve or they do something good and positive for the week, which make us confident that the system we use is a good one” (Interviewee 3: 18/8/2007). Vygotsky applied the principle of cooperation when assessing the zone of proximal development in the situation when a child is offered support and assistance through demonstrating a task while solving a problem (Vygotsky, 1987: 209). Imitation and mediation act as life-lines which drive and encourage learning and development. Mediation literally refers to the act of helping a process through by intentionally intervening without directing it. This applies and can be seen in cases where a senior teacher or the principal intervenes by assisting a teacher to acquire certain skills. Using the influence of mediation, Vygotsky developed the term known as the Zone of Proximal Development [ZPD] (Vygotsky, 1978: 85- 86). The Zone of Proximal Development can be defined as the space that lies just beyond the individual's current level of understanding, and where an individual cannot understand something on his own, but has the potential to gain such understanding through interaction with another person who has the capacity (1978: 85- 86). The individual that assists in gaining such understanding may be a teacher, friend or colleague at work. Individuals that provide assistance that translates into understanding, act as mediators in shifting the person's original understanding to a new level. This perspective of learning places much attention on how learning occurs through interaction with others in a group [situated cognition], family, and the community, and is similar to Wenger's social participation in expertise acquisition. This process of interaction must connect in the zone of proximal development to be effective.

Lave and Wenger (1991: 29) suggest that learners begin the learning process from the margins or

periphery by engaging in menial tasks. Over time they gradually move on to much more complex activities leading to the acquisition of skills and expertise.

Haller et al (2000: 285-93) say that learning collaboratively potentially allows for ‘knowledge’ to emerge and/or to be restructured/reconstituted as individuals with differing levels of experiences, viewpoints and prior knowledge either transfer knowledge in a process of sharing or negotiate meaning. In further support of this view, is the idea that diversity operates within groups in terms of “[prior] knowledge, social status, situational role, gender, interpretive frameworks and other social factors” which is a necessary condition for new “knowledge” to emerge. It will be evident that the diversity amongst the teachers in this study facilitates the process of collaborative learning. Morgan and Morgan (1992: 3) allude to this by saying that “collaborative activity between students, teachers, parents, principals, administrators, support staff and local trustees lies at the heart of the process”, while referring to collaboration.

4.4 Observing others

This study found that teachers learn about classroom management by observing others such as senior teachers or colleagues as well as observing the responses when interacting with learners.

4.4.1 Observing senior teachers

During the staff appraisal process of Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS), novices normally get first-hand exposure to the working method of a more senior teacher in action, but they also observe certain disciplining techniques in action as well as novel ways to negotiate and solve problems in the classroom. Interviewee 8 is of the opinion that: “learning by observing others, helped me avoid many mishaps made by my colleagues and it simply involved watching the behaviour of my senior colleague, and later imitating his behaviour.” Another observation by Interviewee 8 of his Head of Department (HOD) further explains how strongly he was influenced. He remarked that he noticed “how well the senior teacher engages the class by giving and subtracting team points to specific groups and individuals” in the class. This applied to “consistent responsible behaviour and progress, handing assignments in on time, participating in group discussions, offering explanations to questions as well as assisting slow learners.” Learners who constantly “disrupted the class with unruly behaviour were penalised and after

misbehaving thrice, their parents would be informed". From this action it was clear that "it depended on individual learners to prove their commitment by their actions, good or bad" which in turn would determine their situation (Interviewee 8, 7/10/2007). Interviewee 8 further noted that notwithstanding the consistent and strict application of these rules, the senior teacher that he observed nevertheless enjoyed much cooperation from learners. Interviewee 10 said that after observing a more senior teacher using some techniques, with much success, he also started using techniques like "moving around the room", "body language", "eye contact", "praise and rewards", "keeping learners on task by having the next activity on the board" - so as to leave no time for trouble to arise from time "in-between" activities (Interviewee 10: 19/11/2007).

4.4.2 Observing colleagues

The advantage of observing others is that an observing teacher can immediately identify the limitation of the "strategy" as well as recognise good practice. This idea has been echoed by interviewees who joined the profession quite recently (Interviewees 1, 8, 9 and 10). They all agreed that learning by observation has an important advantage in that one can learn by successful techniques as well as the mistakes of others, especially the teachers who have been in the teaching profession for a considerable number of years (Interviews from August to November 2007). These observations were mostly made during the process of IQMS, a performance appraisal system procedure which the Education Department uses. During this process, teachers select a peer, as well as his or her immediate senior colleague, to evaluate their own performance during a lesson. Colleagues then get the opportunity to evaluate another teacher in a formal classroom arrangement, comparing presentation of lessons, aspects of classroom management and general teaching methods against a given set of criteria.

Clearly one can see that the act of observation can be used as a positive learning tool by applying lessons learnt to avoid mistakes in one's own classroom. Interviewee 9 notes that by observing others she was able to "reinforce" what she already knew of classroom management. By observing how others employ disciplinary "strategies in action, helped me in my learning process and made me more confident and in control of my own teaching" (Interviewee 9: 10/11/2007).

4.4.3 Observing learners' response

This study found that everyday contact with learners can equip a teacher with a fair idea of what to expect under different situations. Since the teacher and learners have established a “community of practice” over some time, the teacher is able to predict the behaviour of learners based on previous interactions. For instance, after a request to start with an activity from the teacher, “some will immediately start with the task, while others (the usual culprits) will start talking about unrelated issues, borrow stationery and look for books, or bother their class mates” (Interviewee 2). In anticipating this, interviewees reported that they have learnt to “act proactively before learners have a chance to cause a problem. This strategy has been useful in assisting me in planning learning activities and in helping me simply to check whether learners are effectively engaged” (Interviewee 2: 7/8/2007).

Teachers report that they have learnt through their interaction with learners that all learners should be treated equally and that whenever a misdemeanour occurs, the teacher should indicate that he or she is aware of the transgression. A teacher reports that it is important to treat all learners equally when it comes to discipline: “[learners] will be quick to point this out to you [if discipline has been applied inconsistently] and accuse you of having favourite learners in the class”. When a misdemeanour is not immediately acknowledged by a teacher, the “learner in question will think that the teacher does not mind that he/she now and then misbehaves and may take it as permission to commit further offences” (Interviewee 2: 7/8/2007).

Another example of insight based on the teacher being a member of the classroom community of practice is that some teachers report that they have realized that when learners are done with a task, the learners “become bored, especially when they do not know exactly how to keep themselves busy or when no clear guidance is given regarding the task at hand” (Interviewee 1: 5/8/2007). This prompted Interviewee 4 to “[use] enrichment activities relevant to the instructional subject matter [in order to] keep faster learners busy and by so doing decrease the likelihood of behavioural problems” (Interviewee 4, 20/8/2007).

Interviewee 7 reports that her experience has taught her that it is important to “[develop] a relationship with disruptive learners” so that they “feel welcome and valued”. This in her experience “takes away learners' motivation to disrupt classes”. Learners “stopped antagonising”

me after I simply “dropped the rope [not applying the disciplinary rules too rigorously]” and “reached out to them in an unconditional, non-judgemental way” (Interviewee 7: 1/10/2007). Interviewee 5 learnt that when a rule is broken, the “consequence should follow immediately” since he has experienced that children learn best from what actually happens and not from continuous warnings and what is said to them. In other words “teaching them good behaviour is better than telling them what to do” (Interviewee 5, 23/9/2007).

The above strategies of managing the classroom were learnt over a long period and through personal reflection on how learners respond to different disciplinary strategies. In line with the socio-cultural perspective, Bandura's social learning theory (1977) suggests that the highest level of observational learning is achieved through the process of organizing and rehearsing modelled behaviour symbolically and overtly enacting it. Accordingly, an individual is more likely to adopt modelled behaviour if it results in a valued outcome and has a model that the observer can relate to. Strategies consistent with social learning theory include mentoring and on-the-job training. It follows that even teachers will find learning exceedingly laborious if they had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions for information on what to do. It is said that most human behaviour is learnt from observation and adults are thought to develop most of their skills by watching others perform a task. An observation of others by an individual leads to a gaining of new knowledge and may serve as a guide towards action (Bandura 1977: 22).

4.5 Deliberate exploration

4.5.1 Trial and error

Respondents who were less than five years in service named trial and error; sometimes referred to as “discovery learning” or “learning by doing”, as a strategy that they found to benefit from. “I normally experiment with different discipline techniques, discard what is not useful and keep those with which I experience success, for myself. Sometimes it involves a combination of ideas or a variation on the theme, depending on the situation and the age of the learners” (Interviewee 1, August 2007). Interviewee 8 remarked that “when I experiment with ideas I pick up from other teachers which I feel makes sense to me, it reduces the number of errors I make and it normally boosts my self-confidence without having to make the same mistakes they did.”

(Interviewee 7/10/2007)

Teachers suggested that it can be frustrating when a number of repeated trials do not lead to some success. They reported that sometimes an attempt might be successful and at times it just does not work.

“I am normally sceptic with first attempts and learnt that watching somebody else making a mistake is better than me having to venture into unknown territory. I know that it is not always possible and I do realise that I also need to make mistakes in order to succeed and ultimately experience reinforcement of the desired outcome, providing me with immediate feedback after I made an error or experienced success” (Interviewee 8: 7/10/2007).

One can learn how to become skilled in maintaining discipline in the classroom by involving oneself, and practising the techniques, as with any other aspect of education.

Interviewee 3 learnt “to have a no-nonsense attitude from day one”. Instead of doing as he would previously, by “resorting to small talk in order to make learners feel at ease”, he realised that it “is a waste of time”. He maintains that classroom rules need to be established from the first day of school. “You, as the teacher, should be in control and in charge from the beginning and learners should know exactly what is expected from them.” He experienced that it is better to get the learners to participate in drawing up class rules in order for them to feel ownership and responsible for their actions. “We then examine the rules together so that learners can understand that it is needed to protect them as well as adults and their belongings and to help them to get along with others, including what might happen when they do not follow the rules. During the discussion, the teacher as well as the learners should then come to an agreement on what is acceptable or not. I review the rules regularly in order to check whether it is still needed and whether it was applied consistently as well as whether I as the teacher did not perhaps deviate from these rules or its (sic) consequences at certain times” (Interviewee 3: 18/8/2007). This, according to the study, suggests that learners should view rules as serious and realize that they are accountable for their actions.

According to Interviewee 4, she learnt the hard way to “keep parents at all times informed and involved and have a copy sent home to be studied and which the parents should sign”. Learners “should also be held accountable for every action or behaviour that does not contribute to a positive classroom environment”. In other words “there should be a consequence for not behaving properly and this should be consistent every time a rule is broken otherwise rules will serve no purpose and defeat the objective of a controlled environment” (Interviewee 4: 17/8/2007).

“Inconsistency” in applying rules as Interviewee 2 explains, “leads to constant turmoil in my classrooms. Spending time on warnings, reminding them to do their work or having to silence them also defeats the purpose since no accountability is built into the system.” Endlessly “repeating directions, nagging, yelling, calling parents, and giving warnings” according to Interviewee 2 (7/8/2007), “do not work because they really do not hold the learner accountable”. One need to keep learners accountable for their actions and apply rules rigorously.

The objective of learning is the development of individual consciousness, experiencing self-mastery through a process of self-reflection and interaction with people and objects in the external world (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky maintains that human intelligence and knowledge originate in society. From the socio-constructivist perspective, learning is made possible when an individual interacts within his or her social environment (interpersonal), followed by a process of internalisation (intrapersonal). However, it is important to note that individuals such as teachers are not passive receivers of information According to Haller et al (2000) they are active constructors of their own knowledge through practice and experience. Schuetze and Sweet (2002:7) argue that competence is acquired through knowledge acquisition and long exposure to practice. Kalman (2000:189, 198) maintains the definition by Scribner and Cole (1981: 236) that practice is a "recurrent goal-directed sequence of activities" involving skill, technology, and knowledge. He explains that all practices involve interrelated tasks that share common tools, knowledge base and skills, and refers to socially developed and patterned ways of using technology to accomplish tasks.

4.5.2 Reflection

Reflection on good and successful practices by teachers can also be a great source of inspiration and the developing of knowledge and skills.

Kristine (2007) is of the opinion that when we reflect, we recall essential events or experiences in our lives which regulate what we are later able to observe, reminisce about, develop, and understand.

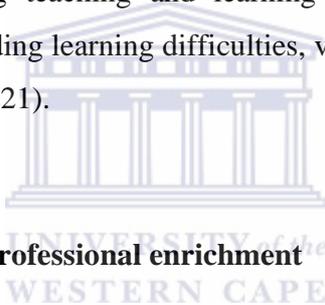
Teachers agreed that they use reflection when they participate in ongoing conversations about the practice of teaching and learning and that feedback from colleagues and critical analysis of student behaviour create a culture that supports continuous learning. According to Interviewee 3, he “learnt over the years to constantly use reflection as a method to deal with new cases of ill-discipline.” After 23 years of experimenting with different techniques, he inevitably “draws on [my] previous experience and it seldom leaves me disappointed”(Interviewee 3: 18/8/2007).

Most of the respondents with close to, or more than, 10 years’ service said that they rely on reflection and even at times apply the lessons learnt automatically since the previous responses have been reinforced through the years and became so familiar that they are applying it in a variety of learning settings (Interviewees 2, 3, 4, 5, & 7: Interviews conducted between 7 August and 1 October 2007). After years of teaching experience they inevitably look back or reflect on their past teaching experience.

Interviewee 3 said “my skills and knowledge are building up through years of past experience and experimenting with new techniques” (Interview: 18/8/2007). This shows that experiential learning which occurred during the years has an impact when teachers reflect to see just how they can improve on their present practices, including classroom management and discipline. This study found that when teachers reflect on and examine their practice, it can lead them to doing a better job which results in personal and professional growth. Experiential learning can also be “education that occurs as a direct participation in the events of life” (Houle 1980: 221). Here learning is not sponsored by a formal educational institution, but by people themselves. Learning that is achieved through reflection upon everyday experience is the way that most of us

do our learning. We also refer to it as learning from experience, in past encounters, after seeing and understanding what effects our actions had and then anticipate what would follow from such an action. We refer to it as reflection on previous learning from life and work experience. Regarding discipline, it may be useful in assisting to plan learning activities and to check simply that learners are effectively engaged. Teachers may not be able to explain their actions in detail. Therefore there may be difficulty in transferring their learning to other settings and situations. It is thus useful in assisting to plan learning activities and to check simply that learners are effectively engaged.

An educator who has learnt through reflection may well have various rules of thumb or generalizations about what to do in different situations. They will be able to say what action to take when there is tension between two people in a group. Accordingly, this “provides an excellent framework for planning teaching and learning activities and it can be usefully employed as a guide for understanding learning difficulties, vocational counseling, and academic advising and so on” (Houle 1980: 221).



4.5.3 Attending conferences for professional enrichment

All the informants agreed that workshops arranged by the Education Department or their own institutions or any non-governmental organisation can be important learning opportunities. Interviewee 3 (18/8/2007) said that “when I meet other teachers at workshops and conferences, I realise that my colleagues face the same discipline challenges as I do”. Interviewee 10 realised that “we almost always share similar ideas; we debate and then try what the one or the other does in their classrooms in our own classes and in the process we learn new methods of classroom management and discipline techniques from one another” (Interviewee 10: August 2007). So they also benefit from the experience of interacting with other teachers that they meet at conferences or workshops and in sharing with other teachers, teaching in different socio-economic areas.

Morgan and Morgan (1992: 3) allude to this by saying that “collaborative activity between students, teachers, parents, principals, administrators, support staff and local trustees lies at the

heart of the [collaborative] process”. So a paradigm shift or change can be accompanied by collaboration (between teachers meeting at conferences and workshops) and is often a key ingredient to learning.

4.5.4 Sporadic review of literature

4.5.5 Searching the internet

The study found that teachers can direct their own learning by taking initiatives to gather and review electronic as well as printed information related to classroom management. Interviewees reported that they read what other teachers, academics and researchers have had to say on the topic by browsing the internet, as well as systematically reading magazines and educational journals or articles that focus on classroom management and school discipline.

Respondents agreed that using the internet can be an excellent way to pursue informal learning and to satisfy one’s need and quest for information. Interviewee 2 remarked that “after 19 years of teaching I now know and learnt that when I have exhausted all other avenues and resources, I can use the internet as a last resort to research challenges and questions concerning teaching but especially discipline issues which sometimes even the DOE has no answer for” (Interviewee 7/10/2007).

Using the Internet as an information resource tool is dependent on the discretion of the individual teacher. Interviewee 5 is of the opinion that

“Making use of the internet relies solely on a teachers’ eagerness to acquire information. Discipline problems in class motivates me, but the fact that the internet provides resources that I can explore whilst developing my own learning style, and at the same time have a wide choice of material to select from, when ever time permits, is so great. It also offers me an alternative to traditional classroom education since I do not have the resources at home” (Interviewee 5: 23/9/2007).

Interviewee 6 stated that

Surfing the net made me more confident and what I've learnt has been a catalyst to my thinking and teaching methods. I have been surprised to find that the discipline problems we are struggling with at this moment have been experienced by teachers in other countries for years. I found a vast amount of research that I could make use of and could share with my colleagues" (Interviewee 6: 25/9/2007).

Since the availability of internet services and access to it is widespread at the workplace and in most homes, it becomes an ideal delivery system for informal learning ... Teachers can take control of their own learning in terms of how they schedule their personal learning time.

4.5.6 Reading educational journals and magazines

All the interviewees admitted that some of the skills they acquired had a lot to do with systematic investigation by reading magazines and books. They view it as a means of language acquisition, of communication and of sharing information and ideas. Interviewee 7 remarked that "I constantly learn new terminology which I share with colleagues. Reading not only developed my creativity and creative thinking skills to decide on alternatives for unruly learners, but also my communication skills to convince learners of the benefits of concentrating on their work" (Interviewee 7: 1/10/ 2007). So reading is experienced as an important tool as far as informal learning is concerned. Coombs and Ahmed (1994) agree that "the lifelong process by which every individual acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights [ranges] from reading newspapers and books; listening to the radio, television and viewing films. Generally informal education is unorganized, unsystematic and even unintentional at times, yet accounts for the great bulk of any person's total lifetime learning – including that of a highly 'schooled' person" (Coombs and Ahmed 1974: 8).

Reading educational journals and magazines can also be called intentional learning. Intentional learning refers to the process in which an individual aims to acquire knowledge and achieves that objective through reading, coaching, or mentoring. Accidental learning happens when an individual learns something unintentionally, during everyday activity. Teachers acquire most of

their classroom management skills and knowledge through an accidental learning approach.

According to educational researchers, there is a strong link or correlation between reading and academic success at all ages. Pretorius (2008) says in an article called “The importance of reading” that good readers can comprehend ideas, follow arguments, and detect implications. Since reading competence is essential for academic achievement, it follows that good reading skills also assist teachers, who read widely, with the aim to execute their jobs to the maximum.

4.6 Conclusion

In this study, teacher learning has been studied in the context of reform in the educational system implemented in South Africa in 1996. This reform encompassed, among other things, the abolition of corporal punishment. Teachers had to adjust to these changes by learning new skills. According to the focus of the study, it was found that teachers used a variety of ways and approaches when they learnt to adjust to the changing conditions of classroom management and to maintain discipline at school. The findings, based on interviews with teachers, suggest that teachers learn through collaboration. This includes collaboration by sharing ideas and experiences with colleagues; through conversations with the community and parents; as well as via informal conversation with fellow teachers from other schools. A second learning category involves observation of others, for instance, senior teachers and peers during the process of Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS), an appraisal system in which teachers’ work is evaluated, as well as the observation of responses during interacting with learners. In addition, teachers also learnt through deliberate exploration by “trial and error”; by reflecting on past experiences; and by attending conferences and workshops which focus on professional development and enrichment. Lastly, according to this research, they also learnt by sporadic reviews of literature, which include searching the internet as a source of information as well as systematic investigation by reading educational journals and magazines.

Section Five

Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

This study concerned itself with the ways teachers acquire classroom management and discipline knowledge and skills in the absence of corporal punishment. Theoretically, this study was located within the field of workplace learning. Accordingly, the school, the site of data collection, was also the site where the teachers were primarily learning at work. The study examined the question: *“How and why do teachers learn about classroom management and discipline?”*

It is significant that key informants of this study highlighted that their formative formal educational programmes did not prepare them to maintain discipline in the absence of corporal punishment especially as this applies to learners living in disadvantage communities. Conversely, teachers acknowledged that their learning about classroom management and discipline were either self-initiated or that they learnt collaboratively through their interaction with peers and other actors at school. Learning collaboratively became possible due to the learning opportunities teachers that were “afforded” within the working contexts in which they found themselves.

The remainder of this section provides a summary of the learning opportunities; teachers were afforded at school as their place of work.

5.2 Learning affordances

At schools teachers were exposed to multiple opportunities to learn about classroom management and discipline. These include collaboration; observing others; deliberate exploration; reflection; professional development and enrichment; as well as systematic investigation and sporadic review of the literature.

Collaboration

Collaborative learning amongst teachers was characterised by exchanging or sharing ideas, views and perspectives. Collaboration also included teachers discussing ideas they read about in newspaper articles or on the internet. Sometimes the teacher discussions were based on insights that they gained by interacting with their learners. On other occasions the discussions were based on problems teachers might have experienced. The collaborative learning discussions were frequently initiated by the teacher who experienced classroom management or discipline problems, or the discussions originated when teachers reported on disciplinary issues they experienced. Collaborative conversations, in general, took the form of knowledge-transfer where the more experienced teacher provided guidance and advice. To a lesser extent, the collaboration took the form of negotiating the best understanding amongst the teachers participating in the conversation.

In the case of collaboration with the community and parents, teachers learnt that parents want them to be fair and consistent when enforcing rules. Parents also want to know or be informed about decisions involving their children. Teachers learnt that they are perceived by the community and parents as authoritative figures which may cause parents to react in a defensive manner when teachers and parents are interacting regarding disciplining their children. Working and planning together with parents resulted in new understanding which involved a collaborative process between teachers and parents, allowing both groups to create new meaning and experience success in the process. The one predictable factor, namely collaboration between teachers and parents, acted like glue which holds the different efforts from teachers and parents together and allowed teachers to come to new meaning and insights while finding solutions.

Teachers learnt through collaborating with colleagues from other schools, for example, exchanging of information on best practices like the most suitable time for doing mental math or reading for the whole school or the introduction of a demerit system as a strategy to control unruly learners.

In short, collaboration involved teachers acting and working together in a variety of ways with

one another in order to share and exchange viewpoints, give advice and share strategies, related to classroom management and school discipline. Collaborative activities between teachers, parents, principals, governing bodies, support staff and local communities brought about learning among teachers.

Observation

Observation was another successful learning strategy used by teachers to gain skills and knowledge related to classroom management and discipline. Observing senior teachers and/or colleagues, as well as learners was an affordance that generated learning about classroom management. Teachers experienced observation as a positive learning tool when applying lessons learnt by watching others to avoid mistakes in their own classrooms. The observing teachers themselves could make multiple connections between theory and practice, and the skills they obtained when they observed other teachers in action in the “real world” or in a classroom setting enabled them to feel more prepared and willing to experiment with similar strategies. Teachers also valued this type of learning since they could observe experienced senior teachers.

Everyday contact with learners equipped teachers with a fair idea of what to expect under different situations. Since the teacher and learners had established a “community of practice” over some time, the teacher was able to predict the behaviour of learners based on previous interactions. Teachers reported that they had learnt through their interaction with learners that all learners should be treated equally.

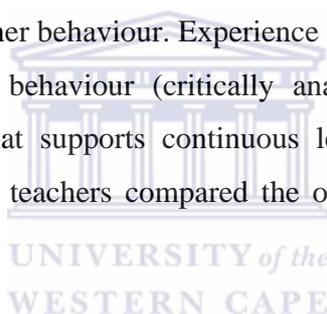
The advantage of observation is that an observing teacher can immediately identify the limitation of a “strategy” as well as recognise good practice. Learning through observation has the important advantage that the observer learns through recognising successful classroom management techniques or approaches as well as recognising the classroom management mistakes. Accordingly, observation facilitated the learning process of the teachers through modelling practices as well as assisted teachers to avoid classroom management mistakes. Furthermore, existing knowledge and skills related to classroom management were reinforced through the process of observing other teachers.

Deliberate exploration

“Trial and error” and experimenting with different discipline strategies generated valuable learning. This was mostly experienced by teachers experimenting individually in their classrooms. Deliberate exploration was frequently initiated after discussing new ideas and methods with colleagues and thereafter experimenting with the new ideas in the classroom. The objective of this type of learning was the development of skill and knowledge through practice and experience. Trial and error involved interrelated tasks that had common goals, which involved socially developed and patterned ways of using technology to accomplish tasks.

Reflecting on personal practice

Reflection on good and successful practices by teachers was also a great source of inspiration in the developing of knowledge and skills. Reflection was used in ongoing conversations about previous instances of problem learner behaviour. Experience as well as feedback from colleagues looking back on similar learner behaviour (critically analysing and deciding on ways of intervention) created a culture that supports continuous learning. After experimenting with different techniques, the initiating teachers compared the outcomes of the initiative with past experiences.

***Professional development and enrichment***

Conferences and workshops provided by the Education Department or non-governmental organisations, served as important learning opportunities for teachers who participated in this study. At these gatherings, teachers discussed informally issues related to classroom management. These discussions at times resulted in teachers learning new methods of classroom management and discipline techniques from one another.

Systematic investigation and sporadic review of literature

Teachers learnt through systematic investigating how others manage their classrooms by reading magazines, journal articles and books exploring the subject. Reading academic articles developed their creativity and creative thinking skills in order to decide on alternatives for unruly learners, as well as communication skills to convince learners of the benefits of concentrating on their work.

However, examining issues related to discipline were not always as systematic. More often the investigations were sporadic and prompted by a specific disciplinary issue. In such situations teachers directed their own learning by taking initiatives to gather and review electronic as well as printed information, such as that related to classroom management. Reading what other teachers, academics and researchers had to say on classroom management and school discipline afforded teachers valuable learning opportunities to gain insight into classroom management and discipline.

5.3 Implications for further research in teacher learning

This research focused on teachers' learning in a previously disadvantaged, sub-economic area, where teachers work with limited resources as well as limited and inadequate support structures, such as psychological and counselling services for learners displaying extreme forms of deviant behaviour.

This research is silent on how teachers who practice in more affluent areas learn about classroom management and discipline. Accordingly, research that ascertains whether teachers in more affluent suburbs as well as previous model C schools, experience the same dilemmas and challenges and whether they are afforded similar learning opportunities as those found in this study, is needed.

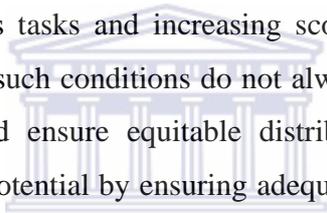
Teachers' learning activities were scrutinized primarily on an action level and not on a mental level. Both levels could be studied simultaneously and in relation to each other. In other words, we might be able to explore what happens on the mental level of activities when a certain type of activity occurs, such as when experimenting with getting ideas from others. It might be worthwhile to take into account the relation between the action and mental level of activities in further studies on teacher learning.

5.4 Concluding comments

Through a process of systematic investigation, it was found that teachers acquired classroom management and discipline skills through workplace learning, initiated by themselves as well as collaboratively through interaction with colleagues and learners. This was possible due to the learning opportunities they were afforded within their working contexts.

The learning affordances were made possible through knowledge transfer and sharing by more knowledgeable others. Information was passed on by social agents like peers, parents, teachers, or activities such as observation, reflection, and sporadic review of literature.

Teachers needed indirect guidance during opportunities to observe and practice participation in a community, assignment to various tasks and increasing scope of responsibility, and time for reflection and dialogue. Although such conditions do not always arise naturally or equitably for every teacher, senior staff should ensure equitable distribution of such opportunities, and enhance every teacher's learning potential by ensuring adequate support resources and guidance as well as reasonable learning time.

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Following from the above, it seems that teachers do in general support and guide colleagues. The availability of learning opportunities associated with school discipline, and how teachers have made use of such opportunities during workplace learning, proved that work-based learning is sufficiently rich to pass as lifelong learning. In addition, characteristics that enhance teachers' motivation to engage in informal learning are: the wish to become more efficient teachers, to use their time optimally and more productive, and their commitment to professional development combined with their love for learning.

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Appendix 1

Unstructured Interview Schedule

June 2007

1. Why and how have you acquired skills in order to maintain classroom discipline which can allow you to teach the way you want to teach?
2. What teaching activities and methods of discipline do you engage in to improve your teaching and are these effective?
3. What other activities are teachers using to manage classes in order to maintain discipline?
4. Do you seek support by collaborating with colleagues over ideas in order to improve your classroom management skills and are you experimenting with these ideas in your classroom?
5. Can interdependency between teachers by observation of different classroom techniques, promote learning?
6. How did you deal with the challenge of the changing role of the teacher regarding discipline reform, which requires you to adapt? How did those learning activities and methods help you to keep abreast of developments? In other words, how have you learnt?