

**THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON THE  
CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT LEPATO HIGH SCHOOL IN  
THE LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

**by**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that:

**THE IMPACT OF ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT ON THE  
CULTURE OF TEACHING AND LEARNING AT LEPATO HIGH SCHOOL IN THE  
LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

is my own work and that all the sources used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references, and that this dissertation was not previously submitted by me for a degree at another University.

.....

T. H Malatji

( i )

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact that alternatives to corporal punishment had on the culture of teaching and learning at Lepato High School in the Limpopo Province. The methods used for data collection involved the use of questionnaires, personal interviews and participation observation. The findings indicated that implementing alternatives to corporal punishment without proper support from all stakeholders in education was disastrous for this school. This study further revealed that parental involvement in education is necessary for the successful application of alternatives to corporal punishment in schools. The study findings will make a positive contribution to the improvement of the handling of disciplinary problems in various schools especially in the Limpopo Province and South Africa in general.

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- Lepato High School Governing Body for being supportive and co-operative in answering the research questionnaires honestly and timeously.

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**DEDICATION**

This research project is dedicated to my father; the late pastor Makikele Herman Malatji, for his endless moral support and encouragement in my studies. It is also dedicated to my two children, Mahlatse and Tebogo, as well as my wife, Petunia, for her support during my studies.

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1. ANC - African National Congress
  
2. NAPTOSA - National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa
  
3. OBE - Outcomes Based Education
  
4. RCL - Representative Council of Learners
  
5. SASA - South African Schools Act
  
6. SADTU - South African Democratic Teachers' Union
  
7. SGB - School Governing Body
  
8. SMT - School Management Team
  
9. TLO - Teacher Liaison Officer

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## **BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The abolishment of corporal punishment in schools by government has left many educators dumbfounded and powerless. Many of them regarded this form of punishment as a remedy to all kinds of disciplinary problems. To some educators it was a quick way of solving problems and it surpassed all other forms of behaviour correction. Unfortunately, nothing could be done because the abolition of corporal punishment was in line with the supreme law of the country, which is the Constitution of South Africa (Act 108 of 1997).

The abolishment of corporal punishment did not only disturb educators since many community members as well as certain political structures expressed different views, including religious beliefs, in trying to justify the use of corporal punishment in schools. In contrast, the abolition of corporal punishment was supported by many organisations including the two largest educator unions, namely, the South African Democratic Teachers' Union (SADTU) and National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA).

In the place of corporal punishment alternatives were introduced and all

schools in the country were expected to implement them. Many educators again saw this as a big challenge to their profession, especially because they were not exposed to these methods of discipline during their teachers' training. However, many

learners saw this as their chance to do as they wished. They have taken advantage of the banning of corporal punishment without accepting any responsibility for their deviant behaviour when it comes to discipline. This has seriously affected the culture of teaching and learning in schools.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The educators at Lepato High School sometimes have to deal with disruptive learners who show little or no respect for their fellow learners, educators and school property. There were several learners' disturbances at this school, which left the school buildings damaged, and some of the educators injured. The school is at present listed among the high-risk schools by the Limpopo Department of Education and it is also compelled to participate in the Safe Schools Project designed to help schools with disciplinary problems. Educators at this school were rescued by policemen on several occasions and sometimes had to report at the Lulekani Circuit Office because the situation at the school was not conducive to teaching and learning. A large number of the learners continued to defy the rules about the starting time for school. Some of the learners were dodging their lessons, tests and willingly and openly disregarded the Code of Conduct drafted and adopted by the

democratically elected School Governing Body (SGB) and the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). The problem was that these unfortunate incidents were taking place in a school where alternatives to corporal punishment were used like in other public schools. The Department of Education regards alternatives to corporal

punishment as relevant tools to promote good governance and the smooth running of schools. With the use of alternatives to corporal punishment, it is hoped that schools will be able to instil self-discipline, self-respect, a sense of responsibility and accountability in learners because corporal punishment had failed to produce the desired results.

### **1.3 Motivation for the study**

According to Salim (1995:9), the Constitutional Court abolished corporal punishment for juveniles in June 1995. Schools were seriously affected by this legislation because they were serving the youth and for a long time educators had not used or known any other effective way of disciplining learners other than corporal punishment. Educators were expected to immediately change their disciplinary strategies to the more humane and acceptable ones as approved by the Department of Education and the laws of the country. According to Salim (1995:12), educators can achieve effective discipline through positive disciplinary measures such as rewarding positive behaviour, modelling appropriate behaviour and behaviour modification techniques.

Many schools implemented these strategies immediately after the abolition of corporal punishment.

What inspired the researcher to embark on this study was the realisation of the fact that the banning of corporal punishment in schools was followed by a disturbing

surge of a lack of discipline that continued to disrupt academic activities in many public schools. This had continued for years and has led to the situation where the education system of some rural high schools is on the verge of being dysfunctional. Lepato High School is one of them. Furthermore, the researcher realised that people in these communities have come to accept the situation as unchangeable.

#### **1.4 Aim of the study**

The aim of the study was to explore the impact that alternatives to corporal punishment had on the culture of teaching and learning at Lepato High School. As such, this study was an attempt to explore the successes as well as failures that these new methods of discipline have brought into the teaching and learning situation.

#### **1.5 Objectives of the study**

The following objectives of the study were identified:

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- To explore factors that hamper the realisation of workable alternatives to corporal punishment as envisaged by the Department of Education;
- To identify possible causes of persistent disciplinary problems encountered by this school and how to remedy them;

- To make recommendations for the improvement of alternatives to corporal punishment used by the school in order to restore the culture of teaching and learning.

## **1.6 Research questions**

To achieve the aim and objectives of the study, the following research questions were posed:

- What is the school doing to maintain a situation that is conducive to teaching and learning?
- Are all those who are responsible for this task doing their jobs as expected?
- What can be done to overcome these disciplinary problems in this school?
- What is the impact of alternatives to corporal punishment on the culture of teaching and learning?
- Which are the workable alternatives to corporal punishment that

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educators can use in order to instil self-discipline in learners?

## **1.7 Significance of the study**

The research findings will help to expose the root causes of problems that hinder academic progress in many high schools so that corrective action can be taken



before it is too late. The impact of the present alternatives to corporal punishment used in schools will be explored and their effectiveness or shortcomings be brought to light for improvement and reinforcement. This will also help to bring about a significant change in the present culture of teaching and learning in high schools. The research findings will aid the teaching profession given the fact that the majority of educators come from a background in which corporal punishment was known as the only form of disciplining learners. Workable alternatives to restore a culture of teaching and learning in schools will be clarified and this can be of assistance to other stakeholders such as the Department of Education, School Governing Bodies and educators' organisations which have an interest in educational matters.

## **1.8 Definition of concepts**

For the purposes of this study, the following concepts will have the meanings as defined in the study:

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- Learner

A learner is any person, of school-going age, who is receiving education or is obliged to receive education in terms of the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996.

- Educator

An educator is any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons at an education institution. He/she must have undergone professional training for a specific period of time to be called an educator.

- Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is any deliberate act against a child that inflicts pain or physical discomfort to punish or contain him/her. This includes, but is not limited to, spanking, slapping, pinching, peddling or hitting a child with a hand or an object. It also includes denying a child to use the toilet, to have food, a drink, heat, or shelter. Pushing or pulling a child with force and forcing a child to do physical exercises are also regarded as part of corporal punishment.

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- Alternatives to corporal punishment

These refer to new disciplinary methods currently used in schools to correct learners' behaviour instead of using corporal punishment.

## **1.9 Conclusion**

This Chapter covers the reason why the study was undertaken and gives the aim, objectives and the significance of the study. Existing literature on the topic will be reviewed in Chapter Two.

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## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW ON ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT AND DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

Discipline is important for maintaining order and harmony in a school and it provides a climate in which learners can learn freely from disruption and chaos. Disruptive and anti-social behaviour can have a deleterious effect on teaching and learning in a school. In order to promote good behaviour schools should have a school discipline policy which should include details of school rules and expected behaviour, as well as the consequences of deviating from the school rules. A school's discipline policy and its implementation are also bound by the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 which provides essential guidelines for what is permitted and what is prohibited in terms of punishment, especially physical punishment. The school with all its activities is geared towards the development of the child's logical and analytical abilities. The educator's task is thus to guide the learner until he/she can think, analyse things and learn independently. However, the educators' guidance can only be effective if it takes place in an environment that is safe and conducive to teaching and learning. It is only through effective discipline that this can be achieved.

Effective discipline is also associated with high academic and non-academic achievements. In some schools, discipline is a major problem and one of the factors contributing to poor academic performance and results. Since corporal punishment was abolished in all public schools, alternatives to corporal punishment are widely used in order to maintain an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning in schools.

## 2.2 International overview

In many parts of the world, learners' rights were considered to be limited by their status as minors and the concept of *in loco parentis*, according to which school authorities assumed the powers of the child's parents during the hours the child was under the school's supervision.

In Sparta, Athens, Egypt, and China early educational discipline was cruel and merciless. Learners did not have a say in the education process as a whole. Things were brought to them cut and dried and there was no room for questioning or consultation. According to Clabaugh and Rozycki (1990:292), disciplinary measures used in educating the learners good behaviour were severe and corporal punishment was the order of the day. The two authors mention that fear was the sole motivation for learning.

This situation changed as the years went by and in America experts in educational matters unanimously agreed in the early seventies that corporal punishment was ineffective and counterproductive.

Clabaugh and Rozycki (1990:446) note that the American Psychological Association passed a resolution opposing the use of corporal punishment in schools in 1975. According to this Association's report, corporal punishment

lowers self-esteem, encourages children to resolve difficulties with violence while it also instils rage and a sense of powerlessness in learners without reducing undesirable behaviour. This report and other reports that severely condemned corporal punishment led to the abolishment of corporal punishment in schools. It was replaced by alternatives to corporal punishment.

In order to succeed in the application of alternatives to corporal punishment, all stakeholders need to be involved in their implementation. Rolff (1993:159) emphasises that it is unlikely that one person or even a small team of leaders, can be capable of handling all sides of a school's development process. The same applies to discipline in a school. A report given by Watkins and Wagner (2000:25) on a survey done on 1000 schools with good discipline in America, shows that the schools were engaged in the following activities:

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- The schools never used new tricks or quick fixes for solving problems;
- They created a whole-school environment that would be conducive to good discipline rather than adopting isolated practices to deal with disciplinary problems;
- Programmes in these schools emphasized positive behaviours and used preventative measures rather than punitive actions to improve discipline;
- These schools adapted practices to meet their own identified needs and to reflect their own styles of operation;

- They used teamwork under a capable head and staff members with leadership qualities;
- They used the strong ties that they had formed with the learners, parents and community agencies to their advantage.

These activities were used by the schools to create good school culture that was conducive to teaching and learning.

In addition, Watkins and Wagner clarify the importance that school Codes play in maintaining good discipline in schools. They (2000:32) mention that these Codes apply to and have been developed by all groups in the school, who thus wish to see them operate in practice. It is, therefore, clear that the international community upholds the rights of the child to learn in a free, normal and democratic atmosphere that is characterised by

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good discipline and orderliness. In order to achieve this, one has to use alternatives to corporal punishment that are in line with the Constitution of the country.

### **2.3 Research in Southern Africa**

Maintaining discipline in South African schools was highly contested by the abolishment of corporal punishment in all public schools. This action caused an uproar in educational circles and many educators as well as parents predicted that this would cause a collapse of discipline in schools.

According to the minister of Education Kader Asmal (2000:5), Christian National Education was designed to support the apartheid system by schooling children to become passive citizens who would accept authority unquestionably. Beating children as a way of discipline was a method to make them comply with any doctrine and this was widely accepted by many in a society that was characterised by violence. Things changed after the 1994 elections when South Africa stepped out of isolation and joined the civilised global community. A new democratic Constitution was adopted that guaranteed the right to dignity, equality, freedom, and security to all citizens. South Africa automatically became a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of a Child. This forced South Africa to protect

children from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect, ill treatment, exploitation, and sexual abuse. It is, therefore, not surprising that the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 prohibits all people in authority at schools from administering corporal punishment to any learner irrespective of the offence committed.

### **2.3.1 Relationship between discipline and the culture of learning and teaching**

Hoberg (1993:68) describes schools as social organisations that are influenced by a multitude of competing and often conflicting interests emanating from



parents, community members and groups, charitable organisations, businesses, religious and even political groups of every persuasion. In order for the school to be a safe institution for children, discipline must be maintained. Discipline is the total exercise of the educator's educational authority for the good of the learner on his/her way to self-discipline. Discipline is exercised in the form of leading, guiding, exercising a good influence, giving help and support, instructing, informing, and giving practice in doing what is good and right. This is in line with the South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 because it encourages the use of any form of discipline that is humane and corrective by nature.

Oosthuizen, Botha, Mentz, Roos, and Van Kerken (1994:39) support this idea by maintaining that when a learner conforms to school rules, a secure and tensionless environment is created, enabling the learner to concentrate on his/her schoolwork. Potgieter, Visser, Van de Bank, Mothatha, and Squelch (1997:59) put this task of creating an environment conducive to learning squarely on the shoulders of the principal and educators. The principal and educators must maintain proper order and discipline, thereby creating the right school climate.

According to a Guide for School Management Teams (2000:2), the most important thing about a school culture is that it should build and facilitate the relationships and behaviours which enable the school to do its work. This culture must build trust, support, communication, and participation. The same views are

supported by Van der Westhuizen, Basson, Barnard, and Prinsloo (1991:68) by maintaining that discipline will improve if communication channels are clearly evident.

They further mention that discipline has the best chance of being successful if learners are free to make choices and fully understand why they are expected to behave according to certain norms. However, it must be mentioned that learners in secondary schools tend to be extremely critical about the discipline at their schools and this has compromised the quality of education in South African schools.

### **2.3.2 The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 and discipline in schools**

In order to remedy this situation, every school is compelled by the South African Schools Act (SASA) to have a written and approved Code of Conduct. This will serve as the only acceptable and lawful tool to limit the fundamental rights that learners have. On the local level of the national educational system is the SGB, which is responsible for the provision of education at grass roots level. Since education is a shared responsibility of schools, parents, learners, and other interested members of the community, these people automatically become stakeholders who serve in the SGB.

According to section 8 (1) of SASA, the SGB must adopt a Code of Conduct compiled by them for a particular school. Its main aim is to regulate conduct, encourage good behaviour, promote self-discipline, and create a well-organised and good school so that effective learning and teaching can take place. The South African Schools Act stipulates that educators, parents and learners must be involved in this activity. It is also important that every learner should have his/her own copy to avoid unnecessary excuses for breaking the law. The Code must contain, among other things, school rules, sanctions (punishments) and disciplinary procedures.

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This is an important document that all schools should develop and follow if they want to create a climate that is conducive to teaching and learning.

According to section 9 (1) of the South African Schools Act No. 84 Of 1996, the SGB has the power to suspend any learner who misbehaves for a period not exceeding one week while still following the right procedures of disciplining him/her. The SGB can also recommend his/her expulsion to the Provincial Head of the Department of Education when serious misconducts are involved. Other forms of corrective measures such as Friday detentions, giving extra work and warning slips can be used as long they do not inflict pain or dehumanise the culprit.

### **2.3.2 The Representative Council of Learners (RCL)s' role in maintaining discipline**

The RCL, which is an important part of the SGB, plays an important role in maintaining peace and harmony in the schoolyard. The school should create a conversational situation. It must create a situation of meeting or encounter because an effective or educative teaching act is usually carried out in a personal encounter between the educator and the learner.

The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 recognises the RCL as an equal partner in the running of schools. In applying alternatives to corporal punishment the RCL should be involved if the right atmosphere for

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education is to be maintained in the school. Information obtained from the Guide for Representative Council of Learners (1999:21-22) stipulates the role of the RCL as follows:

- It operates within the framework of the policies and rules of the school;
- Collaborates closely with other stakeholders;
- Supports the School Management Team (SMT);
- Tries to improve the interpersonal relationships between learners, educators and parents;
- Develops and maintains a healthy and good spirit;
- Helps to bring about order in the school;
- Facilitates cleanliness and order in the school, supports and takes a lead in encouraging both.

The RCL is, therefore, the mouthpiece of the learners and must lead by example for the other learners to follow.

#### **2.3.4 The School Management Team and the educators' role in maintaining discipline**

The whole task of keeping the learning and teaching culture undisturbed needs an ability to deal with change. In the past, churches, private companies, the state and even principals themselves controlled schools. Things have changed. Since 1994 almost every part of education has

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changed. Many people welcome the changes but change is often stressful. That is why it is argued that the most important function of the management team in any public school in South Africa today is perhaps to manage change.

When implementing alternatives to corporal punishment in any school the implementers need support from everyone involved in education as a whole. School Management Team members need to plan together with the stakeholders, get feedback from them and then plan again if something is not working.

If people feel that they are important to the change process and understand why the change process is important, they are likely to co-operate. Stakeholders involved in the whole exercise where their full support is very important are the learners, parents, educators as well as co-opted experts from special fields in the

community. When institutions fail to manage change effectively it is usually because of a lack of commitment by the people who play important roles in putting change into practice. In order to develop and maintain a culture of discipline, dignity and respect, educators can implement alternatives to corporal punishment in various ways in their classrooms. Asmal (2000:12-14) suggests that the educator must:

- Adopt a whole school approach and make sure that his/her classroom discipline reflects the school policies;

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- Establish ground rules;
- Be serious and consistent about the implementation of the rules;
- Know his/her learners and focuses on relationship building;
- Manage the learning process and the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally;
- Make sure that learning materials and methodology are challenging to learners;
- Be inclusive by not leaving other learners out;
- Give learners the opportunity to succeed, for instance, by allowing them to take responsibility;
- Devise positive strategies to deal with attention-seeking learners;
- Involve parents by making them part of the solution; and
- Use professional assistance were possible.

According to Salim (1996:16), the development of a democratic approach to discipline in schools compatible with the principles of equality, mutual respect and

responsibility is the alternative to corporal punishment. This is a good summary of what an alternative to corporal punishment is and how it should be used to correct the learner's behaviour. Salim furthermore states that no manual, handbook or experts can replace the collective efforts of teachers, parents and pupils who confront disciplinary problems under the guidance of these principles (1996:16). He concludes his argument by quoting Albert Einstein who warned that the worst thing for a

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school principal is to work with methods of fear, force and artificial authority. Such treatment destroys the healthy feelings, integrity and self-confidence of the pupils.

## **2.4 Research in Limpopo**

Mabeba's (1996) research on perceptions held about discipline in education, reveals the following findings and recommendations:

- That learners and parents prefer that discipline be taught as a school subject;
- Entrusting high school learners with discipline, allowing them to determine the consequences of their behaviour inculcates self-discipline;
- Educators' becoming role models of disciplined behaviour inculcates self-discipline;
- Large enrolments undermine discipline although some parents did not support this finding;

- High school learners should be suspended for violation of school rules and this should aim at maintaining order and discipline;
- Discipline should be consistent between male and female educators;
- There must be a shared decision-making and not an imposition of disciplinary measures and the school's discipline policy;
- Permanent expulsion is not recommended but school authorities

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should develop alternatives to expulsion;

- Stakeholders should meet regularly and programme services and technical assistance should be extended to families, social welfare and other community structures.

In concluding his research findings, Mabeba (1996:368) remarks on the little attention that psycho-educationists, education planners, educators, and parents give to discipline in education in South Africa as a whole. The researcher mentions that while parents, educators and high school learners are aware of the consequences of undisciplined behaviour as a hurdle in the development of the learner, it is surprising how educators expect to manage discipline in the South African school system. He furthermore maintains that discipline remains an important ingredient for the learner to learn successfully.

## **2.5 General theory about alternatives to corporal punishment**

In the past, ill discipline was dealt with harshly in the form of corporal punishment. This form of punishment was by its very nature anti-human and was an abusive



practice that promoted the idea that violence provides a solution to every problem. There is no doubt that the practice was degrading rather than being rehabilitative. The theory behind the usage of alternatives to corporal punishment as a tool for behaviour correction is that if learners are provided with a space to be responsible, to explore their

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own ideas and to participate in things that affect them directly, they will become responsible adults (Asmal, 2000:15). Many educationists see alternatives to corporal punishment as a democratic type of discipline based on participation and involvement. It is further believed that if school rules are applied equally to every learner and they succeed in building trust and respect in learners, then the cooperation between learners and educators will be strengthened. In addition, Asmal (2000:14) indicates that if these alternatives are implemented properly, they will help to instil self-discipline in learners and encourage them to realise their academic potential and become mature and independent-thinking adults.

Mabeba

(1996:367) agrees that entrusting high school learners with discipline, and allowing them to determine the consequences of their behaviour inculcates self-discipline.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

From the foregoing discussion it is clear that corporal punishment failed to

instil the desired good behaviour in learners. It failed to inculcate self-discipline in learners but instead brought about the culture of violence and intolerance in the very same learners it was meant to correct. Research locally and internationally has proved that there is strong support for the use of alternatives to corporal punishment. There were successes recorded in schools where these methods of behaviour correction were properly used.

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In this study the researcher thus wanted to establish what impact these alternatives to corporal punishment had on the culture of teaching and learning at Lepato High School in the Limpopo Province. The next Chapter, therefore, deals with the research methodology that was used to conduct this research project.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2000:103), research methodology entails whom or what the researcher is going to study in order to collect data. The researcher must identify who is available for the study and how he/she will reach them. It is also important to show whether it will be appropriate to select a sample and how it will be done. In addition, this section covers the research design, the area of study, the data collection method as well as the data collection procedure.

#### **3.2 Research design**

The researcher used the qualitative and descriptive designs in conducting this study. It was a case study where policy implementation and management issues of Lepato High School were scrutinised. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:279), case study designs are often used when the researcher is interested in a clearly delineated entity such as a household, family, institution, or an organisation. Since

this study concerned human actions in a special institution with the aim of describing and understanding their activities, this choice of a research design was the most suitable for this study.

### **3.3 Area of study**

The study was conducted in one rural high school in the Phalaborwa area namely, Lepato High School. Lepato is situated outside Namakgale Township in Makhushane Village under Kgoshi Malatji. The Village is about 10km from Phalaborwa. Most of the learners in this high school reside in Makhushane Village while a few come from Namakgale Township. The school has one principal, one deputy principal, four heads of departments, and twenty-two educators. The school starts from Grade 8 to Grade 12 and the learner enrolment was 943 at the time of the research. The school has twenty classrooms, one functional library, a science laboratory, and an administration block with seven offices.

### **3.4 Population**

A population is the entire group of persons or objects that are of interest to the researcher, or the criteria the researcher is interested in studying (Brink, 2000:132). In this study the School Governing Body of Lepato M. High School was targeted. The population interviewed comprised the following members:

- The principal as an ex officio member;

- Nine parents;
- Three educators representing the whole teaching staff;

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- One member representing the non-teaching staff, and
- Three learners (RCL members).

The total number of the School Governing Body members interviewed was seventeen. The Teacher Liaison Officer was also included in this study and her inclusion made the number of the respondents to increase to eighteen.

### **3.5 Sampling method**

De Vos (2002:199) describes a sample as the element of the population considered for actual inclusion in the study, or a subset of measurements drawn from a population in which the study is interested.

In this study, eighteen people were selected to be a sample that represented all stakeholders at this particular school. There was no need to use any sampling method to select a group to represent the whole population because all stakeholders in this school were fully and legally represented in the SGB. Schools elect RCL members who represent learners in the SGB at the beginning of every year while other members of the SGB are elected after every three years. The RCL members who formed part of the interviewed group were the chairperson, the secretary and

the treasurer. The population for this study was already in place before the study commenced.

### **3.6 Choice of instruments**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:282), the use of multiple sources of data is important in case studies of all kinds. This involves using more than one method, multiple interview or observation occasions. In this study a well-structured questionnaire was used as an instrument to extract information from the participants. Questionnaires were compiled in English and administered to literate respondents. Participation observation was also used to collect the necessary information. Participation observation can be described as a qualitative research procedure that studies the natural and every day set-up in a particular community or situation (De Vos, 2000:280). As an educator attached to the school the researcher had ample chance to observe the school's proceedings as they unfolded on a daily basis.

### **3.7 Pilot study**

According to De Vos (2002:210), a pilot study is one way in which the prospective researcher can orientate himself/herself to the project he/she has in mind. It is a prerequisite for the successful execution and completion of a research project. It is, therefore, important for the researcher not to embark on the research project before

he/she is confident that the chosen procedures are suitable, valid, reliable, and effective to produce the desired results.

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In this study, five questionnaires were distributed to five SGB members representing the five different stakeholders. The collected data were analysed to ensure that the instrument would produce the desired results. These five respondents were later included in the group that was to be interviewed.

### **3.8 Data collection methods and procedures**

Since the target population consisted of parents, educators and learners, the formation of a focus group which could be interviewed at the same time, was impossible. The researcher distributed questionnaires to educators, learners, the school clerk, and the principal to complete. The learners were assisted by the Teacher Liaison Officer (TLO) in the interpretation of some of the questions they did not understand. The researcher had to arrange with the nine parents in the SGB for suitable dates and times to complete the questionnaires. The researcher assisted the parents who did not understand some of the questions.

As an educator attached to this school, the researcher was able to access some information relevant to the study. These include school disciplinary policies, examination records and analyses of school results. He also participated in some of the activities used in trying to normalise the situation at this school. Several

interviews were held with other senior teaching staff members for further clarifications as well.

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This Chapter covered the research methodology used to collect the necessary data. A qualitative research design was adopted and the population, area of study, sample, and the choice of instruments were outlined. The next Chapter deals with the presentation of the collected information.



## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

In this Chapter, the findings are presented so that the theory indicated in Chapter Two could be confirmed or denied. According to this theory, learners who are provided with a space to be responsible, to explore their own ideas and to participate in things that affect them directly become responsible. Alternatives to corporal punishment help to instil self-discipline in learners and encourage them to realise their academic potential. It is further stated in this theory that these learners who are given such freedom become mature and independent-thinking adults.

#### **4.2 Findings**

##### **4.2.1 Disciplinary problems encountered by the school**

Twelve of the eighteen participants interviewed believed that the school had reached a situation where there was a general breakdown of discipline. Half of the participants regarded the school discipline as poor and three as very poor.

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The following were identified by the participants as persistent problems that hampered the normal teaching and learning at the school:

- Late coming and early departure by learners;
- Learners not attending lessons regularly, dodging lessons and loitering around in the school premises;
- Drug abuse, especially dagga which was used by more boys than girls;
- Fights among learners and their disrespect towards their educators;
- A lack of respect for school furniture and buildings;
- A lack of self-respect by learners who did not even comply with wearing their school uniforms;
- Learners' strikes, dodging tests and avoidance of doing school related activities that led to the progression of learners to the next grade.

#### **4.2.2 Disciplinary problems that alternatives to corporal punishment failed to address**

Alternatives to corporal punishment used at this school could not address the following problems:

- They could not improve the learners' working rate. The learners' attitude towards their schoolwork did not improve because they kept on ignoring doing homework and classwork given to them by the educators;

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- Methods used to curb late coming failed dismally as the learners continued to come late to school, even in summer;
- Learners continued to strike year after year despite several attempts by their educators to show them the correct channels of resolving their grievances;
- Acts of vandalism, fights among learners and dodging of lessons did not stop or improve;
- Self-respect never improved.

#### **4.2.3 Root causes of the problems**

Ten participants put the blame on wrong disciplinary methods used to address these problems. According to them, these methods were ineffective and needed to be replaced by workable alternatives that would bring about change at this school. Five of the eighteen participants regarded negligence on the part of the stakeholders as the root cause of these problems while three did not know what the root causes might be.

This investigation further revealed that the following stakeholders were contributing significantly to some of the problems the school was experiencing:

**(i) Parents**

8 (44.4%) of the participants blamed the parents for the problems that the school was experiencing. According to them, the parents did not perform their duties as expected. This finding might be based on the fact that 10 (55.6%) of the participants rated the parents' meeting attendance at only 10% in a school where there were 943 learners. This is a clear indication that the parents were not supporting the school in trying to create law and order among the learners. 11 (61.1%) of the participants believed that parental involvement in cases concerning their children had always produced the desired results. Failure by parents to show up at school when called to do so worked against the progress that the school tried to achieve. This study further revealed that most of the parents of the learners were:

- Illiterate and, therefore, had little or no interest in educational matters;
- Ignorant and, therefore, neglected the supervision of their children's schoolwork at home.

These were some of the reasons why some of the parents never showed up for meetings organised by the school or when they were called to come and discuss their children's learning problems with the educators.

## **( ii) The Representative Council of Learners**

All the participants agreed that the school had a democratically elected RCL that was looking after the interests of the learners at the school. The RCL was elected by learners and was, therefore, not imposed by the School Management Team.

However, 12 ( 66.7%) of the participants felt that the RCL was not facilitating cleanliness and orderliness at the school. The same number of participants agreed that this structure did not lead by example for other learners to follow. That is why most of the learners remained unruly and could not be corrected easily by their educators. 10 (55.6%) of the participants rated the RCL's level of performance as poor and one participant as very poor. It was further uncovered that:

- The RCL was not strong enough to control the learners' unruly behaviour. There was still an element of fear in them for taking up their rightful position in the school as leaders.
- It could not motivate learners to behave properly whereas it failed to comply with some of the school rules;
- It still wanted to satisfy some learners rather than doing what was right;
- It did not see itself as an important stakeholder in the SGB that should bring about change and order in this school.

## **(iii) Educators**

The school had twenty-eight educators including the principal, and the pupil- teacher ratio was 1:34. According to the Department of Education standards, the school was properly staffed. A team of six senior educators including the principal led the school. There were four heads of departments, the deputy principal and the principal. This is regarded as a well-constituted School Management Team that can lead any school in the right direction. The school too had a school clerk who looked after all the administration, financial records and other school correspondence. This gave the SMT enough time to strategise and implement the vision of the school properly.

One participant in this study rated the standard of teaching at this school as excellent, three rated the standard as very good and thirteen rated it as good. Only one participant differed from the others by stating that the standard of teaching was poor. This indicated that the educators at this school were doing their jobs as expected although there were the following issues concerning discipline that they did not pay sufficient attention to:

- 14 (77.8%) of the participants believed that the educators sometimes led by example;
- 13 (72.2%) believed that they sometimes attended periods on time;
- 12 (66.7%) believed that they sometimes honoured their periods regularly.

Half of the SGB members interviewed agreed that the educators showed little concern about orderliness in the school. This shows that although the educators

maintained a good standard of teaching, they overlooked certain key issues in discipline. They should as professionals always lead by example, always go to their respective classes on time and always honour their periods. By so doing they could have helped to minimise disciplinary problems that the school was experiencing.

#### **(iv) The School Management Team (SMT)**

The study revealed that all stakeholders failed to resolve disciplinary problems because of a lack of commitment and good relationship among them. Some participants made mention of the fact that the SMT sometimes showed no respect for other SGB members and that this had a negative impact on the running of the school. The duty of a principal as an ex officio member in the SGB is to guide the School Governing Body on matters concerning education. He must see to it that there is trust and respect among members of the SGB at all times. The chairperson normally executes this duty but the principal must step in when he/she feels that the governing body is no longer a united force that should drive the school forward. In fact, the principal is present in the SGB in an advisory capacity and should not take sides or make decisions on behalf of the governing body.

#### **4.2.4 How the school reacted to the problems**

The Department of Education expects all schools to establish a Code of Conduct through which they can run their programmes professionally. These Codes of

Conduct will help to limit some of the rights that learners have which can have a negative impact on their learning. Lepato High School also developed a Disciplinary Code for its learners through which they could govern their day-to-day educational activities on the school premises and during school trips.

11 (61.1%) Of the participants in this study agreed that all stakeholders compiled these rules. This was the right thing to do and the school should be credited for that. The Disciplinary Code categorised the types of punishable offences into three groups, namely, moderate, serious and very serious misconduct. It also included measures to be taken against culprits. The Disciplinary Code further indicated the composition of the Disciplinary Committee as well as the procedure to be followed in disciplinary hearings. It clearly indicated who should tackle the problem, at which level, as well as which problems should be taken to a final disciplinary hearing. This was a well-designed document produced by the Disciplinary Committee to solve all disciplinary problems experienced by the school.

Attached is the Disciplinary Code and keys to abbreviations used by the school:

**Table 4.1 Lepato High School Disciplinary Code**

Item	Misconduct	EDUCATOR		DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE
		1 <sup>ST</sup> Incident	2 <sup>ND</sup> Incident	3 <sup>RD</sup> incident
<b>1</b>	<b>MODERATE</b>			
1.1	School Uniform	VWL	WWP	CP / FW
1.2	Late coming	VWL	WWP	CP / FW
1.3	Early departure	VWL	WWP	CP / FW
1.4	Class disturbance	VWL	WWP	CP / FW
1.5	Learner's portfolio	VWL	WWP	CP / FW
1.6	Absenteeism	VWL	WWP	CP / FW



<b>2</b>	<b>SERIOUS</b>			
2.1	Gambling	WWL	CP	CP / FW
2.2	Intimidation/bullying	WWL	CP	CP / FW
2.3	Fighting	WWP / CP	CP / FW	S
2.4	Truancy	WWL	CP	CP / FW
2.5	Vulgar words	WWL	CP	CP / FW
2.6	Copying in exams	WWP / CP	CP / FW	S
2.7	Swearing	WWL	CP	CP / FW
<b>3</b>	<b>VERY SERIOUS</b>			
3.1	Physical violence	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S
3.2	Liquor & drugs	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S
3.3	Sexual harassment	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S
3.4	Theft	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S
3.5	Vandalism	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S
3.6	Fraud	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S
3.7	Dangerous weapons	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S	FDH/CP/SAPS/S

### KEY

CODE	EXPLANATION
VWL	Verbal warning to learner
WWP	Written warning to parent
CP	Contact parent
FW	Final warning
FDH	Formal disciplinary hearing
SAPS	South African Police Services
S	Suspension

### COMPOSITION OF THE DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE

1. SGB Chairperson/delegated member of the SGB
2. Deputy principal
3. HOD
4. One educator.

## **DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

1. The learner will be informed in writing of the charges he/she is to face 5 days in advance.
2. The learner must be given a chance to be heard (not prohibited to be represented by the RCL/parent or TLO)
3. The learner should be treated with dignity throughout the process.
4. The learner should be informed of the outcome in writing.
5. The learner has the right to appeal.
6. Records of the proceedings should be kept safely.

## **SEARCHES AND SEIZURES**

1. It must be done in private in the presence of a senior teacher and not in a humiliating manner.

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2. Boys will be searched by male educators and girls by female educators.
3. A disciplinary committee hearing will follow.

10 ( 55,6%) of the participants indicated that not all of the learners knew about these rules. They further mentioned that these rules were communicated verbally to

learners and that learners did not have copies of this important document. Parents did not have copies either.

#### **4.2.5 The impact of alternatives to corporal punishment on the culture of teaching and learning**

##### **(i) Impact on school rules in general**

11 (61.1%) of the interviewees mentioned that alternatives to corporal punishment used at this school were ineffective. 12 (66.7%) of them stated that their usage did not bring about any positive change in the learners' behaviour at the school. 10 (55.6%) of the participants maintained that with alternatives to corporal punishment in place, the culture of teaching and learning had not improved.

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6 (33.3%) of the participants were convinced that the situation had moved from bad to worse. From this study it was clear that alternatives to corporal punishment at this institution had a negative impact on the following aspects:

- Absenteeism from school and missing periods;
- Schoolwork in general (class work, homework, and tests);

- Learners' behaviour (attitude towards fellow learners, educators and school property).

The learners tended to become unruly and took advantage of their newly acquired freedom to do as they pleased. The school also experienced an increase in the number of learners who loitered around the school premises and those who gambled just outside the schoolyard during school hours. Fights among learners occurred on a daily basis while laziness, disrespect and truancy among them increased.

### **(ii) Impact on school results**

The tables below show how the school had performed from Grade 8 to Grade 11 over the past four years:

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### **Analysis of Grade 8 – 11 results from 2002 to 2005**

Table 4.2 2002 results

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NO. WROTE</b>	<b>NO. PASSED</b>	<b>% PASSED</b>	<b>NO. FAILED</b>	<b>% FAILED</b>
<b>8</b>	333	293	88.0	40	12.0
<b>9</b>	187	65	34.8	122	65.2
<b>10</b>	138	59	42.8	79	57.2
<b>11</b>	110	49	44.5	61	55.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	768	466	60.7	302	39.3

Table 4.3 2003 results

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NO. WROTE</b>	<b>NO. PASSED</b>	<b>% PASSED</b>	<b>NO. FAILED</b>	<b>% FAILED</b>
<b>8</b>	197	197	100	0	0
<b>9</b>	404	404	100	0	0
<b>10</b>	129	84	65.1	45	34.9
<b>11</b>	97	68	70.1	29	29.9
<b>TOTAL</b>	827	753	91.1	74	8.9

Table 4.4 2004 results

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NO. WROTE</b>	<b>NO. PASSED</b>	<b>% PASSED</b>	<b>NO. FAILED</b>	<b>% FAILED</b>
<b>8</b>	181	107	59.1	74	40.9
<b>9</b>	202	52	25.7	150	74.3
<b>10</b>	388	6	1.5	382	98.5
<b>11</b>	108	7	6.5	101	93.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	879	172	19.6	707	80.4

Table 4.5 2005 results

<b>GRADE</b>	<b>NO. WROTE</b>	<b>NO. PASSED</b>	<b>% PASSED</b>	<b>NO. FAILED</b>	<b>% FAILED</b>
<b>8</b>	181	177	97.8	4	2.2
<b>9</b>	236	218	92.4	18	7.6
<b>10</b>	259	70	27.0	189	73.0
<b>11</b>	123	65	52.8	58	47.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	799	530	66.3	269	33.7

The problems that the school experienced had a negative impact on the school results from Grade 8 to Grade 11. The pass rate kept on fluctuating through the four years as indicated. A closer look at these results shows that there was no consistency in what the school achieved over the past four years. In 2003 the 'pass one pass all' policy was applied in Grades 8 and 9 so the percentage passed for that year rocketed to 91.1%. This was caused by the confusion in implementing the OBE teaching style at the school. Since the group that passed to higher grades

consisted of a majority of undisciplined learners, there was a massive failure rate in 2004 and the percentage passed dropped to 19.6 %. The majority of these failures were learners who hardly stayed in their classes, did their homework, classwork, assignments, and tests.

The table below shows how the school performed in Grade 12 for the past four years.

**Table 4. 6 Analysis of Grade 12 results from 2002 to 2004**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>NO. WROTE</b>	<b>NO. PASSED</b>	<b>% PASSED</b>	<b>NO. FAILED</b>	<b>% FAILED</b>
<b>2002</b>	29	26	89.7	3	10.3
<b>2003</b>	47	34	72.3	13	27.7
<b>2004</b>	71	58	81.7	13	18.3
<b>2005</b>	95	74	77.9	21	22.1

The same fluctuation of results repeated itself in the Grade 12 examinations conducted over four years. The pass rate was not consistent and did not show any improvement. The school could not produce a hundred percent pass even though they had only twenty-nine learners in 2002 because of disciplinary problems. What is remarkable about the school's matric results is that for the past four years, the school managed to be above the regional pass rate. This shows that the school had the potential and the capability but the missing ingredients were commitment, discipline and cooperation from all stakeholders in education.

#### 4.2.6 Suggested solutions to the problems

The participants to this study suggested the following solutions to the problems:

- Parents should be involved in all problems that the school is facing; that is the only way learners' problems can be reduced;
- The School Management Team should develop a mechanism that will help to monitor period attendance by educators;
- Stakeholders should be consistent in applying the school policy and should follow it to the letter;
- There must be full commitment, trust, respect, and unity among all stakeholders in order to form a formidable force to steadfastly face all challenges;

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- The problem of learners' toilets should be addressed to avoid unnecessary excuses from learners for roaming outside the school fence during school hours;
- Revision of the alternatives to corporal punishment should be done with the aim of introducing practical and workable alternatives that will address the real problems facing the school;
- Suspensions and recommendations for expulsion should not be used as mere threats to learners who committed serious misconduct, but must be carried out as stated in the Code of Conduct;
- All criminal offences should be reported to the police with no exception;

- All educators should be involved in revising the present alternatives to corporal punishment and be prepared to implement them.

#### **4.2.7 Relevant people to address these problems**

12 (66.7%) of the participants agreed that the relevant people to tackle the school's problems should be all the stakeholders together. They are the ones who should come together and figure out what can be done in order to restore the culture of teaching and learning at this school. 8 (44.4%) of the participants singled out the parents as the only stakeholders that did not play their part responsibly when coming to supporting the school in all educational activities.

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#### **4.2.9 Assistance from outside the school**

13 (72.2%) of the respondents indicated that the school did not enjoy the necessary support it deserved from the local tribal authority. This support is crucial because the school is in a rural village under a chief whose authority many people still recognise.

The investigations further revealed that indunas too still enjoy support from their subordinates, and the school should try to reach the parents through them. However, the school was enjoying firm support from the South African Police Services in Namakgale and from members of the Department of Health and Welfare stationed at Maphutha Malatji Hospital.



Fifty percent of the participants stated that the school had full support from other societal structures such as the ANC Makhushane Branch, civic associations and church organisations. The other fifty percent did not see any support coming from these groups in the village.

### **4.3 Conclusion**

This Chapter presented the findings as collected from the respondents and through participation observation. Disciplinary problems encountered by the school including those that could not be solved through the use of alternatives to corporal punishment were outlined. Their causes as well as suggested solutions were put forward including the school's Disciplinary Code. All these

findings presented should be understood and interpreted against the theory given in the introduction of this Chapter. Chapter Five will, therefore, concentrate on the interpretation and analysis of the findings as presented in Chapter Four.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

In Chapter Four, this study reported that the level of discipline at this school had deteriorated and that the culture of teaching and learning was also badly affected. The purpose of Chapter Five is to interpret and analyse these findings, taking into consideration the theory forwarded by educationists that alternatives to corporal punishment produce self-disciplined and independent- thinking learners. If not so, what were factors that prevented making these forms of behaviour correction

successful at this school and what should be the possible remedies available for the school to use.

## **5.2 Interpretation and analysis of the findings**

### **5.2.1 Causes of persistent problems at Lepato High School**

The following discussion covers the two research questions where the researcher wanted to find out whether all the stakeholders were executing their duties as expected and what could be done to overcome these problems at Lepato High School.

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#### **(i) Parental involvement in the learners' education**

There were nine parents in the SGB who were democratically elected to represent the parent component as well as their interests in all school related matters in this school. The nine needed to report to their constituency on the progress made by the school as well as to update them on problems encountered in the education of their children.

Unfortunately, the study revealed that only 10% of the parent population attended meetings organised by the school. This was a major setback for the school because the educators were battling alone to correct the situation with the help of a few parents and eventually gave up the struggle against ill discipline. The learners, on

the other hand, took advantage of the non-involvement of their parents in educational matters to ignore all school- related tasks, which at the end had a negative impact on the school's results. The educators became discouraged and frustrated because at high school level they were supposed to be dealing with adolescents who could become unruly at times. This state of affairs had negatively affected teaching and learning at this school. The school results thus never stabilised over the four year period.

#### **( ii) Representative Council of Learners**

It is encouraging to note that the RCL members were democratically elected by the learners themselves and were not imposed by the SMT. It is, however, unfortunate that learners at this school were still cherishing the idea of choosing radical leaders to serve them because of their rudeness. This is supported by the fact that the RCL leaders were not leading by example or facilitating cleanliness and orderliness in their school. At times notorious learners who hardly stayed in their classes and dressed properly in the school attire were elected as leaders of the RCL. Such learners could not motivate the learners to take the right direction because they themselves still needed direction and motivation. These types of leaders did not fulfil their duties as expected because they wanted to satisfy the needs and aspirations of

the learners who voted them into office. Many learners still regarded the RCL as an instrument to be used by them to disorganise the school administration.

This attitude had caused the school a fair amount of expenses because it created endless strikes that left the school buildings vandalized. The school thus needs well-disciplined and mentally balanced RCL members to serve the interests of both the school and the learners. The culture of teaching and learning at this school will remain disturbed until these learners are guided properly to choose visionary leaders with the school's interest at heart.

### **( iii) Educators**

The research findings pointed out that the standard of teaching and learning at this school was not good although the school had the necessary resources for normal education to go on unhindered. There were twenty well-built and electrified classrooms, a library, a science laboratory, and an administration block consisting of seven offices. This study, however, revealed that educators at this school could do better than this. The mere fact that they sometimes went to class on time, they sometimes honoured their periods regularly and sometimes led by example leaves much to be desired. This is a clear indication that the educators were somehow demotivated and needed motivation of some kind so that they should always do their work as expected.

Educators need to be on the forefront for learners to follow. They need to model the way and to be living examples of excellence in whatever they do so that they can instil self-discipline and a sense of pride in the learners. They must always show concern for cleanliness and orderliness if they really want to change the school situation around. Their frustrations are sometimes genuine because they do not get the necessary support from the very same parents who entrusted them with the care of their children. But they should try to remain professional at all times and should support all efforts made by the SMT in trying to rectify the situation at this school.

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Communication with the parents should be kept alive despite the parents' lack of interest in the educational matters concerning their children.

#### **( iv) The School Management Team (SMT)**

The school was among the best-staffed schools in the Limpopo Province with six subsidised promotion posts. The principal was even assisted by a school-based clerk in all financial matters and administration correspondence. This was a position of strength that the SMT should fully utilise to develop this school further. The SMT should strive for unity and cooperation amongst members of the staff and the SGB. The SMT should always lead by example because some of the research findings indicated that the SMT sometimes showed no respect for the other stakeholders. This was working against all efforts of improvement made by the school and affected the discipline at the school. The SMT thus need to suggest practical solutions to the

problems that the school is facing. Real solutions to unique problems that are peculiar to this school should be looked into and be implemented as soon as possible. The principal as the head of the school should be visible in some of the structures created to restore the culture of teaching and learning at the school. In delegating powers he must make sure that his presence is clearly visible in all structures of discipline set by the school. If not so, the educators will become reluctant to take the lead in matters relating to discipline in this school.

#### **(v) Support from the local tribal authority**

The school was named after one of the greatest chiefs of the BaPhalaborwa tribe in the Limpopo Province. Half of the school buildings were built through donations contributed by the villagers who wanted to see progress and development in their community. It is disheartening to see what the community had initiated going down the drain. Information gathered through this study indicated that the school was getting virtually no support from the local tribal authority. Since members of this community still respect their chief and his indunas, it is understandable why the parents were giving little support to the school. If the situation at this school were to change, the key figures in the community should be seen taking sides with the school leaders in initiating those changes.

#### **5.2.2 The school's reaction to the problems**

One of the research questions the study had to answer was what was the school doing to maintain a situation that was conducive to teaching and learning. The school did the right thing by drafting and adopting a Disciplinary Code through which it wanted to restore the right teaching and learning atmosphere in the school. It is also appreciated that all the stakeholders were involved in the drafting of the Disciplinary Code so that all parties could take ownership of it.

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#### **(i) Learners' Disciplinary Code**

This research study revealed that not all learners at the school knew about this Disciplinary Code. This was a serious omission on the part of the stakeholders at this school. According to the information gathered, the Disciplinary Code was communicated verbally to the learners. Some learners, therefore, kept on defying whatever rules the school was trying to implement. It would be good if the school could distribute copies of the Disciplinary Code to all learners so that they should know of the consequences of breaking the school rules. If for some reason learners could not be trusted with these documents, a means should be created so that the parents should get hold of this important document. This will help the school because some of the parents will help to reinforce the school rules to learners at home. This will also make the work lighter for educators at the school.

Verbal warnings to learners should be minimised and if possible, written warnings should be sent to parents so that the learners should be aware of the seriousness of breaking the school rules.



Afternoon and weekend detentions are some of the alternatives to corporal punishment the school can include in their Disciplinary Code. These two alternatives to corporal punishment can become fruitful to the school since learners will be deprived of weekends and after school privileges while they are kept busy studying at school. In this way their behaviour may be changed.

### **5.2.3 The impact of alternatives to corporal punishment on the culture of teaching and learning**

Another research question that the researcher wanted to be answered through this study was the impact that alternatives to corporal punishment had on the culture of teaching and learning at this school. The situation at this school was very interesting because it gave the impression that what educationists say about alternatives to corporal punishment is not true.

The theory that educationists hold in education is that these alternatives to corporal punishment promote accountability and responsibility in learners. If learners are provided with the opportunity to be responsible, if they are allowed to explore ideas and take part in all methods of behaviour correction that involve them, they will obviously become responsible and accountable for their actions. According to this theory, cited in Chapter Two of this study, alternatives to corporal punishment should build trust, respect and cooperation between learners and educators in any educational environment.

This study revealed that learners at Lepato High School enjoyed their rights like other learners in the neighbouring schools. They had a democratically elected RCL, they held meetings whenever there was a need to do so and they also had a democratic Disciplinary Code, which even allowed them to

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appeal against any decision taken by the Disciplinary Committee. All the respondents interviewed agreed unanimously that corporal punishment was no longer used at this school. This should have made the learners more cooperative than expected. However, some of the learners at this school were so wild that they even damaged school property during strikes. In addition, they were so undisciplined that the school results were also affected and the school had to be listed among the high-risk schools in the Limpopo Province.

However, it is important to point out that alternatives to corporal punishment on their own cannot do miracles for the school. Indeed, finding the right alternatives to corporal punishment is not an academic exercise; it is what must be done for the sake of learners at a particular school. It demands commitment and passion, not only from educators but from all the stakeholders together.

The findings at this school revealed a sad picture of ignorance and non-commitment on the part of all stakeholders involved in education. Most of the parents ignored calls made by the school for help; the RCL tried its best to please learners who voted for them; some of the educators did not do their jobs properly; while the SMT could not foster unity and cooperation among all the stakeholders. These factors could not

produce a fertile ground for alternatives to corporal punishment to produce the desired results for the school.

#### **5.2.4 Workable alternatives to corporal punishment**

The last research question the study had to answer was whether there were workable alternatives to corporal punishment that the school could use. The researcher is mindful of the fact that this study cannot prescribe to the school which alternatives to corporal punishment to use because it is the responsibility of the school to identify and implement them in a way that will suit its unique situation. The educators are to reflect on their own approaches to discipline in order to identify what they are getting right and where they need to develop in their approaches. The educators need not follow the same approach and adopt identical measures used in other schools but they should stick to what is working for them. On the basis of the findings of this study it is, therefore, impossible to suggest cut and dried alternatives to change the situation at this school once and for all. However, it must be stressed that there is no manual or handbook that can replace the collective efforts made by educators, learners and parents in restoring the culture of learning and teaching at this school.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

The interpretation and analysis of the research findings in this Chapter confirmed the theory discussed in Chapter Two. But, alternatives to corporal punishment do produce good results in schools where there is sufficient

backing from all stakeholders in education. Disciplinary problems and the unstable examination results experienced by this school were not caused by the use of alternatives to corporal punishment but by the lack of support the stakeholders gave to them. The next Chapter will deal with concluding remarks as well as recommendations to various stakeholders in education.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Conclusion

In order to conclude this research project properly, it is important to check if the researcher's findings have met the objectives set at the beginning of this study. The researcher specified the following three objectives to be accomplished through this study:

##### 6.1.1 The first objective

The first objective was to explore factors that hampered the realisation of workable alternatives to corporal punishment at Lepato M. High School.

- This study revealed that a lack of parental involvement was one of the factors that hampered progress at this school. Educators alone could not implement effective alternatives to corporal punishment without the necessary support from the parents as primary educators at home.

- The non-existence of a strong and well-trained RCL structure that could stand the test of time also surfaced as a problem. The RCLs that

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led the learners needed to be capacitated in order to effectively lead the learners.

- The third factor, which hampered the realisation of workable alternatives to corporal punishment, was the slackness of some members of the teaching staff in carrying out their professional duties.
- The lack of the necessary support from the local tribal authority was the last detrimental factor explored by this study. The Chief's subjects could not see the importance of education if the tribal authority itself did not take matters of education seriously.

### **6.1.2 The second objective**

The second objective was to identify possible causes of persistent problems encountered by the school and how to remedy them.

- This objective was fully achieved because it was uncovered that the school's problems emanated from a lack of commitment by the stakeholders in

education and not from the use of alternatives to corporal punishment. Remedies to these problems are addressed in the researcher's recommendations in this study.

### **6.1.3 The third objective**

The last objective of the study was to make recommendations for the improvement of alternatives to corporal punishment used by the school in order to restore the culture of teaching and learning.

- This was fully achieved because the study scrutinised the Disciplinary Code used by the school with the intention of making improvements where possible, for instance, a recommendation was made that afternoon and weekend detentions should be introduced in the Disciplinary Code as another form of corrective measure to deviant learners.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

In concluding this study the following recommendations are made:

### **6.2.1 Recommendations to Lepato High School**

#### **(i) The Representative Council of Learners**

The school should:

- Encourage learners to choose capable, committed and sober-minded learners to lead them;

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- Provide intensive training on what RCL duties are and how to resolve learners' problems;
- Appoint a TLO who should help them whenever there is a problem and he/she should always be available for them;
- Involve learners in all school developmental programmes to avoid unnecessary strikes;
- Encourage the RCL executive to meet regularly to discuss issues that affect learners and not wait for problems before mass meetings are held;
- Try by all means to encourage the RCL to lead by example so that other learners can follow them.

## **(ii) Educators**

Educators as professionals and role models for the learners should:

- Always honour their periods and be on time so that mischievous learners should not get a chance for loitering around during lessons;
- All show concern on all issues of orderliness during working hours;
- Always be examples in order to earn respect from the learners;



- Fully support the use of alternatives to corporal punishment implemented at this school.

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### **(iii) The School Management Team (SMT)**

As the controlling body of the school, the SMT should:

- Make copies of the school Disciplinary Code available to all learners or to all parents of learners at this school;
- Develop a mechanism to monitor class and period attendance by learners and educators. A period attendance register can do the trick;
- Forge unity amongst all stakeholders at the school;
- Find a way of attracting parents to the school activities, for example, by establishing an ABET centre at the school which will also help to reduce the number of illiterate parents in this community;
- Always lead by example and be visible in all disciplinary structures that the school had established;
- Think of other ways of involving political structures in the community in its attempt to solve school problems.

#### **6.2.2 Recommendations to parents**

Parents as primary educators at home should:

- Support all parents meetings organised by the school;

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- Honour all calls made by the school when they are needed to come and discuss their children's problems with the educators;
- Encourage their children to behave properly at home and at school, and respect school property as well as the educators;
- Monitor the time when their children leave for school and the time they arrive back from school;
- Monitor their children's written work regularly.

### **6.2.3 Recommendations to the Department of Education**

As the overall service provider of education it should:

- Organise regular workshops for stakeholders in matters that are related to alternatives to corporal punishment;
- Provide manuals and guidelines to schools on how to handle common disciplinary problems in schools;
- Design programmes that will help educators to cope with this stressful work of inculcating self-discipline in learners;
- Encourage schools in rural areas to establish ABET centres in order to alleviate the problem of illiteracy among parents;

- Introduce tighter policies that will bind parents to take full responsibility for their children's actions in all schools under its jurisdiction.

#### **6.2.4 Recommendations to Government**

As the supreme authority over the South African education system, it is recommended that it should:

- Establish centres where learners with severe disciplinary problems can be handled by professionals trained in that particular field so that other well-behaving learners should continue studying undisturbed;
- Make use of the ward councillors to influence their communities to promote and value education;
- Organise education awareness campaigns to conscientise parents in rural areas about the importance of education as well as their participation in matters pertaining to education in general;
- Introduce discipline as a subject to be taught or make it part of Life Orientation in all public schools in the country;
- Encourage local tribal authorities to fully support schools established in their communities.

#### **6.2.5 Recommendations to the research community**

In this study the main focus was on the impact of alternatives to corporal punishment on the culture of teaching and learning at one high school in the

Phalaborwa area. After conducting this research it became clear that there is a need for further research to be conducted on the impact of these alternatives to corporal punishment on the culture of teaching and learning in all neighbouring schools in the Phalaborwa area as a whole. Attempts should be made to establish whether the other schools were experiencing the same effects and what the causal factors are in order to improve education practices in this area. It will be helpful to the Department of Education if common problems could be identified as well as their causes so that they can be addressed for the sake of the educational progress of learners in this area.

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## **APPENDIX 1**

### **QUESTIONNAIRE**

**RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**

N.B. PLEASE DO NOT WRITE YOUR NAME OR SURNAME.

- |  |
|--|
| 1. PUT A CROSS [ X ] IN THE BOX PROVIDED.                            |
| 2. A ONE SENTENCE ANSWER WILL BE SUFFICIENT FOR THE OTHER QUESTIONS. |

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

1.1 How long have you been attached to this school ?

1 yr	2 yrs	3 yrs	4 yrs	5 yrs	Over 5yrs
------	-------	-------	-------	-------	-----------

1.2 Which component do you represent in the SGB ?

SMT	Parents	Educators	Learners	Non staff members
-----	---------	-----------	----------	-------------------

1.3 Indicate whether you are Male or Female.

Male	Female
------	--------

## 2. PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED



2.1 According to your judgement, have you reached a situation of a general breakdown of discipline at your school ?

Yes	No
-----	----

2.2 How best can you rate the level of discipline at your school?

Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very Poor
-----------	-----------	------	------	-----------

2.3 Write down one persistent disciplinary problem that hampers normal teaching and learning at your school.

.....

2.4 What could be the root cause of this problem?

Negligence	Wrong disciplinary methods used	I don't know
------------	---------------------------------	--------------

2.5 What is the possible remedy for this problem?

.....

2.6 Who do you think is/are suitable to address this specific problem?

Principal	Educators	Parents	Learners	All of them
-----------	-----------	---------	----------	-------------

2.7 In your own opinion, who should be involved in maintaining a good culture of teaching and learning ?

Principal	Educators	Parents	Learners	All of them
-----------	-----------	---------	----------	-------------

2.8 Given the situation at your school, which stakeholders do you think do not perform their duties as expected?

SMT	Parents	RCL	Educators	All of them
-----	---------	-----	-----------	-------------

2.9 What could be the possible reason for this?

.....

### 3. THE RCL'S ROLE IN DISCIPLINE

3.1 Do you have democratically elected Representative Council of Learners at your school?

Yes	No
-----	----

3.2 If yes, how was it elected into office?

Chosen by the SMT	Chosen by the educators	Chosen by the learners
-------------------	-------------------------	------------------------

3.3 Does it facilitate cleanliness and orderliness at your school ?

Yes	No
-----	----

3.4 Does it maintain and develop a healthy and good relationship in your school?

Yes	No
-----	----

3.5 Do RCL members always lead by example?

Yes	No
-----	----

3.6 How do you rate their level of performance?

Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor	Very poor
-----------	-----------	------	------	-----------

#### 4. THE EDUCATORS' ROLE IN DISCIPLINE

4.1 The standard of teaching at your school is

Excellent	Very good	Good	Poor
-----------	-----------	------	------

4.2 Educators at your school (make a cross to indicate your answer)

	Always	Sometimes	Never
Lead by example			
Attend their periods on time			
Honour their periods			
Encourage learners to behave properly			
Show concern about orderliness			

## 5. LEARNERS' DISCIPLINARY CODE

5.1 Do all learners know about this Disciplinary Code?

Yes	No
-----	----

5.2 If yes, how was it communicated to them?

Verbally	Each one has a copy	Parents have copies	I don't know
----------	---------------------	---------------------	--------------

5.3 Who compiled the school rules?

Principal	SGB	Learners	All stakeholders	I don't know
-----------	-----	----------	------------------	--------------

## 6. ALTERNATIVES TO CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

6.1 Do you find alternatives to corporal punishment effective at your school?

Yes	No
-----	----

6.2 Are they user-friendly ?

Yes	No
-----	----

6.3 Do all stakeholders support these new methods of discipline?

Yes	No
-----	----

6.4 Have they brought any significant change to the learner's behaviour?

Yes	No
-----	----

6.5 With alternatives to corporal punishment in place, teaching and learning has:

Improved	Not improved	Worsened
----------	--------------	----------

6.6 Is there any disciplinary problem that alternatives to corporal punishment cannot solve?

Yes	No
-----	----

6.6.1 If Yes , give one example of such a problem.

.....

6.7 What do you suggest as a remedy to this problem?

.....

6.8 With alternatives to corporal punishment in place, what is their impact on the following aspects:

NB 1 = Good 2 = Bad 3 = Worse

Punctuality (All school times)	
Class attendance (including period attendance)	
Schoolwork (homework, tests, assignments etc.)	
Attitude towards school property	
Attitude towards educators	
Attitude towards fellow learners	
Self-respect	

## 7. PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN DISCIPLINE

7.1 Does parental involvement in solving learners' problems yield any results?

Yes	No
-----	----

7.2 Are parents always supportive in this regard?

Yes	No
-----	----

7.3 Do parents regularly attend meetings organised by the school?

Yes	No
-----	----

7.4 If they do come, which percentage will best suit their attendance?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	------

## 8. LEARNERS



8.1 Are learners free to hold class/mass meetings at your school?

Yes	No
-----	----

8.2 If yes, how often?

1 x per week	1 x per month	1 x per quarter	1 x per semester	When a need arises
-----------------	------------------	--------------------	---------------------	--------------------

8.3 What is their attitude towards the use of alternatives to punishment?

Well utilised	Abused
---------------	--------

8.4 Are learners still punished corporally at your school ?

Yes	No
-----	----

8.5 What impact does this have to your school's discipline?

.....

## 9. ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL

9.1 Do you receive the necessary support from:

	YES	NO
Local tribal authority		
SAPS		
Hospital		
Circuit Office		

10. Do you feel that there is anything important and relevant to this study that you want to bring our attention to ? Please write it down.

.....  
.....

**THANK YOU**

