

## Disciplinary Measures for Learners in Secondary Schools: An Evaluation of a District in the North West Province

R.U. Emekako

Faculty of Education, North-West University, Mafikeng Campus,  
Postal Box X2046, 2735 NWP, South Africa

**Abstract:** The issue with learner discipline is a worldwide epidemic problem. In South Africa, scholarly studies show increase in the cases of reported learners' lack of discipline in schools and classroom in particular. This lack of learner discipline can disrupt proper teaching and learning in today's classroom. The aim of the study was to determine disciplinary measures used by secondary school teachers by investigating how teachers administer these discipline measures in the verge of sustaining a peaceful and disciplined learning environment. This research was guided by the mixed methods approach which employed questionnaires and interviews for the purposes of data collection. n=361 questionnaires were distributed to teachers and only n=20 participants were selected for interviews from the 361 teachers of the quantitative phase. The selection of participants was established through stratified random, convenience and purposeful sampling techniques. Empirically, descriptive and inferential statistics and content analysis informed the findings of this study. It emerged from this study that despite the varieties of disciplinary measures available to teachers after the abolishment of corporal punishment, teachers still put to use only a few of the available measures. The study also reports that most of these measure are not very effective and suitable as corporal punishment. The study concluded that more workshops should be organised for teachers specifically on skills acquisition on the use of accepted disciplinary methods for South African primary schools.

**Key words:** Discipline, disciplinary measures, learners, teachers, secondary schools

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### INTRODUCTION

The issue with learner discipline has become a worldwide epidemic problem. The lack of learner discipline can really interfere with the teaching and learning process and if learner misconduct is not handled properly, education cannot be successful (Rossouw, 2003). Learner discipline constitutes a problem in South African schools (Wet, 2003, 2010; Rossouw, 2003; Geyser and Wolhuter, 2001). Moloi (2002) states that the experience of youths during the liberation struggle of South Africa which ended in 1994 has inflicted considerably on their behaviour which invariably has made them to develop some sort of arrogance towards themselves, teachers and even parents.

Scholarly studys show cases of learner ill-discipline are on the increase in South African schools and to refer to few reported cases, learners have been alleged to murder other learners in school premises (Harber, 2001; Zulu *et al.* 2004). Zulu *et al.* (2004) also highlighted reported cases on learner misconduct in KwaMashu in Durban. In a similar sense, Serame (2011) also reports cases of learner discipline in Jouberton in the North-West. In this notion, Rossouw (2003) states that this bad

behaviours from learners can range from various gang related-activities, learners carrying weapons, i.e., guns and knives and also smoking drugs.

The lack of effective learner discipline measures makes positive school environment a difficult task to achieve. Schools in South Africa have responded to the issues of discipline in different manners such as prayer for learners, counselling, detention, reprimand, office referrals, corporal punishment, suspension and expulsion and so on (Serame *et al.*, 2014). Since, learner misconduct is a national plague in South Africa, there is a legal structures put in place that guides schools in managing issues with learner discipline. They include the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No. 108 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a-c) and the South African Schools Act, No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Due to the rising of these legislations, the Minister of education published the alternative to corporal punishment which now guides teachers on disciplinary measures. Corporal punishment is now a crime for teachers to use in the Republic (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, b).

Such cases of learner discipline have greatly affected teaching and learning. The researcher who has on some

occasions conducted research on learners and teachers in the Ngaka Modiri-Molema district of the North West province in South Africa as a post-graduate student of education management has observed over time different attitudes of learners towards discipline such as learners not been committed to their work, learners not obeying basic rules and regulation set by the School Governing Body (SGB) and don't care if they are expelled, disruptive in nature and engage in the use of substance use and enjoy been out of class. Although, various authors have in the past investigated disciplinary methods applicable in South African schools but this study specifically seeks to determine how these disciplinary measures are put to use and a test of the effective level in the a district in the North West province. To achieve this broad aim, this study asked the following research questions.

What are the constitutional disciplinary measures for dealing with learner discipline in schools? What are the level of effectiveness of the available disciplinary measure for teachers in South Africa and in Ngaka Modiri-Molema district in particular? What is the relationship between variables of disciplinary measures or measures in South Africa and in Ngaka Modiri-Molema district in particular?

These question was answered through a theoretical framework which covered adequately learner discipline in South Africa and an empirical investigation which allows for a critical review of the available disciplinary measure in the Republic of South Africa.

**Theoretical framework for learner disciplanry measures:** Theory is only valuable if it informs guidance to practice for teachers and education managers by suggesting new innovative ways in which events and situations can be understood (Bush, 1995). Theories of education are basically applied in practice as a conventional way of managing problems in school. This study uses a pluralistic theoretical approach which offers different solution on the problem. The possible inter-relationships between multiplicities of educational theories is further tested through past literature and empirical research which informed a better way of practice thereby bridging the theory-practice gap (Bush, 1995). The theoretical frameworks applicable to the study includes the geborgenheit theory of security and the choice theory of learner behaviour.

**Geborgenheit theory:** This theory was formulated in 2009 by Izak Johannes Oosthuizen. This theory discusses critical issues in the application of learner discipline measures from an Educational Law perspective (Oosthuizen, 2015). Manyau (2014) explains that the

geborgenheit theory is particularly concerned with good organisational skills practices by teachers in schools to enhance learner discipline. In applying this concept, this theory stresses that all participants in the school (learners, teachers, parents/guardians and even the state) are needed to apply Geborgenheit, a safe place for learning. Owing to the nature of reality of discipline, education management and law are very suitable tools for achieving a well-regulated environment of Geborgenheit (Oosthuizen, 2015). These fields in education promote rights and obligations of participants in order to achieve a quiet, peaceful and safe learning environment. According to Oosthuizen (2015), how participants are to help achieve Geborgenheit in a school are discussed below: Learners: Learners are expected to obey rules and regulations and they must also be adequately catered for in terms of a secure and orderly environment. In this regard, a safe study environment must be provided for all learners (Oosthuizen, 2015). This environment must be safe from all sorts of violence, sexual harassment, drugs and weapons.

**The educator:** In the Republic of South Africa, teachers are expected to exhibit a very sound professional conduct but also by law they are entitled to just labour practices (Oosthuizen (2015). The South African Council for Teachers (SACE) helps regulate this professional conduct. In the consideration of fair and just labour practices for teachers, education management and law and the Geborgenheit theoryseek to provide a safe place for teachers to discharge their duties.

**The parents/guardians of the child:** Parents or guardians as the primary and first educator of a child are entitled to the participation in the education of their child by being involved in the governing body of the school for the essence of decision-making (Oosthuizen, 2015).

**The state:** The finance for education comes from the state. It is expected that the state reaps good values in terms of well-behaved and educated learners enriched with skills necessary to better the economy of the country (Oosthuizen, 2015). According to Oosthuizen (2015), the application of Geborgenheit theory through the national budget via the state helps to achieve a safe environment by enhancing constitutional values that promote social justice for learners and teachers by promoting rights to basic education for all in the best interest of a child and just administrative action for participants in education, thereby, supporting the application of human rights in a typical school environment.

It is important to provide a mentally and physically safe environment for teaching and learning free from distractions, disruptions and intrusions (Serame *et al.*,

2014). It has been established in the aforementioned that for teaching and learning to be successful, there is the need for Geborgenheit. Furthermore, there is evidence in research that there exist a strong connection between well-behaved disciplined classes and successful teaching (Wet and Jacobs, 2009). It can be said then that teachers in schools should promote, encourage and maintain a state of orderly Geborgenheit in the school environment and this must be achieved through legally approved disciplinary means in the Republic of South Africa (Serame *et al.*, 2014).

**Choice theory of behaviour:** The Choice Theory of behaviour was developed by William Glasser. This theory aims to find new ways to understand and explain how learners behave but most importantly, how educators can help these learners exhibit positive behaviour by themselves through the choice that they make. This is a challenge for teacher as understanding thoughts in the brain of learners with behavioural problems can be a rather difficult task (Bechuke and Debeila, 2012). Choice theory explains that learners are solely responsible for the way they choose to behave and also for the consequences of their choices. Therefore, teachers who opt for this theory must help to modify learner behaviour without the use of punishments or rewards of any sort (Bechuke and Debeila, 2012).

According to Glasser (2009a, b), the philosophical assumption of Choice theory explains that students must have a choice which can be their choice of curriculum, the rules that govern them in their classrooms and the school in general. This will give a learner some sort of ownership in their learning by getting involved through participation which will obviously bring about self-awareness and esteem (Bechuke and Debeila, 2012).

Choice theory can be applied in classroom management as it create space to learn because of learners' ownership in the classroom. The possession of this ownership automatically challenges learners to come to class willingly with great eagerness (Bechuke and Debeila, 2012). Glasser (2009a, b) in his research on dealing with discipline problems in classroom management, proposed that educators have two goals, the first being to try to put a stop to unwanted occurrences of learner's bad behaviour and the second, which is the most important, is that educators must teach learners the best ways to control their behaviours. In a follow-up to this, Glasser (2009a) affirms that "there is a clear difference between teaching student responsible behaviour and the behaviour improvement programs offered by other organisations". The latter can be used to control the former but educators must also indulge in inculcating positive discipline in learners in and out of classrooms.

**Disciplinary measures applied in schools:** Disciplinary measures are tools used by teachers as a strategy towards managing reported cases of learner misconduct. In South Africa, during the apartheid era of school governance, teachers relied mainly on the use of corporal punishment in which disciplining was taken as punishment (Maphosa, 2011). However, since the country achieved democracy, the use of corporal punishment is now prohibited in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, b) as it's use is considered a criminal activity and offenders are liable for prosecution (Maphosa, 2011). The Minister of Education published a document which specifies alternatives to the use of corporal punishment and it notes that educators are to administer these alternative measures according to the magnitude of offense committed by a learner (DoE, 2000).

Positive reinforcement which is always advised for adoption in schools can be balanced with disciplinary measures. Reasonable discipline should, however, be applied to learners and not attempt to humiliate learners unreasonably. Some teachers and parents motivate for a more assertive style of discipline. Some individuals claim that many problems with modern schooling stem from the weakness in classroom discipline. It is not clear, however, how this viewpoint reflects what is happening in schools using this type of approach. Classroom discipline and behaviour is highly problematic even with the existence of extremely rigid codes of behaviour. In practice, many educators find the learners unmanageable and do not enforce discipline at all. The following are regarded as some of the most important allowed discipline measures applied in South African schools.

**Counselling:** Counsellors are adequately trained to help learners towards positive behaviour. Learners are often referred to the school counsellor in matters that are psychological in nature that a mere teacher cannot adequately deal with. Oosthuizen, Roux and Van der Walt in Serame (2011) point out that counselling requires supreme care and diplomacy. Counsellors must also practice moral leadership on learners in order to inculcate in them true values.

**Detention:** Detention is one of the oldest means of punishment for misconduct of a learner. It can simply be defined as the detainment of a person in order to punish (Oosthuizen, 2010). In this case, the learner will have to sacrifice certain stipulated time after school hours in carrying out any form of punishment stipulated. Serame (2011) noted that even though it is still commonly and popularly used in schools today, it has become boring in the way it is applied.

**Verbal and written warnings:** Usually issued by the principal of a school, these are records of learners who break the code of conduct, which must be adequately kept in case reference to them is needed (Serame, 2011). Reprimand is a verbal warning method applied by both teachers to correct disciplinary problems such as swearing, classroom disruption, wrong clothing and untidiness and so on. Rosen (2005) in his book on best practices for administrators outlines four guidelines on verbal reprimand as: focus on clear goals of the main problem; focus on issues and not personalities; forget the past and focus on the present; and focus on consequences.

**Deprive learners of privileges:** It is punitive in nature and deemed very effective by many parents and teachers. It simply is a way of depriving learners of certain privileges that they previously enjoyed as a form of punishment and Rosen (2005) comments that the rights of learners must be adequately protected when adopting this method for handling learner discipline.

**Menial tasks:** It originates from a French word *menie* meaning household but other jobs outside the home are also referred to as menial jobs. In the school setting, educators may assign a menial task to learners to keep them busy such as cleaning or note taking (Serame, 2011).

**Prayers by educators:** Russouw in Serame, (2011) points out that misconduct can be traced back to the origin of sin from the earliest existence of man. Parents have taken steps in praying for the school regularly in specific areas at different times (Oosthuizen, 2010). Christian teachers realise that to deal with discipline at school can depend on prayer and the Lord's will (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2003).

**Rewards:** Rewards are ways of appreciating learners with gifts as a result of their good conduct and that is why the sole reason of reward is to strengthen and improve on good conduct (Oosthuizen, 2010). Rewards are of two types: planned and unplanned rewards (Serame, 2011). Planned reward is the situation where the learners are aware of the kind of rewards they will receive good conduct; it is assured ahead of time before the learners start working towards winning while unplanned, which may also be called spontaneous rewards are won without having ideas or expecting any form of motivation (Grootman, 2008). When good behaviour helps cancel out previous bad conduct, it is also a form of reward and when learners at foundation phase are shown rewards in the forms of candy, it makes them react impulsively (Oosthuizen, 2010).

**Parents involvement:** Parents are to take responsibility in the discipline of their children both at school and at home (DoE, 2000). According to the Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), parents should be allowed to partake in the writing of the Code of Conduct for learners thereby involving themselves as required by common law in the discipline of their children. Schulze and Serame (2011) hold that parents should be made aware of the developmental programmes at schools regarding the discipline of their children. In addition, parents are to be involved in every part of the education of their children in order to take responsibility of whatever is the outcome of their children's conduct (Serame, 2011).

**Referrals to the School Governing Body (SGB):** Referrals mostly happen with serious misconduct of learners such as suspension and expulsion (Maphosa, 2011). However, Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003) in his research on learner discipline conducted in secondary schools shows that other less serious misconduct can also be referred to the disciplinary committee for hearing. Referral creates positive behaviours in learners and it should be applied by following the right procedures.

**Suspension:** According to South African Schools Act (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), suspension is the refusal by the SGB to allow a child to attend school for not more than one week. SASA section 9(1) states that the governing body may, on reasonable grounds and as a precautionary measure, suspend a learner who is suspected of serious misconduct from attending school but may only enforce such suspension after the learner has been granted a reasonable opportunity to make representations to it in relation to such suspension. It should be noted that when a learner is suspended, the rights of the child to education is also temporarily suspended. This suspension also covers every school facility enjoyed by the learner as at the time of the suspension. Suspension is the most used form of discipline used for serious misconduct. Sometimes, expulsion precedes suspension in cases where a learner is found guilty and this is the complete removal of a learner from school.

**Expulsion:** This may be regarded as the permanent exclusion of a learner from school. Before a child is expelled, there must be a proper investigation of the nature of the crime committed to ensuring fairness. Serious offences that may give rise to expulsion are mentioned by Maphosa (2011) as criminal offences, physical assault and violence.

According to SASA (Republic of South Africa, 1996a), Section 9(4) states that “a learner or the parent of a learner who has been expelled from a public school may appeal against the decision of the Head of Department to the Member of the Executive Council within 14 days of receiving the notice of expulsion” and section 9(6) states that “a learner who has appealed in the manner contemplated in subsection (4) of 9, must, pending the outcome of the appeal, be given access to education in the manner determined by the Head of Department”. Expulsion should be the last resort in handling learner discipline.

**Corporal punishment:** Although, the use of corporal punishment has been prohibited from use since 1996 by the Department of Education (2000) but it is still considered a method of handling learner discipline. More so, Section 12 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, No. 108 of 1996, (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, b) states that “everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way”. In line with the Constitution, the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) states that “no person shall administer corporal punishment or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any educational institution”. In addition, SASA, 1996, section 10(1) states that “a person may not conduct or participate in any initiation practices against a learner at a school or in a hostel accommodating learners of a school”. This is a reflection that corporal punishment may be effective but no longer constitutional right to apply in South African schools. The abolishment of corporal punishment left a big vacuum in handling learners with serious misconduct.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The most important components towards the approach to a research study are the philosophical assumptions, design and the methods chosen (Creswell, 2014). This study followed the pragmatic paradigm which shaped the use of the mixed methods approach. The design employed was the explanatory sequential mixed methods design. This design embraced the use of a survey (quantitative) in the first phase and interviews (qualitative) in the second phase to explain deeper the quantitative responses from the first phase [QUAN-qual]. The results of this phase were then built on in the second phase through qualitative research (Creswell, 2014). The researcher selected this design purposely because it brings about more understanding of the problem under study (Creswell, 2014).

The population (N = 6.180) included all educators currently working in Ngaka Modiri-Molema district in the North West province. Samples were drawn separately for both phases (based on the design chosen). Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)’s sample size determination formula, n = 361 questionnaires was distributed to educators in this district for the first phase. For the qualitative phase, n = 20 participants were drawn from 5 schools from the initial quantitative phase. The stratified random sample, convenience and purposeful sampling strategies were used for the selection of participants for both phases. Data were collected by means of questionnaires and interviews. Data were analysed by means of statistical software (SAS and SPSS) for the first phase and content analysis was done on the interview transcripts through an a-priori method in the second phase.

Permission was obtained through all appropriate ethical channels from the provincial department of education to the Area Office where district is located. Voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality was ensured throughout.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

On response rates, 361 questionnaires were distributed among teachers in the district and a total of 277 were returned and used for the analysis of data. The percentage of questionnaires received back from educators was 76.7%. According to Serame *et al.* (2014), the minimum response rate that can give a reliable and valid conclusion is 70%. The findings and discussion are presented in descriptive (simple percentages) and inferential statistics (correlation of variables of disciplinary measures). They results from this statistics are further explained in the qualitative phase.

**Disciplinary measures for learners in secondary schools data presentation-simple percentages (descriptive statistics):** Table 1 represent the disciplinary measures used by school teachers in the Ngaka Modiri-Molema district of the North West in maintaining learner discipline. This Table 1 shows the effective level of these disciplinary measures. The responses had four scales: very ineffective, ineffective to some degree, effective to some degree and very effective.

**Interpretation and discussion:** This section presents and discusses the effectiveness of the constitutional disciplinary measures for learner discipline in South African schools in Table 1. In terms of reprimanding learners, educators’ response showed that 57% believe it is ineffective and 43% responded effective. This shows that reprimand is very common and averagely balanced. Reprimand is verbal in nature and used to correct minor

Table 1: Disciplinary measure used in schools in Ngaka Modiri-Molema district

Variables	Valid Percentage/ Frequency			
	Very Ineffective	Ineffective to some degree	Effective to some degree	Very effective
Reprimand (C1)	23(64)	34(94)	40(112)	3(7)
Isolation within the classroom (C2)	12(33)	23(65)	53(146)	12(33)
Isolation outside the classroom (C3)	14(39)	61(170)	22(60)	3(8)
Merits-demerits points system (C4)	9(25)	61(169)	27(74)	3(9)
System of classroom rules (C5)	7(19)	17(48)	69(190)	7(20)
Learner participation in the code of conduct (C6)	7(19)	23(63)	61(170)	9(25)
Encouraging learner praises amongst other learners (C6)	7(20)	20(54)	64(178)	9(25)
Encouraging traditions (C8)	21(57)	10(29)	63(174)	6(17)
Referral to the SGBs disciplinary committee (C9)	11(30)	16(43)	22(62)	51(142)
Meeting with the parents of learners (C10)	14(38)	15(41)	20(55)	52(143)
Emphasising values (C11)	12(34)	15(42)	68(187)	5(14)
Regular prayers by educators (C12)	14(38)	57(159)	21(59)	8(21)
Proper subject preparation of educators (C13)	15(41)	11(31)	22(61)	52(144)
Rewards (C14)	14(40)	12(33)	65(180)	9(24)
Deprivation of privileges (C15)	9(24)	26(74)	60(165)	5(14)
Community service (C16)	6(17)	60(165)	27(75)	7(20)
Menial task (C17)	6(17)	61(170)	23(63)	10(27)
Detention (C18)	6(17)	59(162)	28(78)	7(20)
Referral to the principal (C19)	2(14)	17(46)	67(187)	11(30)
Corporal punishment (C20)	4(12)	20(54)	40(111)	36(100)

behaviour problems. Rosen (2005) in his book on best practices for administrators outlined four guidelines on verbal reprimand as focus on clear goals of the main problem; focus on issues and not personalities; forget the past and focus on the present; and focus on consequences. Results in table 4.5 showed that referral to both the SGB and principals seemed very effective with 73% and 78%. Serame (2011) agrees that parents are to be involved in every aspect of the education of their children in order to take responsibility for whatever is the outcome of their children's conduct. On the other hand, referrals to the SGB mostly happen with serious misconduct of learners which could lead to suspension or expulsion (Maphosa, 2011). In addition, Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003) in his research on learner discipline shows that other less serious misconduct can also be referred to the disciplinary committee for a hearing. Referral creates positive behaviours in learners and it should be applied by following the right procedures. More so, Table 4 also showed that rewards and deprivation of privileges seemed very effective with 74 and 65%. Rosen (2005) agrees that although it is punitive in nature and very effective but also comments that the rights of learners must be adequately protected when adopting this method for handling learner misconduct. The menial task is very ineffective at 67% according to the response of educators and that is why Serame (2011) refers to it as just a means of getting learners busy after committing minor offences. It can be said that it is not an effective means of punishing or correcting learner's bad behaviour. Detention according to descriptive statistics proved very ineffective and Serame (2011) confirms this by noting that even though it is still commonly and popularly used in

schools today, it has become boring in the way it is applied by educators. The last of them is the use of corporal punishment. Although, it is prohibited in South Africa but findings shows that most educators deem it as very effective on the category of effective to some degree to very effective with 76%. Wolhuter (2010) confirm that the abolishment of corporal punishment left a big vacuum in handling learners with serious misconduct in South Africa because learners now know that nothing can be done to punish them harshly for their misconduct.

**Data presentation-correlation of variables of disciplinary measures (Inferential statistics):** Correlation in this research formed a second layer of analysis by helping determine association between any two given variables by measuring the strength, weakness and direction of the linear relationship between two variables which is always between +1 and -1. The level of significance was calculated at 1% as the p-value. When the p-value is equal the level of significance, then the correlation is found to be significant. Correlation between statements on the research instrument (questionnaire) on disciplinary measures was carried out. Only correlations that were found to be in the strong uphill and downhill (+ 0.70 to +1.00 and -0.70 to -1) were used for further analysis. Table 1.2 below shows the applicable variable correlations for disciplinary measures.

Causation cannot be inferred from correlation but can only measure the level of relationship between two variables (McMillan and Schumacher, 2012). The following correlations were useful for group predictions as they were found to be in the strong uphill correlation (+0.70 to +1.00 range).

Table 2: Multivariate correlations of the variables that influence discipline measures for learner discipline in South African secondary schools

Variables	Correlation/p-value	Correlation range	Level of significance
C9/C8	0.71731/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C9/C10	0.85213/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C9/C11	0.70408/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C9/C13	0.71176/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C10/C8	0.70261/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C10/C9	0.85213/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C10/C10	0.76493/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C10/C13	0.81033/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C11/C8	0.70658/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C11/C9	0.70408/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C11/C10	0.76493/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C11/C13	0.70953/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C13/C9	0.71176/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C13/C10	0.81033/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant
C13/C11	0.70953/<0.0001	Strong uphill	Significant

\*\*Significant on the 1% level

Based on the variables in Table 2, referral to the SGBs disciplinary Committee (C9) with encouraging traditions (C8), meeting with parents of learners (C10), emphasising values (C11) and proper subject preparation by educators (C13) on one hand and vice-versa on the other hand with varying correlating strength measured. A discussion is presented below for more clarity.

Referring back to literature, C8-C10, C11 and C13 according to literature are disciplinary measures available to teachers for learners who misbehave (Serame, 2011). Referrals mostly happen with serious misconduct of learners which could lead to suspension or expulsion (Maphosa, 2011), although Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003) stresses that minor cases can also be reported to the disciplinary committee for control purposes. Meeting with the parents of learners are also found effective and used for serious cases and when it is not solved then it escalates to the SGB disciplinary committee for a hearing. Also, the mastery of the content of an educator’s subject helps in controlling classroom misbehaviour. This is evident from the 52% educators who referred to it as very effective.

**Qualitative phase-interview data qualifying the quantitative results:** This section uses a-priori method by using the main question to determine the theme. The categories were generated during the coding process which are discussed below:

**Reprimand:** According to most teachers in different schools, reprimanding learners is one of the most used methods by just using verbal methods in correcting learners. Teachers also emphasised that this is also applicable for use by parents at homes. A teacher said, “We start by reprimanding the learners after which we give them a written warning for future occurrence of misconduct”. Results in the quantitative phase show that

this method is not very effective and Rosen (2005) in his book on best practices for administrators outlines four guidelines on verbal reprimand as focus on clear goals of the main problem; focus on issues and not personalities; forget the past and focus on the present and focus on consequences.

**Menial task:** During the interview session, teachers pointed out that the menial task is used a lot in the school and usually attached to other forms of correcting or punishing learners who have misbehaved which they emphasised as ineffective. Examples of such common tasks given to learners are picking litters off the surroundings (inside and outside of the classrooms) and washing of the toilets. According to the quantitative results in the first phase of the study, a menial task is found very ineffective to some degree with 67%. Therefore, the findings of both quantitative and qualitative correspond. Serame (2011) points out that teachers may assign a menial task to learners to such as cleaning or note taking, to keep them busy.

**Call the parents:** According to one of the teachers in a focus group, “calling of learners parents is very effective and it is only done when a learner continues to have the same fault for about three times”. When parents are called, they give the learners the opportunity to be heard and the principal and the parents try to address the problem together. Prior to this time, a written warning has been served to the learner which is recorded. The quantitative phase of the research found this discipline strategy very effective. Parents are to take responsibility in the discipline of their children both at school and at home (DoE, 2000). However, parents are to be involved in every aspect of the education of their children in order to take responsibility for whatever are the outcome of their children’s conduct (Serame, 2011).

**Merits and demerits style:** Participants mentioned that this method is used occasionally which sometimes could come with a reward of earning a certain pre-defined point. The result in the quantitative session find it ineffective. No major report has covered this method in much details in literature.

**Detention:** Detention was quite common in most of the schools covered for the interview process. Detention happens after schools hours for a minimum of one hour by giving learners extra or additional work to do. One of the teachers emphasised that “detention is effective because learners try as much as possible to avoid it thereby behaving themselves but so many teachers try as

much as possible not to use it because it means they themselves spend extra time at school". In literature, Oosthuizen *et al.* (2003) defined it as a situation where the learner will have to sacrifice certain stipulated time after school hours in carrying out any form of punishment stipulated in the school premises. Serame (2011) noted that even though it is still commonly and popularly used in schools today, it has become boring in the way it is applied. This can be a reason why it amounted to an ineffective degree with 65%. Detention should be made more useful by creating time and effecting it during school working hours by removing students who defaulted to a special class where teachers can monitor them on task given.

**Suspension and expulsion:** According to one member of the School Management Team (SMT), "suspension and expulsion are usually last resort used by the school SGB when other methods have been explored". It is a method that was used by all schools where the researcher carried out interviews. During this stage, a learner guilty of misconduct has already passed through the disciplinary hearing where they are allowed to share their own side of the story. This is also known as Audi alteram partem, a Latin phrase meaning 'let the other side be heard as well'. It is the principle that no person should be judged without a fair hearing in which each party is given the opportunity to respond to the evidence against them (Oosthuizen, 2015). To support this, suspension is the refusal to allow a child to attend school by the SGB for not more than one week. Section 9(1) of the Schools Act states that the governing body may, on reasonable grounds and as a precautionary measure, suspend a learner who is suspected of serious misconduct from attending school but may only enforce such suspension after the learner has been granted a reasonable opportunity to make representations to it in relation to such suspension. On the other hand, expulsion is the permanent exclusion of a learner from school. Serious offences that may give rise to expulsion are mentioned by Maphosa (2011) as criminal offences, physical assault and violence. During the interview, teachers stressed that the essence of suspension is no longer realised because learners always come back worse and that sometimes a suspended learner comes to classes without notice and permission. As the researcher, I gather that learners are usually suspended for serious misconduct but the constitutional gives right to education for a child. The question here is which school will admit such learner after been expelled by another school?

**Referral to the School Governing Body (SGB):** The results of the quantitative phase on referrals to the SGB

showed it as very effective. The interview transcriptions revealed that referrals to the SGB usually happen when the disciplinary committee or the educator responsible for discipline cannot handle the issue of the learner misconduct/discipline. It is deemed as very effective because it usually involves the parents of learners and sometimes may lead to suspension and expulsion. Maphosa (2011) supports that referrals mostly happen with serious misconduct of learners which often leads to suspension and expulsion. Referral creates positive behaviours in learners and it should be applied by following the right procedures (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2003).

## CONCLUSION

In this research, we evaluated the disciplinary measures used by educators for learner discipline in Ngaka Modiri-Molema district in the North West province. The rigorous data analysis conducted in this research revealed that despite the availability of a host of disciplinary methods for learner discipline allowed for use in South African school, teachers still feel most are ineffective which makes them put use only a few of the available measures. In more specific terms, the following synthesis is made from the analysis of data of both phases.

The teachers in the district do not put to use all options available to them in terms of disciplinary strategies/methods. They only employ seven out of about twenty measures (Table 1) which are learners' reprimand, menial task, call the parents, demerits and merit style, detention, suspension and expulsion, referral to the School Governing Body (SGB). This suggests that school managers do not exhaust all available means when handling learner discipline in their respective schools.

In the quantitative phase, only the following measures were effective: system of classroom rules, learner participation in the code of conduct, encouraging learner praises amongst other learners, encouraging traditions, referral to the SGB, meeting with the parents of learners, emphasising values, proper subject preparation by educators, rewards, deprivation of privileges, referral to the principal and corporal punishment. However, the most effective according to interviews were: referral to the principal, the use of corporal punishment, the system of classroom rules and proper subject preparation by the educators. Other measures widely used but not effective were reprimand, merits and demerit system and menial task

Detention is very widely used in the region but most educators are reluctant to use it simply because of the extra time they have to work. Suspension and expulsion



are used for serious cases and as last resort but educators feel that its use no longer has meaning because the same learners return back to school.

The researchers believe that a continual proper awareness seminar especially on the use of all disciplinary measure is a step further towards ensuring a positive learning environment in schools. This will enable teachers to constantly share experiences and new innovative and strategic ways to handle learner misconduct in schools.

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