HOW EFFECTIVE ARE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES REGARDING MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS SITUATED IN POOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREAS?

by

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SUMMARY

Poor discipline in public schools has become a major concern following the abolishment of corporal punishment by the National Department of Education. The educators in schools were left with no constructive alternatives to maintain discipline by the educational authorities and had to find and implement alternative disciplinary measures. Ill-disciplined learners capitalised on the situation, resulting in the deterioration of discipline in public schools.

The aim of this research is to identify how effective SGBs are regarding the maintenance of discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas. For this purpose, a qualitative study was conducted in four secondary schools in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape. Different data-collection techniques, in the form of questionnaires, focus group interviews, observations and documentary analysis, were used to obtain the necessary data. Learners, educators and parent members of School Governing Bodies (SGBs) were used as participants for the study.

The findings of the study indicated that parent SGB members lacks relevant and ongoing training and development for the task of executing their roles as disciplinarian bodies at their respective schools. The fact that these are lacking have contributed to the general deterioration of school discipline in the selected schools.

The study concludes with suggestions on strategies that SGBs can implement to improve their capacity in improving and maintaining discipline. Such improved capacity will create an environment that is conducive for teaching and learning, especially in schools situated in impoverished areas.
Key terms

Behaviour
Discipline
Effective
Poor socio-economic areas
School Governing Bodies (SGBs)
CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND, LITERATURE REVIEW, PROBLEM STATEMENT, RESEARCH DESIGN AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

1.1 BACKGROUND

The majority of South Africans pinned great hope on the transformation and restructuring of the country that was to follow the major political changes that started during the 1990s and culminated in South Africa’s first democratic elections in 1994. Many were specifically hoping for quality and equality in education. The promotion of quality and equality education is rooted in a broad philosophical and principled position that all South Africans should have the same educational rights and opportunities, as encased in the Bill of Rights, which protects all children from discrimination, whether linked to race, gender, social class, language, religion or ability (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). The non-racial education system that followed the democratisation of South Africa is based on the principle of equity for all and provides for the central, provincial and local organisation of education under one Department of Education for all races and all geographic regions (Pretorius and Lemmer, 1998:13).

The creation of this unified education system required from the government to set in place governance in schools that differed from the previous authoritarian, undemocratic and discriminatory systems. The inception of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) paved the way for a new dynamic and inclusive concept of school governance that incorporated a participatory approach for schools. The South African Schools Act (1996b) provides for principals to become professional managers, while the governance of the school is vested in School Governing Bodies (SGBs). From the distinction made between the concepts “governance” and “management” in the Education White Paper 2 (South African Department of Education, 1997:3-7), it is clear that
“governance” is seen as the responsibility of SGBs who, together with all the school’s stakeholders, determine the policy for the democratic participation of all stakeholders, while “management” refers to the day-to-day organisation of teaching and learning and its supportive activities. In this study, the above interpretation of the meaning of the two concepts will be applicable.

According to Mda and Mothata (2000:75), the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b:18) prescribes that the composition of a SGB should also include the parents of learners from the school. The parent body must elect parents to serve on the SGB from the school community at large. Secondly, educators who are part of the professional teaching body at a school must elect other educators to serve on the SGB. Members of the non-teaching staff at a school must also elect representatives from their colleagues to serve on the SGB. Lastly, the learners must elect members from amongst their peers in the senior classes to represent them on the SGB.

Part of the task of governance of SGBs is to adopt a code of conduct for learners. This should happen only after consultation with the learners, parents and educators of the school. The main purpose of such a code of conduct is to promote self-discipline and exemplary conduct among all learners at that school. When learners do not act within this stated code of conduct, there must be repercussions.

The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) empowers SGBs to discipline learners by suspending them for a maximum period of five days if the transgression justifies such a decision. Suspension, however, may be implemented only after the learner has had a fair hearing and following a decision to that effect from the Superintendent General of Education. The Superintendent General is the only figure with the necessary authority and power to expel a learner on the grounds of serious misconduct. However, the learner or his/her parents have the right to appeal against such decision. Addressing transgressions of a less serious nature is the responsibility of the educators themselves. Such transgressions may include failure to do
homework, late-coming and noisy behaviour in class. It is important that the punishment is fair and fits the transgression.

Unfortunately, the stark reality is that many South African schools are disorganised and undisciplined. Learners openly and unashamedly disrupt education in the classroom, while confused and ignorant SGBs and helpless educators seem unable to deal with the unruly conduct and restore discipline (Bray, 2005:133). Severe misbehavior, which includes violence, vandalism, intimidation, sexual misconduct, theft and the abuse of drugs and alcohol, is not uncommon in public schools in South Africa (Pretorius and Lemmer, 1998:46). The telling heading of a recent newspaper article, “SA schools among the world’s most dangerous” (Herald, 2008:1), is indicative of the severity of the problem. Another heading in the same newspaper read “Pupil threatened teacher with knife” (Herald, 2007:5), indicating that educators are no longer save in their working environment because of the poor discipline in public schools.

As an educator at a public school situated in an area that faces major social and economic challenges, the researcher is frequently confronted with learners’ misbehavior. Offences include intimidation (threats to learners and educators), spreading of pornographic material on cellphones, verbal abuse, carrying of dangerous weapons, such as knives, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual misconduct, fighting and vandalism. Many public schools situated in poor socio-economic areas have become environments in which learners and educators no longer feel save and secure and confident to get on with teaching and learning without disruption.

Although the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) vested powers in SGBs to maintain discipline at public schools, poor discipline remains a major concern to educators who are regularly confronted with the disruptive behaviour of learners.
1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

When thinking of discipline, the concept of acceptable behaviour becomes the issue. The aspects underlying this study are imbedded in the condition of discipline at schools.

Discipline is an essential feature of any organisation that wishes to function effectively. For schools to function effectively, learners need – and usually welcome – a firm but flexible framework for conduct (Dean, 1993:129). This framework for behaviour, also referred to as a Code of Conduct, is at school level the responsibility of a school's SGB and has, amongst other things, the purpose of maintaining the discipline that is necessary for the promotion of effective teaching and learning at the school. Unfortunately, the situation in many schools reflects a complete breakdown in discipline, at times to the extent that the school is rendered ungovernable.

Legislative intervention by the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b:84) has paved the way for the banning of corporal punishment as method or strategy to maintain discipline in South African schools. Corporal punishment as a corrective method has in fact been banned in all public schools since 1996. In the place of corporal punishment, the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) has empowered the SGBs of public schools to develop their own Codes of Conduct, including alternative means of enforcing discipline. These means will be discussed in more detail in subsequent chapters.

As an educator at a public school situated in a poor socio-economic area, the researcher experiences disciplinary problems on a daily basis. This is partly due to the failure of the SGB to implement and enforce the disciplinary measures set out in the school's Code of Conduct.
1.2.1 Research questions

Taking this background into account, the following primary research question has been formulated:

- How effective are the SGBs regarding maintaining discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas?

From the primary research question, the following secondary research questions have been formulated:

- What are the factors that influence the SGBs’ effectiveness regarding maintaining discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas?

- How can the effectiveness of the SGBs regarding discipline at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas be improved?

1.2.2 Research objectives

The following research objectives can potentially provide answers to the abovementioned research questions:

- To identify and determine how effective SGBs are regarding maintaining discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas;

- To identify the factors that have an influence on the SGBs’ effectiveness regarding discipline at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas;

- To determine what can be done to improve the effectiveness of the
1.3. CONCEPT CLARIFICATION

In order to assist the reader and avoid ambiguity and perplexity, various key concepts used in this study are clarified below.

**School Governing Bodies (SGBs)**

According to Macbeth (1989:128), the SGB of a school is the mouthpiece of all the stakeholders involved in the school that make key decisions about the school’s functioning and executive other educational responsibilities. The South African Department of Education (1997a:7) regards SGBs as organisations comprising parents, educators, non-educators, learners and co-opted members of the community. This group of people is elected to represent the school and its community and must promote the school’s best interests in all its actions and discussions. Part of its responsibility is to ensure that effective learning is available and possible.

**Governance**

The concept *governance* means setting the course for the school as an organisation through specific objectives, policies and budgets and by checking that such course is maintained through regular progress reports. In the case of schools, governors as elected representatives of all the stakeholder groups are responsible for setting the direction in which the school will develop and function (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, C-2, 1996:97).

**Management**

According to the Manual for School Management (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:36 (B-4)), the concept *management* entails
overseeing that things get done efficiently and effectively, in addition to stewardship of resources. In a school setting, this involves the active process of putting the plans and intentions of governance into operation. Included in this process is the management of professional educational managers who are responsible for implementing policies and running the day-to-day operations of the school. Management may also help to formulate policies by availing their expert knowledge, but such policies must ultimately be formally adopted by the SGB before they can be implemented.

**Misbehaviour/Misconduct**

The Oxford English Dictionary (Soanes, 2002:69) describes *behaviour* as the way in which someone or something behaves. To behave, is to act in a polite or proper way. Misbehaving is the opposite of behaving and, according to the Oxford English Dictionary (Soanes, 2002:537), means to behave badly. Basically, misbehaviour means unacceptable or improper conduct.

According to The Oxford English Dictionary (Soanes, 2002:69) *behaviour* means to “act in a certain way”. *Misbehaviour or misconduct* could therefore be seen as unacceptable or improper behaviour. Burden (1995:15) supports this by stating that an educator can perceive misbehaviour as any behaviour that threatens or competes with academic actions in the classroom. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will therefore define misconduct or misbehavior as “any action not in accordance with the accepted standards of behaviour or behaviour that is perceived by the authorities as unacceptable for an environment where teaching and learning have to take place”.

**Discipline**

*Discipline* is described as the training of people to obey rules or a code of behaviour with the intention of extorting controlled behaviour through such training (Soanes, 2002:234). In the case of schools, learners are disciplined to accept responsibility for their behaviour or to foster self-control (Province of the
Blandford (1998:2) defines discipline as ‘the development of internal mechanisms that enable individuals to control themselves on agreed upon boundaries for attitudes and behaviour’.

**Educator**

An educator is defined as someone who gives intellectual or moral instruction or who provides training in a particular subject (Soanes, 2002:261).

The Education Labour Relations Council, in the *Policy Handbook for Educators* (2003, A-3), defines an educator as “any person who teaches, educates or trains other persons at an education institution or assist in rendering education services or education auxiliary services provided by or in an education department”.

In this study, an educator in a school will refer to a person responsible for teaching or instructing learners, with the purpose of developing their different skills. The educator’s task increases in that he or she must also guide learners who demonstrate behavioural instabilities to behave according to the norms and standards set by the stakeholders of the relevant school.

**Poor socio-economic areas**

The word socio-economic refers to the interaction of social (having to do with society) and economic (relating to the economy) factors (Soanes, 2002:797). For the purpose of this study, the concept ‘poor socio-economic areas’ will refer to previously disadvantaged areas where poverty and underdevelopment, lack of access to resources, such as well-resourced schools, have a destructive impact on learning and development (Lomofsky and Lazarus, 2001:311). The schools selected for this study were all situated in poor socio-economic areas and the researcher wanted to establish what influence this environment might
have had on the behaviour of learners.

**Corporal punishment**

According to the Manual for School Management (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:471), *corporal punishment* ‘is any punishment inflicted directly on the human body’. Soanes (2002:183) refers to it as ‘physical punishment, such as caning’, which was freely administered in most South African schools under the previous political dispensation.

### 1.4 LITERATURE REVIEW

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:112) view a thoroughly conducted and well-presented literature review on a selected problem as a basic prerequisite that can assist a researcher in placing the results of a study in contextual and historical perspectives. Literature that could be significant for use in this study could be sociological research studies on group interactions and behaviour. The researcher therefore conducted a thorough research on the literature available in books, journals, newspapers and the worldwide web in order to gain a thorough understanding of the different facets of the main research problem.

#### 1.4.1 School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

By 1997, all schools in South Africa were supposed to have established SGBs to serve as forums for parents and the community where they could become legally involved in some of the formal activities of the schools serving their children. Unfortunately, in the area that is the focus of this research, the majority of parent SGB members lack managerial, financial and legal skills; in fact, many are functionally illiterate. This is in total contrast to the vision of effective SGBs and the complementary mix of people, skills and interests, as described by Early (1994:25). Another factor that mars the effectiveness of SGBs is the temporary nature of the membership of parent members, as members may not stay on if they no longer have children in the school. The resultant frequent
changes in parent members make effective training and development of members extremely difficult. The degree to which members are actually aware of their duties and their responsibilities regarding sustaining discipline in the schools therefore also becomes questionable. To address the problem of discipline effectively, SGB members must be equipped with the necessary skills, expertise and knowledge to be effective in enforcing the school's Code of Conduct. As members of an SGB, parents must especially be empowered to feel that they have an important and valuable part to play in the smooth running of “their” school.

Early (1994:46) states that in order for SGBs to function effectively, members need to be properly trained in school governance. Pretorius and Lemmer (1998:23) concurs, adding that in most cases members from the parent corps will be able to accept ownership only if the Department of Education (DoE) establishes training programmes to assist them in meeting their responsibilities as a disciplinary body. However, training alone will not render one an effective member of an effective SGB. After initial training, all SGB members need support in the form of guidelines presented in newsletters, governing bulletins, etcetera, to sustain and support the initial training. The researcher is of the opinion that not only will such communication keep the SGB members abreast of the latest trends and developments, it will also supply them with topics for discussion and debate in order to improve their own practice. In this regard, Van Wyk (2004:54) suggests that SGBs should receive copies of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) in their mother tongue, and undergo training in the same. Ngidi (2004:362) points out that one of the reasons for the poor performance of SGBs is that the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) only makes provision for initial training to empower newly established SGBs, no further training is prescribed to support and promote effective performance. Furthermore, the training of SGB members, which is the responsibility of the Department of Education, unfortunately often does not take place, for various reasons, mostly because of a shortage of funding (Ngidi, 2004:362).
Van Wyk (2001:21-23) comments that SGB members often lack experience in the handling of hearings dealing with disciplinary issues. This ineffective handling of hearings could be blamed on ignorance, lack of experience, or simply a low level of literacy. Van Wyk (2004:51) supports Early’s views, in stating that the ineffectiveness of SGBs could also often be attributed to a lack of interest in the school, low levels of literacy and lack of training. Most of the SGB members in the schools selected for this study were totally illiterate or semi-illiterate. With so many SGB members lacking literacy skills, some schools have adopted draft policies drawn up by the Department of Education or taken over from other schools. As a result, the SGB members have not partaken in the decision-making process and therefore never feel part of the process, rendering them reluctant to take ownership of their schools.

1.4.2 Abolishment of Corporal Punishment

Worldwide, the abolishment of corporal punishment resulted from the emergence of human rights and children’s rights in countries like the USA, Australia, New South Wales and, recently, South Africa. In the latter half of the twentieth century, corporal punishment became a highly challenged practice, especially in democratically governed countries, because of the perceived negative effects it could have on learners’ behaviour and emotional wellness. For instance, Strauss (Slee, 1995:43) has established a link between corporal punishment and child suicide. From a study conducted in the USA, Slee found that those states with a higher incidence of corporal punishment also registered proportionally higher suicide rates among children.

Research conducted by the Department of Education in New South Wales in 1991 revealed that the majority of parents who were in favor of the use of corporal punishment in schools, interestingly enough did not approve of it being administered to their own children, because of the emotional trauma it could cause! In Victoria (Australia) the Director General of Education in 1983 formally abolished the use of corporal punishment in government schools. New guidelines were proposed, in terms of which learners could be suspended,
should the transgression warrant it (Strauss in Slee, 1995:131). In 1986, the State Conference of the South Australian Labour Party passed a motion confirming its intention to phase out corporal punishment over a period of five years (Thorpe in Slee, 1995:49). Over this period, the Department of Education would monitor the usage of corporal punishment.

Before 1994, corporal punishment was the most common method used as a corrective strategy to maintain discipline in public schools in South Africa. From a review of the literature, it is clear that corporal punishment is now considered to have a limited positive effect only, and may be perceived by learners as a model of violent conflict resolution that they can emulate. Unfortunately, since Minister Bengu, through the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), officially banned the use of corporal punishment in public schools, disciplinary problems have escalated in South African public schools. Such an escalation of school disciplinary problems is, however, a common phenomenon all over the world.

This growing phenomenon of escalating disciplinary problems needs serious attention. The presently favored instrument in the solution thereof seems to be the establishment of SGBs. It is therefore imperative that SGBs know exactly what their roles and responsibilities are regarding discipline in order to make schools effective institutions of learning and education.

1.4.3 The school as a conducive environment for teaching and learning

According to Van Wyk (2004:49), the decentralisation of authority will lead to a healthier and stronger relationship between schools and communities. She also states that the underlying responsibility of SGBs is to ensure that educators, parents, learners and non-teaching staff together actively participate in the governance and management of schools, to provide a better teaching and learning environment.
In a study conducted by Joubert, De Waal and Roussouw (2004:80), it was found that SGBs played a leading role in establishing disciplined schools, guaranteeing learners' safety and providing equal access to educational opportunities. To support schools to fulfill this role, Section 19 of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) dictates that provinces provide inductory and ongoing training to all newly elected SGBs in order to promote their effectiveness. According to Joubert et al. (2004:80), codes of conduct should be aimed at not only establishing a disciplined environment that is conducive to effective teaching and learning, but also at inculcating personal responsibility. Thus, the focus is on positive self-discipline and inculcating a standard of behaviour that is recognised and accepted by both society and the members of the school fraternity.

From the literature review, it could therefore be safely deduced that a key characteristic of effective schools is good discipline. If a school’s governing body is not able to create and sustain a disciplined environment conducive to learning and teaching, then it is failing in its main purpose.

1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design or tradition is a description of the theoretical framework of the proceedings the researcher will use to give an analysis of the assumptions, principles and procedures in a particular inquiry (Schwandt, 2001:161). The approach chosen will also describe what strategies will be employed to gather and analyse the data necessary to address the research questions. After studying different methodologies, the qualitative research method was chosen for this research. The reasons for this choice are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

1.5.1 Qualitative Methodology

A qualitative study requires the researcher to obtain a combination of theoretical claims and evidence to produce an argument that can provide answers to the
research questions (Schwandt, 2001:229). For this study, a qualitative research design that studies the phenomenology of a real-world situation in life has been used. Patton (2002:40) is of the opinion that studying real-world situations as they unfold naturally, non-manipulative and uncontrolling, creates an openness to whatever emerges. When the researcher relies on the natural evolving of the real world, there is a definite lack of predetermined constraints or findings. According to Brink (2001:11), a qualitative research must be employed to describe and obtain accurate information about the phenomena under investigation.

In a qualitative study, the researcher relies on his/her own perceptions, experiences and observations to gain an understanding of the real world of the participants. The aim of this study is to focus on the real life situations of SGBs as unfolding from meetings, disciplinary hearings and work situations. These situations will be placed under close scrutiny by the researcher.

In a qualitative research design, an empirical approach may be used in an attempt to understand how individuals experience a phenomenon (Johnson and Christensen, 2004:46). Based on the nature or tendency of an empirical approach, it is generally accepted that the researcher obtains knowledge or data through his/her personal interaction, experience and discourse analysis with participants in their natural environment. De Vos (2000:240) agrees that qualitative research is a multiperspective approach utilising different qualitative techniques and data-collection methods. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will conduct an empirical approach to gathering data on the parent members of the SGBs at the sampling schools. The data collected, will provide possible answers with regard to the research questions.

Using the qualitative research method allows the researcher to study and use a variety of empirical strategies to obtain information that can describe routines and problematic situations in participating individuals’ lives. The information gathered by the researcher will be scrutinised, interpreted and analysed in an attempt to find answers to the research questions. This will also assess the
strengths and weaknesses of SGBs in order to improve their effectiveness.

1.5.2 Research Sample

For the research sample, four public secondary schools situated in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth were selected. Three of the selected schools were situated in poor socio-economic areas, and one in an area where socio-economic circumstances were of a higher standard. The researcher is an educator at one of the three schools situated in the poor socio-economic areas, with the other two schools in close proximity.

The participants selected for the sample consisted of parent SGB members, learners and educators of the sampling schools. Two different sampling techniques were applied in the selection of participants.

*Parents* serving on the SGB were the main focus of this study. All parents serving on the SGBs of the sampling schools were invited to voluntarily participate in the study.

*Learners* were purposively randomly selected for this study. Learners from Grades 8 to 12 at the four selected public schools formed part of the study. The research sample was a heterogeneous group accumulated from different race and age groups. The researcher grouped the learners per grade, placed their names in a hat, and drew the required number of participants randomly.

The same procedure was followed with the names of the *educators* who volunteered to participate. From each group, a different proportion of participants were drawn: 25 learners and 15 educators from each of the four selected schools. The number of participants in this study totalled 100 learners, 60 educators, and all parents who served as SGB members and agreed to participate. If all parents agree to participate it will amount to approximately 36.
1.5.3 Data Collection

The researcher made use of multiple data-collection strategies to obtain information-rich data. One of these strategies was observations at SGB meetings, such as learners’ disciplinary hearings, and observing learners on the school premises. Secondly, the minutes of previous meetings and disciplinary hearings as well as the codes of conduct of the sampling schools were also studied. Focus group interviews were conducted separately with learners, educators and parent SGB members. All participants were required to complete a questionnaire.

The purpose of using data-collection instruments such as questionnaires, focus group interviews, observation and relevant documents was to ensure that various angles were explored to get as much information-rich data as possible. All the collected data were analysed against the theoretical background obtained from the literature study.

- Questionnaires

According to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:80), an effective questionnaire is one that enables the transmission of useful and accurate information or data from a variety of respondents. Clear and unambiguous group-administered questionnaires were constructed for the three different sample groups. The purpose of using group-administered questionnaires is, according to Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:80) that the response rate is usually fairly high in comparison to questionnaires that are distributed manually or mailed to respondents. Getting the completed questionnaires back seems to be a perennial problem for researchers.

For SGB members who were parents, two sections (Section A and Section B) were constructed. Section A consists of biographical data, such as age, gender, qualifications, home language, years of experience on the SGB and related training programmes attended. These questions enabled the researcher to
formulate a profile for each individual member of every SGB, indicating the member's educational background; experience as an SGB member; and skills training acquired that could contribute to his/her effectiveness as parent SGB member.

Section B consisted of questions that were relevant to the research. The purpose of this open-ended section of the questionnaire was to indicate to the researcher how members of the SGB viewed their role and purpose. A similar questionnaire was drafted for educators, to establish how they viewed the performance of SGBs regarding discipline at the selected schools. Open-ended questions were drafted on a questionnaire for learners, concerning their experience of the role of SGBs in disciplining learners. After the completion of the questionnaires, the researcher recorded and coded the information retrieved from the questionnaires.

- Observations

Angrosino and De Perez (2000:673) state that social scientists are observers both of human activities and of the physical settings in which such activities take place. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:116) agree with the former authors, adding that observation is a research aspect characterised by “a prolonged period of intense social interaction between the researcher and the subjects, in the milieu of the latter, during which time data, in the form of field notes are obtrusively and systematically collected”. Taking detailed notes during observation assisted the researcher in reaching a better understanding of the phenomenon under scrutiny. The type of data that were recorded during observation sessions included the proceedings at meetings and disciplinary hearings, the attitudes of the sample studied, and the school environment and its possible influences on the behaviour of the learners. Notes recorded by the researcher formed the basis of a report on how the SGBs performed in their role as school disciplinary bodies and on the behavioural patterns of learners. This reflected how SGBs perceived, understood and conducted themselves.
• **Focus group interviews**

The purpose of using focus group interviews is to generate data that can determine a possible future course of action (Lowe, 2007:82). The data gathered from the focus group interviews were used to triangulate with the data collected through other data-collection strategies. Learners, educators and parents on the SGB all shared the same experiences of disciplinary problems and had no difficulty in verbally reporting their experiences on the phenomenon under discussion.

Focus group interviews were used for specific questions around the research topic to gauge respondents’ perceptions, understandings, feelings and interpretations of the research questions. An audio recorder was used as a reliable source of data capturing so that no information would be lost. The researcher transcribed the recorded data at a later stage.

• **Scrutinising of relevant documents**

McMillan and Schumacher (1993:43) suggest that documents can be sources of very rich data. The purpose of using documents is to provide explanations for past practices that may shed meaning on current practices and thereby light on the problem under investigation. The documents that were scrutinized, were written or printed records of past events. Examples of such documents were diaries of the sampling schools and official minutes of previous SGB meetings and disciplinary hearings.

1.5.4 **Data Analysis**

Data analysis in qualitative research is primarily an inductive process of organising the data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among the categories (Macmillan and Schumacher, 1993:479). The purpose of data analysis is therefore primarily to make sense of the accumulated data in order to draw conclusions. The researcher analysed the data, using a
spreadsheet. This method will ensure that data will be recorded and counted in a systematic manner. Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:129) refer to this as a structured approach to data analysis.

1.6 OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS

This study will be divided into five chapters.

**Chapter One** provides a background to the study, the problem formulation and its sub-problems, aims and objectives. The overview of the study method to be employed, is discussed and, finally, a brief outline of the development of the study is given.

An in-depth literature study is dealt with in **Chapter Two**. This provides a detailed review of the literature that guides the researcher in the study. The literature review focuses on the roles and functions of SGBs, specifically regarding disciplinary matters in public schools.

A formal theoretical framework of the research methodology on how the study was conducted is the core of **Chapter Three**. It gives a detailed outline of the research framework, research population, methods of sampling, and the data-collection and analysis strategies.

The focus of **Chapter Four** is on the findings of the analysis and the interpretation of the data collected for this study.

**Chapter Five** presents the implications of the research findings, the research limitations, some recommendations and the conclusion of the study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW ON SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES AND DISCIPLINE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the post-1994 transformation in South African education, the management structures of public schools have changed. Governance of public schools in South Africa is currently vested in School Governing Bodies (SGBs). Parents, educators, learners and non-teaching staff members employed at a public school are now considered stakeholders in education and are represented on that school’s SGB. This governing body is responsible for various aspects of school governance, such as handling finances, determining the admission policy and making recommendations regarding staff appointments. Its responsibility include: ensuring and supporting teaching activities and maintaining discipline at the school.

Unfortunately, poor discipline among learners is a common factor at South African schools. This impacts severely on the smooth organisation and management of a school. Newspaper articles sketch an alarming scenario: such as “Rape, thuggery, ill discipline, abuse of educators, knives in classes, drugs, booze, all of these along with shocking academic results are the outcome of policies that are hopelessly flawed” (Algoa Sun, 2007:5) and “Just another day at high school as rapes and robberies skyrocket” (Herald, 2007:4). These are but two of numerous, similar articles that appear regularly in newspapers across South Africa, affirming that many public schools in South Africa experience serious problems regarding discipline. The poor Grade Twelve results also make headlines every year and the relationship between poor academic results and poor discipline as a contributing factor seems obvious.
Government has put structures, such as the SGBs, in place to help in the governing of schools. However, the success of SGBs at many public schools, especially those situated in poor socio-economic areas, is questionable. This seems to be especially true in relation to their ability to maintain order and discipline at the schools that they serve.

School leadership and SGBs should work in partnership to prevent a situation where school discipline deteriorates to uncontrollable levels. It is the responsibility of the School Management Team (SMT) to refer learners who make themselves guilty of severe transgressions, as stipulated in the Code of Conduct of that school, to the SGB. For the SGB to be efficient and effective in the handling of such cases, it has to be a well structured and well organised organisation with members who have the necessary skills and knowledge to address complex and sensitive issues.

The main purpose of this chapter is to examine a wide range of sources on the compilation, value and duties of this new structure in education, namely the SGB. Aspects showcasing the SGBs’ success or failure in governing schools and managing discipline will also be discussed against the background of the variables that influence discipline. This was a necessary point of departure for this research in order to get an in-depth understanding of the concept of discipline and all its facets, particularly as manifested in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas. This needed to be done in order to determine the effectiveness of SGBs regarding maintaining discipline at these schools.

In order to get to the heart of the problem under investigation, it is necessary to first develop a broad understanding of the historical background to the fair-reading changes in the education system in South Africa.
2.2 EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

Constitution of South Africa [Act 108 of 1996]

The country’s final Constitution, adopted on 8 May, 1996 sets out the rules that embraces the democratic principles and rights of all South African citizens, including those of learners. A new education system was one of the constitutional obligations towards the peoples of South Africa in order to create a culture of equity and human rights in the South African education and training system (Joubert and Prinsloo, 2001:14). This was highlighted by a former South African Minister of Education, Bengu, who pointed out that the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) gives effect to the obligations that the Constitution placed on the National Department of Education. This required the establishment of a new education system that would endeavour to instill a value system that respects the rights of people of diverse cultures, religions, languages and traditions. However, learners have also become aware of their rights and many have unfortunately begun to abuse the Constitution to their advantage by not taking responsibility for their actions and by misbehaving at school, well aware that their constitutional rights protect them to a large extent from punishment.

South African Schools Act [Act 84 of 1996]

The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) incorporated in the Education Labour Relations Council (1999:2-i), is probably the most important document for educators, learners, and parents, as the purpose of this legislation is to bring about transformation and to develop a culture of tolerance, democracy, non-racism and non-sexism (Joubert and Prinsloo, 2001:17-18). Prior to 1996, South Africa lacked a united and uniform national school system for all racial groups. Apartheid and discrimination is undeniably part of our history, and the previous government created an unequal schooling system based on ethnicity, race and color. The objective of that government was to separate the development of the different population groups to ensure the
preservation of the various cultures of the people of South Africa (Vos and Brits, 1987:66-67) with dire results, especially for black learners.

The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) set out to transform education by creating and managing a new uniform, national school system. Equal opportunities for every learner are the main objective of this new, national schooling system. The policy document also includes guidelines for school managers regarding the management and governance of their schools on different levels and regarding different aspects. These include disciplinary, financial, curriculum, language and enrolment issues. The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) furthermore clearly differentiates between the responsibilities of school governors and managers. It is therefore imperative for all role-players in education to know exactly what their duties entail.

School governance and management

Differentiation between governance and management in the context of the South African schooling system implies the democratic participation of all stakeholders in determining the policy and rules in terms of which a public school is structured and controlled. The main aim of such rules and policies is to protect the rights of learners, to ensure that they receive quality education that is carried out effectively. This aspect is part of the responsibility of any SGB. In order to meet this obligation, the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) allows SGBs to improve and develop rules, direction and policies for schools within the framework of the Act. In the context of this study, the most important responsibility of SGBs is the upholding of good discipline at public schools in order for quality and effective teaching to take place.

The management of a public school is the responsibility of its School Management Team (SMT); this by implication means the day-to-day running (organisation) of a public school through the administration and organisation of teaching and learning at the school. Management also includes the
administration and organising of the performance activities that protect the rights of learners and support teaching and learning. By implication, the SMT of a school is accountable for administering inconsequential cases of disruptive behavior and deal with the offenders. In term of the Act (South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b)), the SMT must refer offenders implicated in serious misconduct to the SGB.

Communities' role in governance of public schools

The community surrounding a school constitutes an integral component of the school governance of that school. As a legal organisation of people, the serving members of a SGB are elected members who represent the community and act on behalf of and to the benefit of the school. The community from which the governing body members are elected, entrust their children and the school to the governing body, expecting it to carry out its duties and responsibilities in an accountable and responsible manner.

For any organisation to function effectively, mutual trust is an essential component. All role-players involved with a school must have mutual trust in one another and members must always act in the best interests of the school community and avoid acting for personal gain. As members of the community, parents entrust the administration of their children’s education to school managers and to the governing body. This implies that all means of ensuring effective, quality teaching and learning must be supported. This includes the enforcement of adherence to a disciplinary code by learners.

Code of Conduct and the role of different stakeholders

All stakeholders in a school community must be consulted when a Code of Conduct is drawn up (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:463). Such a partnership-in-consultation will create an unspoken feeling of ownership to the Code of Conduct and could therefore extract much more loyalty from stakeholders in upholding and abiding to the prescribed code. After
the procedure of drawing up a Code of Conduct has been concluded in accordance with Departmental prescriptions, the document is accepted after a vote. Section 8 of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) requires that all public schools adopt a written Code of Conduct for learners. Such a Code of Conduct is a legal document, in line with the Constitution, legislation, common law and case law (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996: 463). Each learner should receive a copy, and the Code should be prominently displayed on notice-boards throughout the school. In this way, the learners will always be aware of the school’s rules, which will guide their behavior while at school.

The main purpose of a Code of Conduct is to define the mission statement of the school. It entails a drafted set of school rules serving as a reciprocal between learners themselves and learners and educators (Joubert and Prinsloo, 2001:128-129). This document must contain a meticulous and comprehensive description of what behaviour is acceptable and what is not permitted. The aim of such a Code of Conduct is to establish a disciplined environment conducive to teaching and learning. Once the Code of Conduct has been formalised for implementation, a disciplinary committee needs to be elected. Its task will be to deal with incidents related to poor discipline at the school. All learners who contravene the Code of Conduct of the school must be given a fair hearing and, if found guilty, be dealt with accordingly. What is very important to learners and their parents, is that consistency and fairness prevail in all cases being heard. The disciplinary committee must therefore strictly adhere to the Code of Conduct in cases where learners need to be reprimanded, punished, suspended or referred to the Head of Department (Superintendent General) (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:464).

- Role of SGBs concerning discipline in public schools

The SGB is responsible for drawing up the Code of Conduct for learners at a public school. The Code of Conduct prescribes to learners how they must
conduct themselves. Any learners who do not adhere to the prescribed behavior in the Code of Conduct, make themselves guilty of misconduct. The responsibility of the SGB is to discipline such learners according to the guidelines in the Code of Conduct.

- Role of the principal concerning discipline

A lack of commitment from many school principals is considered as one of the reasons why discipline at many South African schools is in such poor state. SGB’s are involved in the recommendation of new principals to be appointed. It is therefore important to get a commitment from principles to uphold good discipline through their leadership. Non-accountability of leaders is seen as one of the reasons why public schools in South Africa are confronted with challenges such as poor discipline, low pass rates, vandalism, low educator morale and educators leaving the profession.

School principals should apply democratic principles such as sharing in decision-making regarding the development and implementation of a disciplinary policy, procedures and practices. The responsibility of ensuring that all members of the school community establish appropriate standards of behaviour in the school ultimately lies in the hands of the principal (Blandford, 1998:6).

- Role of educator concerning discipline

The installing of a fundamental foundation for discipline in learners lies in the hands of the educator in the classroom. Educators often replace parents in this regard and need to be aware that their behavior becomes the learner’s exemplar. In return, committed educators expect from learners, parents, the community and the Department of Education to create an orderly, disciplined environment in which they can execute their task effectively.
Educators should be able to recognise both the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners and should build on the strengths and intervene to limit the consequences of the weaknesses. Developing the self-esteem of learners can help them build good relationships with their peers, parents, educators and members of the community. High self-esteem and a feeling of warmth in learners can have a positive effect on school discipline (Blandford, 1998:2).

- Role of learners concerning discipline

A school’s Code of Conduct must guide behavior and must therefore be very clear and unambiguous in order for learners to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Incorporated in the Code of Conduct must be guidelines regarding the corrective measures to be followed in respect of specific transgressions.

The Constitution of the country, through the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), protects the right of learners to enjoy education in a safe environment where they are respected as human beings and not being discriminated against. Learners through their behaviour may therefore also not intrude on the rights of other learners. Ultimately, learners must learn to practice self-discipline and be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions.

- Role of parents concerning discipline

A school’s Code of Conduct requires from parents to become more responsible in creating positive and effectual learning environments at home. The guidelines incorporated into the Code of Conduct should also encourage parents to become involved in school activities and their child’s life-world.

Parents, in partnership with the Police and other community members, must work together to make their schools safe and free from crime and vandalism. A vandalized school has a distinct harmful influence on learner behavior. In fact,
further vandalism may be encouraged in the absence of a sense of pride and ownership of the school itself.

Parental involvement in and support with the child’s homework can be of great help to educators. This will not only strengthen the bond between parent and child, but also support learning and lessen conflict situations in the classroom. Learners who are disciplined at home are usually also more disciplined at school.

Parents should always have a close relationship with their children's educators. Learners are less inclined to conduct themselves poorly if there is a sound relationship between school and home. Establishing an open line of communication will most likely prevent unnecessary confrontational situations in the classroom.

**Aims and advantages of Code of Conduct**

From the discussion on the roles of different stakeholders in supporting positive behaviour it has become clear that discipline is essential in the school environment in order for a culture of teaching and learning to be facilitated and supported. It therefore stands to reason that one of the aims of a Code of Conduct must be to contribute to the maintenance of discipline in the institution.

Discipline is a deep-seated element of any organisation. The Code of Conduct of a school is the primary source that guides all stakeholders in their behavior and should therefore contain clear guidelines on the expectations, rights and responsibilities of learners (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996, 464-469). For the school to be able to uphold good discipline, the SGB, by means of the Code of Conduct, provides a detailed explanation of the aims, purposes and objectives of the Code for the school. This must also be reflected in the school rules learners have to abide by.
A disciplined school environment is one in which all stakeholders conduct themselves according to a Code of Conduct, which fosters an atmosphere supportive and encouraging to learning. If all involved at a school took responsibility for their own conduct, schools would become environments that support not only academic learning, but also social learning and responsible citizenship. A lack of discipline, however, creates an environment of disorder, disrespect and chaos, which will have devastating results for the future of the school and the community.

The Code of Conduct needs to clearly define what action will be taken in respect of different transgressions. Learners who make themselves guilty of specific transgressions must know what the consequences will be and that whoever breaks a rule, will face similar consequences.

“Fairness” and “reasonableness” can become contentious issues when it comes to corrective measures against learners. Parents as well as learners sometimes stand critical against educators when learners need to be disciplined. While the Code of Conduct protects learners from any unjust or irrational treatment, it at the same time also supports educators in their challenging role.

The Code of Conduct of a school must always be in line with the aims of the school, as set out in the school’s mission statement, in order to achieve those aims. Poor discipline at any school will definitely become a stumbling block in achieving the aims set out in the school’s vision and mission statement.

### 2.3 PURPOSE, VALUE AND ADVANTAGES OF SGB

- **Purpose**

The SGB of a public school is, according to the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the official mouthpiece of a school and must promote the democratic practices introduced in the new education system at the school. SGBs form part of the country’s new structures of democratic
governance in public schools and have to perform certain functions (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:102-106). One of these functions is to discipline learners who behave inappropriately, in terms of the Code of Conduct of the school.

The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) prescribes to the SGBs of public schools how to act in the execution of their duties and determines the framework within what they may operate in the governance and development of a school. Part of their task is to assist principals and management teams as representatives of the surrounding school communities, and to organise school activities effectively and efficiently (South African Schools Act, Republic of South Africa, 1996b:5).

- Value

According to the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the SGB of a school is responsible for uplifting the standard of learners’ achievements, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, serving as a link between the school and the community, and promoting and upholding a high standard of discipline at the school. Any aspect, such as for example poor discipline among learners that impedes the smooth operation of the school, must be dealt with as effectively and proficiently as possible. This will serve to improve the teaching and learning conditions from the perspectives of both educators and learners. These directives are valuable, because they protect the constitutional right of learners to receive education in conditions suitable for learning and they also support educators in the execution of their task of teaching.

- Advantages

SGB members skilled in fields such as finance and law and who have a good understanding of the maintenance of discipline can provide schools with expert knowledge that will support quality management of the school. The
principal and management team will therefore be able to devote most of their time to the day-to-day running of the school, because governing bodies are not concerned with that aspect of the school (Early, 1994:30). Devoting time to effective management will in itself support better order and discipline.

Early (1994:30) is of the opinion that a governing body is useful in removing the segregation that frequently exists in the management structures of schools. By its nature, an SGB is a team that shares the responsibility of principals and deputies on a different level. For example, when decisions must be made regarding large financial projects, the involvement of all stakeholders ensures transparency, trust and shared accountability.

The members of a school governing body, as people from outside of the actual school environment, can furthermore be a great source of objective evaluation, bringing in an outsider’s perspective to a situation at the school. Because of their close involvement, educators and learners are not always able to form an objective perspective of their school and of themselves. Getting an unbiased view from committed outsiders can be of great value to management in re-evaluating their own practices. It is good to get a sense of how the community perceives the school.

Most principals acknowledge the value of governing bodies in determining school policy and procedures on a wide range of facets of governance. A good working relationship between an SGB and the management of a school has positive consequences for the success and growth of the school. Minimum personality conflicts ensure better working relations, and such a positive atmosphere provides a good platform for improving the ethos of the school and creating a climate for effective teaching and learning.

2.4 STRUCTURE OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

The compilation of the SGB is very important, because it becomes the structure that is responsible for drawing up policies such as the Code of Conduct, that will
direct and guide learners’ behaviour. By law, the structure on a SGB contains four main elements; parents; educators; non-teaching staff; and learners. All four elements must be represented in order for each group to have a say in decision-making, as it affects all of them. The following directives, as pointed out by the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), are of importance:

*Parents* of children registered and enrolled at the school are eligible to be elected. Parents are the most important component in a SGB and their numbers are therefore proportionately larger than the other groups. This is based on the contention that parents should have the dominant say in their children’s education.

All *educators*, including temporary appointments, part-time educators, therapists and psychologists, are eligible to be elected on the SGB; however, substitute educators cannot be elected. Representatives of the teaching and support staff are the voice of those directly experiencing the problem of poor discipline.

*Non-teaching staff* appointed under the *Public Service Act 103 of 1994* (Republic of South Africa, 1996a) must also be represented on the SGB of a public school. Non-teaching staff includes cleaners, secretaries, typists, bursars and everybody not involved with the actual teaching in the classroom.

*Learners*, who will be at the receiving end of rules, also need to have representation on the SGB. The representatives must be elected from the Representative Council of Learners (RCL). Every year, new RCL members are elected, as the seniors leave school. From their Committee, representatives are elected to serve on the SGB. Learners’ representatives have a big responsibility and can contribute to the drawing up of rules and procedures that would be more acceptable to their fellow learners. They are in the position to negotiate on behalf of learners and to disseminate correct information back to fellow learners. If learners feel that they also had some say in drawing up the rules, the possibility that they will follow these rules is greatly increased.
The possible number of members to be elected for each component of the SGB is illustrated in the following table:

**TABLE: 1:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Principal</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Non Educator Staff</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school 630+ learners</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The parents of the learners on the governing body must always be one more than the combined total of other members who have voting rights. Parents are regarded as the most important contributors who must have the majority vote in all decision making such as, for the purpose of this study, disciplinary matters.

A governing body of a school may co-opt community members to assist it in discharging its duties; however co-opted members have no voting rights at any meeting. Elected members may only serve a maximum of three years in office.

An effectively functioning SGB can have a positive effect on learner discipline at a school. By including members from different stakeholder groupings, the barriers between home and school and professional and non-professional staff are lowered, encouraging the development of a coherent unit that works together towards obtaining a common goal: quality education for all. To reach this common goal, good discipline is imperative. However, good discipline remains a volatile concern in our schools and causes for great concern.
2.5 DISCIPLINE

To reach the common goal of quality education for all, as stated above, good discipline is imperative. However, over the centuries, disciplinary problems have always been part of the challenges facing educators. It is only the extent and intensity that have changed. Disciplinary problems seem to have escalated over the last decade or two. Learner behaviour is deteriorating and educators are facing increased disciplinary problems with a seeming lack of appropriate effective solutions.

Overcrowding, lack of resources and inequalities such as poorly trained educators in public schools under the previous South African government resulted in schools being vandalized, leaving it in a poor physical state. With the ongoing transformation process in education, conditions have improved. However, change is slow and not always a trouble-free and unproblematic procedure, as people react differently to the process of change. More than fifteen years into a new democratic government, many schools are not yet functioning at a satisfactory level and a lot still needs to be delivered in education. We can therefore assume that the history of inequalities that existed during the apartheid era still has a direct or indirect influence on learners’ behaviour in schools today.

Schools, as learning organisations, use different disciplinary measures to try to create the necessary order (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:470). The purpose of disciplining a learner is to get for him/her to accept responsibility for his/her actions. The Code of Conduct of a school guides learners in their behavior at school and learners should understand that discipline is aimed at correction and development, rather than punishment.
2.5.1 Historical overview of discipline in South African township schools

In the previous century, many black learners were victims of political and socio-cultural crises by being used as pawns in the South African political arena (Bezuidenhout and Joubert, 2003:19). The government enforced segregation, based on race, to keep the different race groups isolated. This was manifest in the establishment of separate departments of Education for so-called “Coloured”, “Indian”, “Bantu” and “White” learners. Education for the different races was marked by extreme inequalities such as different financial allocations per learner of the different race groups (Kallaway, 2002:2). Protests against the injustices of segregated educational conditions available to learners from the different race groups were rife during the years 1976 to 1984. According to Maree (2003:62), young black high school learners were seen as the barometer of systematic marginalisation and powerlessness under the apartheid regime. Many schools in the townships became the sites of a highly politicised struggle. Violence in such schools was socially approved by the surrounding communities.

Under the previous political dispensation, “White”, “Bantu” and “Coloured” Education shared a ferocious commitment to corporal punishment. The majority of black educators, even into the late 1990’s, were largely underqualified and must therefore often have felt pedagogically insecure. Learners exposed and exploited the limitations of their educators, while educators made vigorous use of corporal punishment to control their learners. The learners themselves steadily became more disenchanted with schooling and increasingly rebellious and scornful of educators (Kallaway, 2002:234).

Although directives from the National Department of Education prescribed the means of discipline to be applied, corporal punishment was widely abused by school principals and educators in general. This may possibly also be ascribed to the lack of monitoring of the administering of punishment in schools on the part of the Department of Education, in spite of the clear guidelines given in this
regard. Depending on the severity of the offence, discipline to miscreant learners could vary from verbal and written warnings to corporal punishment. The guidelines on corporal punishment captured in Regulation 704 of 1990 of the Department of Education and Culture, House of Assembly (Badenhorst, 1991:196) inter alia stipulated that:

“Corporal punishment should be administered to learners only:

- on account of neglect of duty or disobedience, recalcitrance (rebellion), willful damage to property, theft, dishonesty, lying, assault, bullying, indecency, truancy or any other misconduct of a serious nature;
- after the guilt of a learner has been proved to the satisfaction of the principal in a full inquiry during which the learner shall be afforded the opportunity to state his case;
- by the principal or a person authorized to in writing, or by another educator in the presence of the principle or the said authorized person;
- in the office of the principal or a place indicated by him, or in the absences of the principal, in the office of the educator in control of the school or a place indicated by him;
- on the buttocks with normal attire, with a cane or smooth stick and to a maximum of five strokes; and
- with consideration of the age and physical condition of the learner”

Very few principals and educators adhered to the abovementioned regulations, rendering school discipline harsh and often cruel, with physical beatings a regular occurrence. Corporal punishment served to instill unquestioning conformity and regimented order in schools as learning institutions (Kallaway, 2002).

Equality in education for all was a rally cry during the apartheid regime, and South African schools became simmering cauldrons of resistance, usually with the condonation of parents and the surrounding community.
Sadly, more than fifteen years after the abolishment of apartheid and the cessation of the political struggle, violence, crime and extreme undisciplined behaviour still exist in many South African schools. Also, the snail’s pace of transformation resulted in little change in the classroom itself. Conditions at certain public schools still create the impression of segregation and marginalization. Some public schools are still overcrowded, lack enough skilled educators, and do not have resources like science laboratory equipment. Learners are therefore often still deprived of quality education, a situation that may provoke antisocial behaviour and criminal activities geared at their own schools.

Being marginalized and receiving an inferior education could create a low self-esteem and feelings of uselessness and hopelessness in learners. Their low self-esteem is often the reason why learners misbehave and engage in more serious acts of crime. Such learners take no pride in themselves or make no effort to improve their future prospects. They display little or no regard or respect for other people’s possessions and, even more alarming, take no responsibility for their actions and show little concern for the consequences.

Harsh corporal punishment just does not seem to bring about the desired attitudinal change in most learners. The question arise why corporal punishment has apparently failed. According to Northmore and Potterton (2003:5-6), there are a number of reasons why corporal punishment does not work. The most important reason is that corporal punishment stops bad behaviour only momentarily and does not always encourage good behaviour. In fact, learners often welcome corporal punishment as a means to win prestige among their peers with a good caning becoming a symbol of status. Furthermore, educators often use corporal punishment to discourage behaviour that is merely irritating and annoying rather than restricting it to cases of serious misconduct.

As a result, corporal punishment does not encourage self-discipline or thoughtful behaviour, but rather creates resentment and hostility and makes the establishment of positive relationships between educators and learners difficult.
Learners observe that adults resort to violence to solve problems and this example increases the likelihood that they will emulate such behaviour in trying to solve problems.

2.5.2 Value of discipline

It is widely accepted that without some measure of discipline, teaching and learning will hardly take place. It would therefore be safe to state that any measure of order established through some disciplinary measures will support learning. Managing overcrowded and underresourced classrooms are a daunting challenge in the absence of discipline (Du Preez, 2003:88). Good classroom management and discipline, on the other hand, will greatly support and enhance learning. The ideal would therefore be to have an orderly environment where self-disciplined learners take ownership of their own learning.

The control or discipline externally imposed by SGBs, the educators or other figures of authority does not always become internalised. However, voluntary self-control develops in a learning situation that is orderly. Discipline is therefore aimed at changing behavior with the expectation that consequences of poor behavior will in future be considered beforehand. In this way, discipline will act as a deterrent for possible misbehavior.

Rules are made to improve order and structure. The reasons for and the benefits of the introduction of the rules should be understood by all; unfortunately, this is not always the case. Richmond (Du Preez, 2003:90) explains that the value of discipline lies in a general notion that it is connected to conforming to rules. Punishment is appropriate when there has been a breach of rules. The purpose of discipline therefore is both to conform to rules and to inflict punishment with the intent to influence learners to change their negative behavior.
According to the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), discipline is also a way of restraining the actions of learners that may inflict harm on others on the self or violate the rights of other learners and educators. A disciplined learner is one who respects other learners and educators, is responsive to proper and fair authority, and accepts responsibility for his/her actions.

Effective education is dependent on sound discipline, but should also be seen as a consequence of good teaching (Kruger and Van Schalkwyk, 1997:114). A school environment where discipline prevails, is one in which learning can be imparted, where educators can teach well, and learners can learn without excessive interruptions (Quarles, 1993:23). Discipline must therefore be maintained in the school and classroom to ensure that the education of learners can proceed without any disruption. The main goal should, however, be to lead learners to self-discipline and the acceptance of responsibility for their actions, including learning. In a well-disciplined class, less time will be wasted on measures of control, leaving more time and energy to devote to teaching and learning.

Society in general expects from schools to be disciplined environments in which order prevails and rules are respected. Schools that are able to succeed in this respect contribute to society in general by guiding learners to conform to the laws of society after leaving school. It therefore seems appropriate to investigate alternative techniques to corporal punishment to bring about the desired changes in conduct that are associated with good discipline.

2.5.3 Techniques used to discipline

Educators must allow themselves to be guided by the principles of punishment as stated in the *Manual for School Governance* (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:471). In terms of these principles, punishment must always be fair, reasonable, appropriate, immediate, consistent and meaningful to the transgressor. Given the high frustration levels amongst
educators, they must restrain themselves from actions that are either not permitted or need to be used with the greatest of caution only (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:471-472). Poor disciplinary measures may cause resentment in learners, based on the perception that they have been treated unfairly or been belittled in front of their peers. Such humiliation will negatively influence self-esteem and the learner concerned may develop a grudge against the educator and schooling as a whole.

Certain techniques of punishment have a negative effect on the behaviour of learners. One such technique, which is prohibited by the Department of Education, is corporal punishment. Mass punishment is also prohibited, as innocent learners are also punished in the process, which is considered as unfair treatment of those not guilty.

The exclusion of learners is a popular disciplinary measure, i.e. frequently transgressors are sent out of the classroom. Although the disruptive learner violates the rights of others to be taught, educators should try and resolve the problem inside the classroom. Learners who are sent out of the classroom, may get injured, rendering the school vulnerable to a change of negligence (Province of the Eastern Cape Department of Education, 1996:471-472). More important, though, is the fact that such “punishment” has no educational value at all and the learner sent out just falls behind further in his/her work.

Although detention is a common technique, learners are rarely given a constructive activity to perform, such as a task related to their learning or a task that will instill more responsibility, such as cleaning the school premises if they messed it up.

Disciplinary or punitive measures should always be aimed at changing the behaviour of learners. Chosen measures must never affect the dignity of the learners and educators therefore need to apply positive disciplinary techniques (Kruger and Van Schalkwyk, 1997:118).
A positive disciplinary measure is taking detained learners to a library at or near the school where they are tasked to read on specific subjects and make notes, answer worksheets or write a passage. Many learners in poor socio-economic areas under normal circumstances do not have the opportunity to visit a library so such an exercise will have educational value and merit.

Positive disciplinary techniques, for example, the withdrawal of privileges, usually enhances, encourages and promotes appropriate behavior such as self-discipline, cooperation, mutual respect and responsibility (Squelch & Lemmer, 1994:92-93). The withdrawal of privileges may be as simple as not allowing participation in a favourite sport.

As all disciplinary measures follow on undesirable behavior it makes good sense for any educator to try and determine which factors could have contributed to the undesirable behavior in the first place.

2.6 POSSIBLE CAUSES OF POOR DISCIPLINE

Children do not exist in a vacuum. All aspects of their well-being are positively or negatively influenced by aspects on different levels of the immediate environment. The most important level, on which multiple factors play a role, is the home environment; parents and siblings and the family’s socio-economic status have a very strong and direct influence on children’s behavior. The second level is that of the school; the educators, peers and the ethics of the school are of great importance in shaping learners’ behavior and personalities. Finally the broader socio-economic environment plays a role in influencing children’s behavior and the choices they make.

All human development occurs in five domains, namely the physical, cognitive, emotional, social and moral domains. The intertwined relationship between environmental factors, development in the different domains and behaviour needs to be analysed in order to acquire a better understanding of what may
have been instrumental to the poor discipline or negative behavior in the first place.

2.6.1 Factors within the child

Physical development

Physical characteristics could become a factor in deviant behaviour. Learners who are very tall for their age group often use their superior height and weight negatively to attain group status. An example of such behavior is bullying. In contrast, children who are shorter or frailer than their peers may become non-participatory, antisocial, cheeky or attention seeking.

Sometimes learners with a physical disability at mainstream schools are put under extreme pressure by fellow learners to perform on the same level. Such learners may then attempt to overcompensate for their physical handicap(s) and in the process make themselves guilty of deviant behavior by participating in disruptive or destructive activities, such as being noisy in the classroom.

Cognitive development

Grey and Richer (1998:6) believe that learners who are disruptive often have a lower IQ, as manifested in poor academic achievement. Learners who find it difficult to cope with their schoolwork may simply give up or lose interest and then get up to mischief. According to Grey and Richer (1998:6), learners with a low IQ also often come from a lower socio-economic class and often manifest a relatively high prevalence of neurological problems. Conversely, highly intelligent learners may also become disruptive when bored, poorly motivated or when feeling neglected. Educators often tend to neglect such learners, focusing on those with average or lower IQs instead.

Levy and Hay (Hunter-Carch, Tiknaz, Cooper and Sage, 2006:6) add that many learners suffer from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and that Attention
Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder has a strong biological component. Gomes (2008:24) concurs stating that a study revealed that Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a genetically inherited condition. Some Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder learners have specific cognitive and social reasoning problems that may manifest in difficulties within the formal school situation.

Emotional development

Louw, Van Ede and Louw (1998:17) state that genetic factors do play a role in temperament. Temperamental characteristics refer to whether a person is calm or easily agitated; impulsive or reflective; an introvert or an extrovert; or trusting or approaching situations with suspicion.

Learners who become upset easily are usually taunted most, because their peers abuse this characteristic for fun. Emotionally immature learners often battle to control their emotions (tempers) and therefore often land into trouble or throw tantrums to get their own way and manipulate the situation. Such learners are perceived by their peers as selfish individuals who always want their own way, resulting in conflict situations within the classroom.

Impulsive behaviour usually has consequences for the learner, which he or she has not considered. This kind of behavior is often irresponsible or disruptive behavior. If they took the time to reflect on the consequences of their behavior, they might have reconsidered. Extroverts are often impulsive in their actions. Because they are people orientated, they can influence others or be influenced very easily, and their actions can be very overwhelming and irritating, often leading to the disruption of order in the classroom. Extroverts easily engage in inappropriate behaviour and influence other learners to follow suit.

At the other end of the spectrum, educators sometimes encounter learners who are shy and timid and weep very easily. This could be due to factors such as fear, low self-esteem or an inherited personality trait. The challenge for the
educator would be to build self-esteem and confidence to the point where the child feels secure enough to interact with his or her peers. Unfortunately, like those who get upset easily, very shy and timid learners may become the target of class bullies; in reality it is not their behaviour that is problematic, but the negative responses that their shyness may elicit. Their behavior becomes problematic *per se* when such learners refuse to participate in group activities.

Shy learners often find it difficult to work within groups because of their introvert nature. Group work offers many advantages but the introvert may find it difficult to work well in such an intimate social setting. Educators may well perceive this as disobedience and uncooperativeness. Such learners will impede on the success of the group by, for example, not finishing tasks or group activities in time.

**Social development**

Gender plays an important role in social development. In modern society aggression is more acceptable among boys; partly due to learned roles in society (Roland and Munthe, 1994:15). Physical aggression, such as bullying, is also more common among boys and obviously not conducive to harmonious classroom relationships and disciplined behavior.

Learners exhibiting temperamental outbursts may often engage in physical fights or verbal arguments. Socially, they may become marginalised because others may perceive them as threatening. The other side of the coin could be that peers may become part of a group that support this type of behaviour, possibly out of fear.

Sometimes learners who are physically larger than others make use of their posture to obtain superior status within the social group. They become domineering within the group and their status can develop into bullying. This might develop into physical fighting, especially between boys. Bullying between girls is usually not physical, but more psychological, through verbal abuse such
as gossiping. Bullying of any kind is socially unacceptable and can be highly disruptive.

Shy, timid learners may find it very hard to assert themselves in a group situation and are therefore easily dominated by strong, extrovert peers. This should be prevented through the careful selection of group members and monitoring the group’s dynamics.

Moral development

Genetics play an important role where the behavior of the child is concerned, as it determines the inheritance of specific characteristics from parents (Louw, et al. 1998:17). Gray, Miller and Noakes (1994:15) state that inherited factors determine the level and intensity of behavioral disturbances. The child may be born with a specific genetic disposition that may result in specific tendencies, such as aggressiveness or suffering from ADHD. The inherited disposition may influence his/her behavior negatively and as such may complicate intervention strategies by educators and/or parents.

According to Charlton and David (1993:22), the individual is the product of both genetic inheritance and sociological and physiological influences. Papatheodorou (2005:28) agrees that the deep and complex root of behavioral problems resides within the individual, either in the body (biogenetic theory) or in the psyche (psychodynamic theory), or in both. The difficulty with both theories is that not all problems in behavioural and moral deviations are apparent and the observer (educator or parent) may not be conscious of their existence, other than through the negative behaviour of the child.
2.6.2 Factors external to the child

- Home environment

Physical development

The home is the primary area in which the child is taken care of (food, clothing and shelter). South Africa’s high poverty rate has a direct bearing on the physical development of learners. If the home environment cannot provide in the basic needs of the child, it will impact negatively on his/her physical development. Learners who are physically neglected, may find it difficult to concentrate and to fully participate in physical activities in the classroom. Such learners may also be prone to illness, as the lack of good nutrition, physical and medical care will negatively impact on their resistance against infections. Consequently, high absenteeism rate may be evident.

Misbehaviour may often be traced to illness or hunger. When a child is feeling ill or hungry, concentration levels will decrease, while the possibility of misbehaviour will increase. Learners from a poor socio-economic environment often find themselves in such a position (Kruger and Van Schalkwyk, 1997:116). When undernourished children show low energy levels, educators may misconstrue their unresponsiveness as defiance.

Cognitive development

The most important factor that has an influence on the cognitive development of learners in the home environment is the educational level of the parents (Louw, et al. 1998:331). Stimulation by parents is very important, because it helps the child with the execution of conversational tasks and increases cognitive levels. Exposure to magazines, newspapers, educational books, educational television programmes, excursions and games are stimulation for the brain and such learners will perform better scholastically, minimizing behavioral problems as learners who experience success, usually exhibit less behavioural problems.
On the other hand, parents can overzealous in their ambition for their children to achieve; often above their capabilities. This induces feelings of helplessness and anxiety. When parents constantly put their children under pressure to perform on the highest level in whatever area, they may develop anxieties, to the extent that they almost constantly feel miserable and unhappy (Charlton, 1993:36). The possibility that they may become rebellious cannot be ruled out, especially during the adolescent period, when such rebellion will most likely result in unacceptable behavior.

Emotional development

A child growing up in a nurturing and affectionate environment, where he or she is accepted and unconditionally loved, feels safe to explore and even to fail, because of the absence of damaging criticism. Such a warm and secure environment usually starts with the relationship between mother and child. The child in an affectionate home environment feels emotionally secure. Charlton (1993:33) assert that the early and prolonged separation of young children from their mothers is a prime cause of delinquent character development and persistent misbehaviour.

Parents can sometimes put enormous pressure on learners to be perfectionists in whatever they do and to excel academically (Brophy, 1996:108). This is true in upper-class socio-economic environments where parents demand from their children unrealistically high academic results in order to “compete with the Joneses”. It equally holds in families from poor socio-economic backgrounds where the parents pin their own dreams and ambitions on their children. This pressure creates feelings of anxiousness, fearfulness, frustration and a non-participatory learner attitude because of fear of failure. This very fear of failure could be the single most important cause of adolescent suicide during November/December each year when final year examinations are written.

According to Gootman (1997:165), childhood trauma can also contribute to emotional instability in a learner. Physical, sexual and emotional abuse, divorce,
parental alcoholism, a death in the family and physical injury can be extremely traumatic for children. All these experiences can manifest in misbehaviour and underachieving, reflecting the child’s pain and suffering. It is therefore important that educators keep in mind that misbehaviour could lie rooted in deep emotional instability.

Slavin (1997:103) is of the view that all learners experience emotional conflict at some point in their lives. Examples of such conflicts and stresses are the rapid and dramatic body changes during puberty, high expectations from parents and educators, peer relations, and even transitions in schools (elementary to middle and then secondary school). This stress may lead to negative behavior, that may include delinquency and alcohol or drug abuse, especially amongst adolescents. Hogue and Steinberg in Cobb (2004:355) has established that adolescents are likely to choose friends whose moods and emotions are similar to their own, or that adolescents’ moods are influenced by those of their friends. Adolescents who experience mood swings and who need emotional support often become victims of environments where drugs and alcohol are easily available.

Fortunately, it seems as if only a small percentage of adolescents experience serious and long-lasting emotional and behavioral disorders. It must, however, be emphasized that the number of adolescents with emotional problems seems to be on the increase, possibly due to a variety of factors, such as pressure at home, at school and in society at large.

Single parenthood could result from the death of a partner or divorce and may cause negative emotional and behavioral conduct in children. Immature behaviour in the classroom is one of the characteristics of learners who are emotionally unstable. They are oftenly interruptive, seeking attention in various ways (Brophy, 1996:321).

Social development
Learners who do not experience an interdependent relationship with their parents during their infant years may develop low self-esteem and lack of trust. Such learners usually avoid close relationships and are prone to depression, because they expect to be rejected (Baron, Byrne and Branscombe, 2006:65). Educators see these learners as mistrusting and non-affectionate, demonstrating a sense of poor self-worth and a reluctance to emerge in any form of competition.

Learners most often depend on the acceptance of friends or peers. Adolescents are frequently engaged in activities which they know is wrong, yet they persist because their peers expect it from them. Learners residing in poor socio-economic environments are much more exposed to negative influences. Negative activities often provide a means of escape from the dire circumstances at home (Cobb, 2004:355). It is not uncommon that such learners may arrive at school under the influence of alcohol or some prohibited substance.

Children growing up in homes where they experience severe punishment depending on the adults’ shifting moods rather than on consistent rules and regulations, may perceive adults as a source of punishment. Such perceptions may influence the child’s behaviour negatively in other social settings, such as school and the community, manifesting in violent behaviour (Gray, Miller and Noakes, 1994:14).

Moral development

The moral development of a child coincides with his/her development of a personal value system (Thom, Louw, Van Ede and Ferns, 1998:459). This value system provides the child with a guide for socially and morally responsible and acceptable behaviour. Parents, adults and, in a lesser capacity, siblings at home help to guide the child to conduct him-/herself in a manner that is acceptable not only at home, but also in the community at large. The child learns to behave according to guidelines that can also be described as values lived by parents.
Research conducted in the USA by Hoffman (1996:9) on violence in schools has unveiled that some parents tell their children that if anyone tries to take something from them, insult them or hit them, they should fight back. This type of advice is in direct contrast with what educators are teaching learners. Such mixed messages are confusing to children and creates uncertainty and confusion regarding moral values.

Charlton (1993:34) state that some children’s behaviour problems can be traced back to the adverse influence of negative relationships and poor modeling existing in families. Examples of poor modeling are family members who abuse drugs and alcohol, exhibit violent temper outbreaks and use foul language at home. Children exposed to such behaviour at home are most likely to engage in misbehaving at school, because the values in an anti-social family are usually inconsistent with the values promoted and enforced by the school. Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995:47) argue that when a child’s home environment does not promote good discipline, his/her educator at school will find it difficult to rectify the problem. The child’s home environment has the earliest influences upon his or her behaviour, consequently the quality of home experiences significantly influences, adversely and otherwise, his or her behaviour at school and elsewhere.

However, learners may choose to ignore parental norms, values and discipline in order to belong to the peer group. Learners, especially in their adolescent years, are pressurised and influenced by peers. A strong family value system is needed to ensure that learners align themselves with positive peer groups, for example, members of youth and church organisations.
• **School environment**

Physical development

School playgrounds are regarded as the ideal environment in which learners can develop not only physically, but also practise social skills and play constructively and cooperatively (Gray, *et al.* 1994:18). Playtime should be enjoyed for the possibilities of physical development it offers.

An environment with adequate resources for the physical development of learners helps the school and community minimise deviant behaviour, fighting and bullying. Resources may include sports fields or recreation centres where learners can participate in activities such as gymnastics and body building, allowing overenergetic learners to channel their energy positively. A major benefit of team sport is that it also teaches social skills. Participation in sport ensures that educators in school experience fewer incidents of restlessness and poorly directed energy among learners, thereby reducing frustration and irritation in the classroom.

Single parenthood affects some children to the extent that their material needs are not met. Papatheodorou (2005:53) is of the opinion that single parents are laden with financial worries, depriving their children of, for example, school uniforms, school utensils and writing materials, and lack of funds to pay for school excursions. Learners from lower-income families run a greater risk of developing behaviour problems, which could result in them dropping out of school (Cobb, 2004:430).

Cognitive development

Meyer (1998:3) proclaims that learners with cognitive developmental problems will have difficulty in engaging in processes such as paying attention, perceiving, remembering, thinking, reasoning, planning, solving problems and conceptualising. Learners who encounter difficulty with these cognitive
processes may not be able to achieve adequately scholastically. They may become disruptive in the classroom because of the low self-esteem and desperately seek attention; even negative attention.

An inappropriate curriculum is a major cause of learner failure (Charlton, 1993:41). McNamara in Papatheodoru (2005:57) contends that curricular demands are closely associated with behavioural problems among learners. Learners sometimes cannot find any semblance between the content of the school curriculum and the ‘world’ they are experiencing around them. Curriculum planners need to consult with communities, educators and learners to provide material that will stimulate the interest of learners and prepare them adequately for adulthood. Wolhuter and Steyn (2003:521) concur, stating that the curriculum should offer stimulating and suitable differentiated programmes of study for a full academic range and that assessments of learners should be supportive, not threatening. Schools should therefore aim to strike the best suitable match between the needs and interests of individual learners and the curriculum they are required to follow. Many South African schools fall short of providing an academic range that will reduce the problem of classroom boredom that so often manifests in disruption. A curriculum that provides learners with a wide range of subjects of interest to them, will be motivational and make the learning experience more enjoyable. However, this would be very difficult to achieve in the majority of public schools, because they are vastly unresourced and can provide only a limited curriculum to their learners. The staff establishment of a school is determined by the Department of Education. Many schools can only employ enough educators to serve the basic curriculum of the school, with specialised options, such as business studies, music and technical subjects, often not available.
Emotional development

As an educator, the researcher has experienced that those learners who demonstrate high self-esteem, are those who excel academically and usually behave in an acceptable manner. Conversely, learners that portray low self-esteem, often reflect negative behavioral patterns. The latter group tend to portray a negative attitude towards the world around them. Such learners are also often emotionally unstable. Their behaviour reveals feelings of inferiority, stubbornness and insolence. Low self-esteem and a poor attitude towards their schoolwork are common characteristics of learners with personality problems. The behavioral patterns displayed by these learners, such as failure to do homework or study for classroom tests or being insolent to adults or being disruptive impact severely on the order and discipline in the classroom and therefore the learning and academic progress of all learners in that classroom.

Educators must be sensitive towards the symptoms learners with long-lasting emotional and behavioral disorders may manifest in order to identify such learners so that intervention may be introduced at an early stage. Educators must be alert to emotional disorders such as aggression, hyperactivity, withdrawal, anxiety, phobias and learning disabilities (Slavin, 1997:442). These may be manifested in disorderly, immature, socially aggressive, distractible, selfish, jealous, destructive and disruptive behaviour in learners. Educators experience these learners as ill-mannered, rejecting reprimands, order and good discipline.

The educator’s personality and conduct in the classroom could encourage an atmosphere of open communication and acceptance. Learners interpret the educator’s attitude and style of communication as indicators of what is acceptable and what is frowned upon. An open line of communication will encourage learners to speak out and share issues that they find distressing or challenging. This kind of communication will only take place in an atmosphere of warmth, acceptance and support.
Social development

Schools are a formal structure for social settings, cradles for the formation of distinct social groupings. These groupings sometimes make their own rules that may be of a deviant nature. Learners in the group that do not comply with those rules are then labeled as outsiders (Gray, et al. 1994:14). Learners usually do not want to be labeled by their peers and would rather comply with the norms of the group, even if this means that they would make themselves guilty of misconduct. When rejected, such learners from the peer group, irrespective of whether the group demonstrate positive and negative behaviour, tend to be angry, argumentative and prone to start fights. Adolescents can act in a very self-centered, insensitive and tactless manner (Brophy, 1996:352).

Learners rejected by their peers tend to become loners, deprived of the opportunity to develop positive social skills. Loners are easy prey to bullies. Because of the rejection of their peers, they tend to be angry, argumentative, and fight with others. They often become distrustful and paranoid and can sometimes interpret accidents as deliberate provocations and become unreasonably aggressive towards their peers (Brophy, 1996:352).

It is a well-known fact that peer group pressure often shapes the behaviour of individuals. Hoffman (1996:10) shares the sentiment that learners want to be accepted by their peers to satisfy their need of belonging. In this regard, Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995:45-46) have noted the interesting fact that girls tend to experience more pressure to conform to the peer group in the classroom situation, due to their greater fear of being isolated by their peers. Unfortunately, all learners may at times be under pressure to conform to negative behaviour, because of the standards set by the group to which they (wish to) belong.

Boys who are members of gangs experience extreme peer pressure outside of the classroom, especially if the school is situated in crime-riddled areas. Non-gang members become targets and are threatened and often victimised by
different gangs. Violence often erupts when a new gang member undergoes initiation. Common requirement to “prove” himself is the victimization of a learner not belonging to the gang or taking on the members of competing gangs.

Bullying is often the manifestation of a learner’s negative relationships with his or her siblings. The bully experiences self gratification by intentionally inflicting injury or discomfort upon peers, which provides him or her with a feeling of “being in control”. The lack of social skills, compassion, warmth and affection is usually the result of self-centered and neglectful treatment at the hands of his/her parents (Baron, et al. 2006:66).

Moral development

Learners, especially adolescents, are in age groups that are characterised by immense pressure from peers, and learners make important moral decisions on a daily basis. Learners raised in a home environment where they are loved and taught that their behaviour can have both negative and positive consequences, are in a better position to make informed choices and thoughtful decisions (Hamachek, 1995:178). For example, if the educator and learners compile classroom rules and agree on constructive punishment, learners will know what behavior is required from them. By discussing the consequences of breaking the classroom rules, the learners are taught valuable life lessons. It is therefore important to involve learners in the compilation of rules of conduct, so that it becomes meaningful to them.

Educators, especially in the more senior classes, are frequently confronted with misbehavior in the classroom. Learners will often rather conform to the views and expectations of peers than to the morals instilled by their parents and other adults. When this transpires, learners’ behavior deviates from the expectations of educators and the latter are forced to take corrective measures.
It is vitally important that educators serve as positive role models to learners. As role models, educators’ behaviour must be worthy of emulation. Gootman (1997:26) postulates that modeling is a mighty tool for teaching learners discipline. Learners copy educators’ undesirable behaviour as well as impersonate noble models, so the model of self-discipline should be above reproach. Educators as role models play a significant part in many areas of learners’ lives, whether as substitute parents or as mentors. Badenhorst and Scheepers (1995:36) are of the opinion that learners who perceive educators as good role models establish a valid core of values, attitudes and skills to which they may aspire. Examples of self-discipline in a positive role model would be, for example, being punctual at times, keeping absenteeism to the minimum and coming to the classroom well prepared for lessons.

- Community and broader environment

Physical development

Children from impoverished communities that are prone to gangsterism usually try to imitate the violent behaviour they see around them. This is evident in their physical play at school, which is characterized by violent behaviour. Such violent behaviour would obviously be in contravention of the school's Code of Conduct.

Social development

Kauffman in Papatheodorou (2005:32) describes children who often model unacceptable behaviour, as those who chronically and markedly respond to their environment in socially unacceptable and/or personally unsatisfying ways. Fortunately, such children can be taught more socially acceptable and personally satisfying behaviour. A socio-economic environment in which poor social behaviour, such as public drunkenness, violence and substance abuse by adults prevails, is a negative attribute to learners’ behaviour in the classroom. It is also evident in the violent and aggressive behaviour learners
sometimes display on the playgrounds. Learners at schools situated in impoverished and crime-ridden areas will inevitably be exposed to negative elements such as gangsterism, drug smuggling and illegal liquor consumption.

Moral development

The environment can have harmful effects on children’s moral development if they are not able to make the correct choices. In environments where adults set confusing examples, children will find it difficult to distinguish between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. In school, such learners behave unacceptable, not always because they want to, but because of their inability to distinguish between right and wrong.

Drug abuse has severely impacted on society in general. While communities situated in poor socio-economic areas are more at risk, it must be emphasized that drugs are present in all classes or layers of society, used as a temporary escape from situations or a quick income-generating method. Communities may convey the impression to children that there is nothing wrong about using drugs, because everybody is using it. The learners become ethically confused and may end up experimenting with drugs, which can impact negatively on their scholastic wellness.

2.7 THE SCHOOL AS ENVIRONMENT CONDUCIVE TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

To ensure that a school becomes an environment conducive to teaching and learning, parents, educators and SGBs must work together in a relationship of trust in order to promote quality education for all learners, thus serving the best interests of the school. Effective schooling can only take place in a disciplined school environment where every learner, educator, SGB member and parent take careful note of the responsibilities and obligations placed on them by the norms and values enshrined in South Africa’s Bill of Rights (1996). Working together harmoniously will certainly create a more positive learning
environment. Unfortunately, reality has shown that not all role-players are equally committed to effective learning, hence poor discipline has become a serious problem at many South African schools.

• **Role of the parents**

In South Africa, most causation parents have involved themselves in school affairs and their childrens’ school activities. In the first place, previous Model C schools are still characterized by better facilities and more resources. These schools were previously ‘White’ middle-class schools in which parents took an active role in school governance. Secondly, the academic outputs of such schools usually range from good to excellent (Morrel, 2001:21). Learners whose parents put time and effort into supervising and/or helping with homework enjoy an advantage and benefit directly, as are reflected in their academic results. This can be taken as proof that a positive school and home learning environment will contribute and encourage learners to put more effort into achieving first-class results.

The South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) is a concerted attempt by government to foster greater involvement by all South African parents in their children’s schooling. Schools and parents must be willing to work together and spend time, money and effort if they want to realise the vision of quality education for their children. This means that educators and parents must take hands to foster an attitude of taking personal responsibility for their actions amongst all learners and to establish a feeling of pride and ownership of their learning and their school. For schools situated in impoverished areas, initiatives to raise funds for specific educational projects, for example, to equip the school library with books, would bear fruit in the longer term. Once local businesses and the community see change, they may be more inclined to support their schools financially.

Parents who are willing to share their time, knowledge and skills to improve management, governance, physical aspects, and any level of teaching and
learning are desperately needed by most schools. Parents can become involved in all aspects of school life, for example sport (coaching), administration (bursar), maintenance (repairing windows), security, a feeding scheme, the library and playground duty, as well as fund-raising projects. At many public schools, these tasks are all still the responsibility of the educators, eroding their time for teaching.

However, what is even more important than involvement in school activities, is personal and direct involvement with the child. Parents should play an integral part in all aspects of the school's learning programme. Personal involvement will keep them in touch with the curriculum, putting them in a better position to assist their child, when needed. Homework must not be regarded as work to occupy learners, but must serve as a guide to the parents to see if their children comprehend what has been done in the classroom. This also creates the opportunity for parents to verify what homework must be done and supervise the completion thereof. Adequate time must be allowed for children to do homework or study. The most appropriate method is to devise a daily time schedule, which must be administered by the parents.

The parents, with the support of the SGB, must take the initiative in formulating school policies, such as a code of conduct, most suitable for their community. Parents need to become directly involved and take responsibility for instilling a sense of discipline of their children. As primary caregivers, it parents’ responsibility to teach their children obedience, responsibility, respect for others, self-control and self-discipline. Parents have the authority to control and discipline their children for transgressions at home. When there is no or little discipline at home, disruptive behaviour will spill over into the school environment. Unfortunately, too often parents are happy to leave the teaching of even the most basic norms and values for positive behavior to their children’s educators.
• Role of the educator

Sound classroom management empowers learners to accept responsibility for their own behaviour and learning (Selaledi, 2000:20). This cultivates in learners the ability to plan, monitor and evaluate their own behaviour according to their personal standards. Discipline in the classroom, as part of classroom management, is a strategic plan by educators to control learners and turn them into compassionate learners. Classroom management and disciplinary techniques enable learners to regulate their behaviour according to the educator’s expectations, even in his/her absence. Sound classroom management and fair disciplinary techniques can therefore lead to increased learner achievement, which is also reflected as improved educator performance.

Success develops positive self-esteem; learners with good self-esteem learn and behave better. Motivation by educators should primarily focus on what learners do right and letting them know what they are doing right. The challenge educators face with motivation is to concentrate on good behaviour and the promotion thereof, instead of focusing on bad behaviour and wasting energy in trying to eliminate it (Galvin, 1999:49-67). One of the most effective ways of motivational feedback to learners is to emphasise the behaviour you as educator is pleased with. Effective motivational feedback would therefore be to tell learners what they need to do to be successful. Specifying this behaviour increases the likelihood of it being repeated, as success breeds success. The positive feedback received on being successful will act as deterrent to behaving in a way that will elicit negative feedback.

To the public, educators exemplify the ethos of a school. Educators must demonstrate that the value system of the school is one to which the community can aspire. Educators should always uphold their professional and respected status as leaders. Their public behaviour must exemplify their professional status, to earn respect for the individual as well as the profession. Their
behaviour in public must therefore not portray the opposite of the values and norms the school stands for: actions speak louder than words.

- **Role of the school community**

School communities include present parents, present and former learners, future parents, commercial undertakings, industry, governmental sectors, religious organisations, sports clubs and the general public in the geographical area surrounding the school. All these people and institutions promote the interests, needs and wellbeing of the school, although some may not necessarily live or be located in the same geographical area as the school.

The escalating problem of poor discipline at public schools highlights the need for greater community involvement in public schools. Public schools situated in poor socio-economic areas are increasingly faced with disciplinary problems, largely stemming from the huge social problems experienced in the community. Community members who are involved in the different structures of the school can play an important role in promoting discipline, to make our public schools effective learning institutions. One such way would be to be present on the school grounds during breaks, to discipline learners who misbehave. The school must bring the community to realise and embrace its responsibility towards the learners by seeking ways and means to involve the community in curbing poor discipline and creating a school environment in which learners can achieve to their full potential.

Schools are largely a reflection of the community and should prepare their learners for responsible citizenship within the community. Community involvement in the school can lead to more effective education if the community is aware of the goals that drive the school. The community expects from the school to produce responsible and valuable community members, not lawless or unruly adults. Public schools, especially those situated in poor socio-economic areas, are making increasing demands on the financial resources and assistance of communities.
2.8 CONCLUSION

The restructuring of South African education brought a new dimension to the governance of public schools. This chapter discussed the new governance introduced in public schools in apartheid South Africa, focusing on the purpose, value, advantages and structure of school governing bodies.

The poor discipline among learners in public schools manifests is a major stumbling block to effective teaching and learning. An overview was given on how discipline in particular corporal punishment, was administered in the previous dispensation. The radical changes in school governance brought about by the new dispensation were reviewed, linked to the role governing bodies have to fulfil in the entire process.

Learners' behaviour at school must always be interpreted within a specific context. The possible internal and external factors why learners misbehave, were also reviewed, as well as what can be done by the different roleplayers to prevent or minimise poor behavior.

The next chapter will focus on the data analysis and interpretations on the findings related to the empirical investigation.
CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Two featured a literature review on school governing bodies and the different roles and responsibilities regarding school discipline assumed by the different roleplayers. To conduct the research, the researcher had to consider a specific research paradigm and choose methods for the accumulation and analysis of relevant data. This was done in order to establish a sound conceptual framework for this investigation. This chapter will therefore provide a detailed exposition of the research design and methodology, state the research problems and objectives, and provide details regarding data gathering and analysis. Trustworthiness and the ethical measurements that have been applied, will also be outlined.

According to McMillan and Schumacher (1996:33), the research design refers to the plan used by the researcher to obtain evidence in order to obtain answers to the research questions. Takona (2002:16) adds that research methodology refers to the principles and procedures underlying systematic inquiry. The aim of this study is to focus on a specific function of SGBs, investigating their effectiveness regarding the maintenance of discipline. It is therefore important that, as in all formal research, the most appropriate approach is found to elicit valid and accurate information in order to answer the research questions.

Results emanating from the research have as purpose the generating of systematic knowledge, which is based on the use of scientific methods involving planned observations and various data-collection methods. These scientific methods in themselves provided the researcher with the opportunity of submitting evidence that is defensible, reliable and valid.
As the focus of this chapter is on the research design and methodology, the problem statement, research questions and planned outcomes of this study need to be discussed in more detail than in Chapter One.

3.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The majority of public schools in South Africa are situated in impoverished socio-economic areas. Most of them are experiencing severe disciplinary problems, which impact negatively on the culture of teaching and learning. This general lack of discipline can be regarded as the primary contributing factor to the low matric pass rate in most schools situated in poor socio-economic areas. Much of the time and energy of educators at most of these schools are absorbed by attending to disciplinary matters – time and energy that could have been more profitably spent on quality and effective instruction in the classroom. With the limited time available for completing the prescribed syllabi, educators should not be burdened with the enormous task of trying to restore and instill a sense of discipline in learners. Sadly, in many schools the state of discipline has deteriorated to levels that are unacceptable to educators. This lack of discipline in many schools developed into a culture of simply ‘being’, in which learning per sé is becoming less important. Unfortunately, most educators are by no means equipped or capable to handle the situation by themselves. To curb or limit poor discipline, necessitates the committed support and involvement of other roleplayers such as SGBs at school level and parents at home.

To restore a culture of learning among learners, schools as learning organizations need strong and effective SGBs to assist the educators in enforcing and maintaining discipline. For this purpose, the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) vested specific disciplinary powers in the SGBs of public schools. However, despite these structures, discipline is still backing in most of these schools, partly because the SGBs are not fully functional and are not using their powers in an effective manner.
Given the importance of the disciplinary role of SGBs, this study focuses on the disciplinary responsibilities of SGBs at public schools. The main aim of this study is to thoroughly investigate why the SGBs in public schools situated in poor socio-economic areas are not effective in restoring and maintaining a sense of discipline at the schools. Against this background, the following research questions have been formulated:

3.2.1 Primary research question

- How effective are School Governing Bodies regarding maintaining discipline in public schools situated in poor socio-economic areas?

3.2.2 Secondary research questions

From the primary research question, the following secondary research questions have been formulated:

- What are the factors that influence the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies regarding discipline at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas?

- How can the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies regarding discipline at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas be improved?

3.3 OBJECTIVES OF INVESTIGATION

The following primary and secondary objectives from the primary and secondary research questions have been developed:
3.3.1 Primary research objective

- To identify and determine how effective School Governing Bodies are in maintaining discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas.

3.3.2 Secondary research objectives

- To identify and determine the factors that have an influence on the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies regarding discipline.

- To determine what can be done to improve the effectiveness of School Governing Bodies regarding discipline at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas.

3.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

It is essential when conducting research that the plan of action be detailed and include an acceptable methodology to be followed, as the credibility of the research project depends largely on an appropriate method that will best to provide the most valid and feasible answers to the research questions. Mouton (1996:107) defines it as an act of guidelines and instructions to be followed in addressing the research problem.

The reasons for the choice of a qualitative research methodology will be discussed in the sections below.

3.4.1 Qualitative research

The nature of this research is exploratory, systematic and contextual, focusing on how certain circumstances and events have been conceptualised by various participants (Cresswell, 2000:181; Cozby, 1997:78). Burns (2000:3) furthermore states that one of the strengths of qualitative descriptions is that it can play an important role in suggesting possible relationship(s), causes, effects and even
dynamic processes in school settings. To classify a research approach as a qualitative inquiry, broadly means that the inquiry aims to understand the meaning of human action and the meaning people give to their actions in everyday lives. This can be achieved only if the researcher is directly involved or become part of the setting, interacts with the participants, and becomes the primary data-collection instrument, as suggested by Delport and Fouché (2002:359). Denzin and Lincoln (2000:8) and Bell (1993:5) before them emphasise that qualitative research takes place within a socially constructed context of actuality, through the existence of a close relationship between the researcher and the participants, in order to have a better understanding of the individuals’ perceptions of their world. Reporting on the phenomenon, from a position of being part thereof, is mostly done in an interpretive way, by means of a narrative.

The objectives of this study necessitated the researcher to give a description and an interpretation of the participating individuals’ environment and the internal context of the organisation. An advantage of using the qualitative method, as cited by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:45), is that it enables the researcher to understand people’s experience in context. The collection of the data assisted the researcher in developing a better overall understanding of the phenomenon as a whole. In this context, it was fundamental for the researcher to have a holistic overview of the SGB as a unit as well as the functions and contributions of individual parent members serving on the SGB.

May (1997:8) is of the opinion that in social sciences, theories that challenge our understanding of the social world and the systematic gathering of data are central to the practice in qualitative research. This research can therefore be seen as exploratory, systematic and contextual in nature, as it demanded a constant investigation of the daily events in the participants’ natural environment. As such, a contextual research method that requires direct contact with the respondents in their natural environments (in this study, the schools) requires that each aspect or component be systematically dealt with in turn and that all the circumstances that could influence the phenomenon under
investigation, be examined. Objectivity can result in different perspectives about a phenomenon, but can also mean that different methods can be used to gather data as well as analyse the resultant data.

Qualitative research is inherently multi-method in nature in an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question (Flick, 2002:229). The various methods used for data collection in this study are discussed in detail under Section 3.5 and its subheadings. Patton (2002:14) adds to this by noting that qualitative methods facilitate the study of issues in detail and depth without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis.

The researcher's purpose in this study is to try and understand the complexities with which the SGBs in public schools are dealing. While the SGB (the group) remains the primary focus of the study, the traits and strengths of individuals within the group will come under scrutiny to see how an individual's contributions (or lack thereof) can affect the effectiveness of a specific SGB.

In order to conduct a thorough investigation into the disciplinary functions of SGBs in public schools, the researcher had to attend a series of meetings and disciplinary hearings. Personal interaction and establishing positive relationships of trust between the researcher and governing body members were crucial for the collection of information rich data for this investigation. The researcher also arranged for opportunities to conduct focus group interviews with parent members of the SGBs, with the purpose of eliciting information-rich data relevant to the research questions. In this study, it was essential for the researcher to have a clear understanding on how SGBs view their roles as disciplinary bodies.

One of the advantages of using the qualitative research approach in this study was that it created the opportunity for the researcher to listen and look more closely at people's words and actions in their narratives or descriptions, as stated by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:2). O'Sullivan and Rassel (1999:36) note that the qualitative research method produces data that is usually not
quantifiable into numbers or percentages. Since the aim of this study was to inquire about one of the functionalities (maintaining discipline) of SGBs, it was imperative that the researcher received answers from the participants’ point of view about the nature and relationship of the function of the SGB. To realise this, the researcher needed to gather evidence to affirm different perceptions from different participants in order to make the study more reliable and the results more trustworthy. To achieve this the researcher made use of a variety of data-collection strategies from different sources. The data collection strategies and sources utilized, will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

3.4.2 Trustworthiness

All social science research must respond to canons, posed as questions against which the trustworthiness of a project can be evaluated (Marshall and Rossman in De Vos, 2002:351). These questions include: How credible are the particular findings of the study? How can we be reasonably sure that the findings would be replicated if the study were again conducted with the same participants in the same context? How can we be sure that the findings are reflective of the subjects and the inquiry itself, rather than a creation of the researcher’s biases or prejudices? Lincoln and Guba in De Vos (2002:351) emphasises that establishing the truth-value of the study is the main purpose of these questions. In order to more accurately reflect on the assumptions of the trustworthiness of the study, Lincoln and Guba in De Vos (2002:351) proposes the following four alternative constructs:

- Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is seen as an indication of methodological reliability and soundness in qualitative research (Babbie and Mouton, 2001:276; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:281). This is comparable with aspects of quantitative research (Creswell, 1998:193). Showing the trustworthiness or “believability” of a research study, further illustrates the researchers’ ability to persuade the
reader that the research findings are reliable, important and worth considering (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004:366). The researcher must clearly demonstrate that sufficient data has been collected for the needs of the study, which are largely determined by the research questions. The concept ‘sufficiency’ refers to the amount of data collected for a study and the quality of evidence provided to support the researcher’s interpretations (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004:366). Any claims and interpretations made by the researcher in relation to the data and research questions must be substantiated with enough appropriate evidence.

To collect the data questionnaires, focus group interviews and observations were used in this study. In addition, relevant documents were scrutinized as secondary sources of data. In support of the interpretation of findings, the literature study was used as part of a triangulation process.

Trustworthiness also requires from a researcher to be coherent in the study. This implies that the logic of the research questions, theoretical framework, data collection and analysis designs must be explicit, justified and appropriate. Lankshear and Knobel (2004:366) believe that one way to guarantee coherence in the methodology and design of a study is to provide a detailed account of the research decisions and the reasons for making such decisions. Justification of the methodology and design strengthens the credibility of a study. In this study, this was achieved by structuring the theoretical framework according to tested and acknowledged criteria as described by various authors on works dealing with research methodologies.

• Credibility

The term credibility is used as an equivalent to internal validity or “truth value” (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:157). The goal is to demonstrate that the inquiry was conducted in a manner that accurately identified and depicted reality in the findings. Ritchie and Lewis (2003:273) suggest that the term credibility translates more appropriately for a naturalistic inquiry than the term internal validity. To support credibility, prolonged engagement, continued
observation and triangulation help make findings and interpretations more credible.

Building a close relationship of trust, establishing a free flow of communication with learners, educators and parent SGB members in the natural settings at school assisted the researcher in data collection. As another way to test credibility, recorded data were shown to respondents, to either confirm or refute the recorded facts. By means of this verification of the recorded data, the credibility of the study was strengthened.

- Transferability

*Transferability* in qualitative research demonstrates the applicability of the findings to another similar context. Ritchie and Lewis (2003:277) state that transferability, also referred to as *applicability* or *generalisation*, can be drawn from qualitative data in relation to another setting where similar conditions to those studied may exist. Struwig and Stead (2001:145) agree that data may be generalised within a group (internal validity) or across different groups (external validity). In order to attain transferability, this study was carried out following a purposive and availability sampling strategy in the selection of settings and participants.

The researcher must adhere to some key principles in order to generalise from qualitative data. Firstly, the collected data must offer the qualitative researcher a rich source of evidence that can be called upon and secondly the researcher must identify and display range and diversity to understand different behaviours, perspectives and needs in the samples. Only with all of this in place the possibility of generalization may come into play.

- Dependability

*Dependability* is also referred to as *reliability* (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:385). This implies that a study's findings should be consistent and
accurate. This is a strategy to determine whether the replication of the study in a similar, but different context would generate the same findings.

A thorough research method backed by sophisticated data-collection methods was undertaken to make the study more dependable as suggested by De Vos (2002:352). In addition, for the purpose of this study, dependability was ensured within the appropriate recording and cataloguing of all the raw data. This was made available for cross-checking.

- Confirmability

Objectivity is the concept that is captured by confirmability. An objective researcher must always remain distant and is neither influential nor influenced. Qualitative research by its nature cannot be completely objective, as the findings are dependent on interpretation and therefore subjective in nature. Confirmability can also be referred to as neutrality (Struwig and Stead, 2001:124). Confirmability entails a complex process in which the data confirms the findings, thus affirming the neutrality of the researcher, as suggested by De Vos (1998:350).

In this study, the researcher has made every effort to remain neutral and objective throughout the study by revisiting the collected data and reflecting on interpretations comparing and affirming it by means of triangulation. De Vos (2002:352) points out that the collected data should substantiate the general findings that guide the researcher to the interpretations. This simply implies that research findings must be free from bias and that the research data must support the research findings, recommendations and interpretations. This requires from the researcher to always remain objective and base his/her findings on existing data only.
3.4.3 Triangulation

Hitchcock and Hughes (1995:180) refer to triangulation as the use of more than one method of data collection within the framework of a single study. Wiersma (2000:251) shares the view that triangulation entails a comparison of information to determine whether or not there is corroboration. In other words, triangulation can be seen as the use of different research aspects to test the same finding. The use of two or more methods of data collection in some aspects of human behaviour also improves the internal validity of a study (Burns, 2000:419).

In this study, the researcher made use of multiple sources to collect data by involving a variety of stakeholders such as learners, educators and parent SGB members. Data collection techniques such as interviews, observations, questionnaires and the scrutiny of relevant documents formed another component of the triangulation process. This was an attempt by the researcher to search for convergence of information on a common finding. It not only served as an assessment of the sufficiency of the data, but also to verify the findings. These actions concurred with Burns’ (2000:491) statement that triangulation contributes to the verification and validation of qualitative analysis by:

- checking out the consistency of findings generated by different data-collection methods; and
- checking out the consistency of different data sources within the same method.

Suter (1998:285) pointed out that when multiple data-collection methods are used to answer a research question, resulting in answers agreeing or converging, despite the variation in methods used to gather information, the answer is judged to be more believable (trustworthy). Bogdan and Bicklen (2003:107) later also agree that multiple data-collection sources are better than
a single source, because multiple sources lead to a fuller understanding of the phenomena being studied. In this study, the research findings were furthermore, where applicable and possible, supported by reference to the literature studied and/or observations made.

3.5 METHODOLOGY

3.5.1 Literature review

Hofstee (2006:91) pronounces that a good literature review is comprehensive, critical and contextualised. Broadly, this means that the literature will provide the reader with a theoretical foundation, a review of work published that is valid to the investigation, and an analysis of that work. Most sources must therefore be regarded as secondary, because they are critical overviews based on the fact of what has gone before. Some sources, however, are original and authentic and would thus be considered as primary sources.

Through a literature review, the researcher has the opportunity to develop a thorough understanding of the current state of knowledge, local as well as international, on certain aspects of the phenomena under scrutiny. Takona (2002:484) and Wiersma (2000:527) emphasise that if the researcher fails to build a solid foundation on what others have done in the field under investigation, he/she will fail to understand what still needs to be accomplished. Therefore a literature review will increase the researcher’s understanding of related aspects and offers a point of reference for discussing and comparing events. Merriam (1998:51) is of the view that previous studies support current studies and point out concerns that may need closer scrutiny by the researcher.

Wiersma (2000:52) suggests that in a literature review, the researcher must attempt to determine what others have learned about similar problems, and read widely on the relevant problem. This process that can be divided into three phases:
• Initial phase: starts with information gathering from relevant sources.

In Phase One, the information is gathered from a wide variety of sources, such as books, newspapers, the internet and journals. Mouton (2001:90) states that a good literature reviewer starts with the most recent sources and then work backwards. Retrospective reading has the advantage that it gives the researcher the opportunity to restructure debates and determine how later studies build on earlier studies.

• Phase Two has as its main aim the retention of the assembled content summarised in a suitable manner.

A good literature review should be well structured to accommodate all the relevant information captured. There are different methods to capture the content with a chronological presentation being the most basic and least structured way of presenting the results. In this study, the researcher started with a brief discussion on the historical background to discipline, corporal punishment and school governing bodies. This was done in order to give the reader a comprehensive overview of the context of the research problem.

• The final phase consists of evaluating and making a critical analysis of the content.

Mouton (2001:90) agrees with Wiersma (2000:52) and states that when a researcher establishes that a source is relevant to his/her study, systematic reading should continue to gain in-depth knowledge on the topic. This will aid the researcher to identify the author’s logic and line of reasoning. However, when the reasoning is dense, convoluted and complex and requires serious deciphering, the researcher will find it useful to visualise the main argument put forward by the author. Critically analysing and restructuring an argument will help to make it more meaningful.
3.5.2 Sample

Sampling is the process that a researcher uses to choose people, places or things to study. A sample is usually a small sub-set of a bigger reality to the study to be conducted. Johnson and Christensen (2004:197) concede that sampling is the process of drawing a sample (subset) from a population (larger group). A sample is a fraction of a whole selected by the researcher to participate in the research project (Brink, 2001:133). De Vos (2002:198) states that a sample is considered to be representative of the specific whole; in this case, the school population. Selecting who to include in the sample, happens with a definite goal in mind, namely of gaining a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. It makes sense to select the most information-rich sample possible, as advised by Maykut and Morehouse (1994:56), as such individuals will contribute to the quality and depth of the research. Researchers make use of the characteristics of the sample to be able to make statements about a population or generalize, based on data gained from the sample. For this study, the sampling method was purposeful, based on aspects of convenience and availability.

Sampling size and procedure

The four secondary schools that participated in this research project, were selected with a specific motive in mind. The research problem under investigation required from the researcher to identify certain characteristics in the population from which the sample have been drawn. The sample schools were selected purposefully in order to obtain participants that were information-rich by being most knowledgeable and informative about the phenomena under investigation (McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:387). For the purpose of this study, four secondary schools were selected from schools situated in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth. Three of the four schools are situated in poor socio-economic areas, and the remaining one in an area where the socio-economic circumstances were of a higher standard. The reasoning behind choosing schools with different socio-economic backgrounds, was to compare
settings, in order to determine if there is any correlation in the role that socio-economic conditions play in the behavior and discipline of learners from schools in different areas.

The participants that were selected, consisted of parent SGB members, learners and educators from the purposefully selected sample schools. Different stakeholders at each of the schools were included in the investigation.

For the purpose of this study, all parent members on the SGBs of the four governing bodies at the sample schools were invited to voluntarily participate in the study. Johnson and Christensen (2004:215) point out that when individuals in a sample volunteer, are available or can be easily recruited, the procedure is described as convenience sampling. The researcher requested that all parents serving on the SGBs participate, because they were the main focus of and central to the issue being studied. Struwig and Stead (2001:123) state that such a sampling technique is described as critical case sampling, because the participants can provide most of the information that will be useful in the research topic.

A purposeful random sampling method has been selected for the selection of learners to form part of the study. This form of sampling involves the random selection of a small sample, with the emphasis on information-rich samples. The participants in the research study included learners from Grades eight to twelve, who had the permission of their parents to participate. The names of learners in grades eight to twelve at each school were separately put into a hat and four learners from each grade were drawn randomly, producing a total eighty learners used as a sample.

Participants from the educators were selected according to the purposeful random sampling method. Volunteers from the four sampling schools also had their names drawn from a hat for participation in the study. From each of the four sampling schools, the names of fifteen educators were drawn to form part of the study, totaling sixty educators. This strategy provided an equal
opportunity for the selection of individuals who volunteered. This method is appropriate for populations that are heterogeneous with regard to their gender, language and age and generated such variety.

3.5.3 Research procedures

Before engaging in any field work, permission was obtained from the Department of Education and the management at the selected schools. The management of the selected schools was informed that all information was to be treated as highly confidential and that no identification whatsoever would be revealed. During the first visit to the schools, the researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the research and requested that all selected participants as well as volunteers form part of the research process. The researcher explained what role the learners would play in the process. The parents of the selected learners who had volunteered to take part, were informed of their selection and required to sign a letter of consent.

Once the participating educators had been selected, a suitable time was arranged at each school for the completion of the questionnaires and the questionnaires were handed out. The researcher sat in while the participating educators completed the questionnaires.

The same procedure was followed with the participating learners. The researcher sat in during the completion of the questionnaires and the learners returned it to the researcher on completion. With both groups, the researcher’s presence was needed to clarify any misconceptions regarding the questions among participants and to make sure that all questionnaires were returned.

A meeting was scheduled with the SGBs at a time convenient to all members, who had different employment and other personal commitments. When the researcher had the opportunity, he explained to the SGB members what the purpose of the research was and what procedures were to be followed. To all who were willing to participate the researcher guaranteed confidentiality in
every phase of the entire process. Participant parent SGB members were also given questionnaires to complete. The researcher also sat in while the SGB members completed the questionnaire. Thereafter, meetings were scheduled to conduct group discussions with the SGB members as a unit. The researcher also attended scheduled meetings and disciplinary hearings of learners at the SGB meetings of participating schools for observational purposes. The researcher requested from the SGBs at the sample schools to make available the codes of conduct, minutes of previous meetings and previous disciplinary hearings for scrutinising purposes.

To ensure that all information gathered, was well organized, the researcher kept a separate file on each school. To ensure anonymity, the schools were identified by alphabetical letters only.

3.5.4 Data-collection instruments

Qualitative research methods involve the capturing of people’s opinions, feelings and practice, their experience and the kind of atmosphere and context in which they act and respond (Wisker, 2001:164). This by implication means that the researcher has to use physical techniques for obtaining the data from the different participants and sources.

Qualitative data is used by researchers to obtain details of the subjective experiences of participants (Clarke, 1999:66). This can also be described as primary data, because the researcher makes use of different research instruments to acquire information directly. In this study, the researcher’s decision to use multi-methods of data collection was an attempt to describe the natural qualities of the setting being observed and the activities taking place within them as thoroughly as possible. Mixing methods to collect data is in Johnson and Christensen’s (2004:162) view an excellent way to conduct high-quality research. A discussion on the data collection strategies employed in this study is presented below.
• Questionnaires

The most important part of the actual design of questionnaires is to construct them unambiguously and clear so that respondents will have no problem to interpret what is being asked (Williams, 1997:92). Clarke (1999:68) argues that a questionnaire can be used to collect information from individuals participating in randomised control trials. It provides a wealth of descriptive data pertaining to individuals or groups. Open-ended questions can sometimes be difficult to interpret/analysed, but can also be used to put the respondents at ease, because they can express themselves in their own words (Hofstee, 2006:133). Respondents also have the opportunity to elaborate on their answers where the need arises. Clarke (1999:70) agrees that open-ended questions allow the respondents to answer in their own words, rather than being restricted to choosing from a list of pre-coded categories. Clarke (1999:70) recommends that in order to eliminate questions that may be misinterpreted, the researcher may find it useful to conduct a trial run on a small group of participants.

Questionnaires must be designed in such a way that the researcher can optimately learn about the characteristics, attitudes or beliefs of participants. Self reporting, where a characteristic or belief could be recorded accurately, was used. Because reporting on findings rely totally on the honesty and accuracy of the participants’ responses (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:125), it is important that a positive relationship of trust should be established beforehand.

Johnson and Christensen (2004:164) agree that the use of questionnaires assist in obtaining a large body of data in a relatively short timespan. It is an effective way of collecting most types of information quickly and relatively cheaply, as long as no questions superfluous to the main theme are included (Bell, 1999:118). Denzin (2002:188) adds that questionnaires allow a survey with no or little personal interaction, with the aim of establishing a broad picture of the respondents’ personal experiences and perceptions.
For the SGB members who are parents, questionnaires containing two sections, namely Section A and Section B, were designed. Section A consisted of biographical data, such as age, gender, academic qualifications, home language, years of experience on the SGB and training programmes attended. These questions enabled the researcher to construct a profile of each individual member of the SGBs, indicating the member’s educational background, experience as an SGB member and skills training acquired that could contribute to his or her effectiveness as an SGB member. Section B consisted of questions relevant to the research problem. The purpose of this open ended section of the questionnaire is to indicate to the researcher how members of the SGB perceive their role and purpose as member of the school’s SGB. A separate/different questionnaire consisting of open-ended questions has been drafted for educators and learners, with the purpose of establishing how they view the SGB’s current performance regarding the maintenance of discipline at the selected schools. The entire process was personally administered by the researcher.

Opportunity was given to respondents to ask for clarification on questions they had difficulty in understanding. After completion, questionnaires were immediately collected by the researcher.

Subsequent to data-collection, were the recording and decoding of information retrieved from the questionnaires. After all the data was collected through all the different means, it was analysed in order to identify main themes or trends.

• Observations

Clarke (1999:79) notes that the main characteristic of observations is that the observer becomes the main instrument of the data collection. Clough and Nutbrown (2002:46) and Gay (1992:234) agree that through observation, the observer looks critically and purposefully for evidence and information to find possible answers to the research questions. Observing furthermore includes intense social interaction between the observer and the participants in their
natural setting, during which the observer inconspicuously and systematically collects notes (Wilkinson and Birmingham, 2003:116). For this research the researcher acted as observer as well during specific observation sessions.

Wisker (2001:178) points out that observation can be a rich source for data collection, because it enables the researcher to capture what people actually do rather than what they say. In this study, participants were observed in the context related to the research questions.

Strydom (De Vos, 2002:279) is of the opinion that the real world of the participants in a research study can be reconstructed only if impressions on aspects under scrutiny in specific situations are accurately captured and revealed. The emphasis is on the dispassionate role that the researcher has to adopt. It involves merely watching what is happening and recording events on the spot (Burns, 2000:413). In this study, the behaviour of learners from the respective participant schools were observed in their natural school environment (outside of the classrooms eg. during breaks), with the purpose of making notes on their behavioral patterns. Notes were also made on the environment, condition of buildings and grounds. As observer, the researcher had to proceed, as unobtrusively as possible in order not to have any influence on the learners that would alter their behaviour, especially at the schools other than his own (Wisker, 2001:180).

Observations regarding the socio-economic environment each school was part of as well as of the physical condition of the school buildings and the school grounds in general were captured by means of field notes. This formed part of a structured observation checklist to structure and guide what had to be recorded specifically.

Secondly, the researcher used the technique of participant observation, which implied that the researcher had to enter the social world of the participants as suggested by Clarke (1999:79). Maykut and Morehouse (1994:69) suggest that the observer must attempt to enter the lives of those observed, to inhabit their
way of viewing their world, suggesting that all preconceived ideas about participants must be disregarded. This by implication suggests actually becoming a participant in the situation to be observed and so registered the experiences and behaviors at first hand, from an inside perspective. The researcher had to obtain permission from the different SGBs to attend formal meetings as well as disciplinary hearings of learners. In this study, the reason for attending these meetings was to make observation notes on how the SGBs were carrying out their duties as governing and disciplinary bodies of their respective schools. This study will be a basic reflection of the functionality of the SGBs as the governance of the school and, more importantly, how they conducted themselves as the disciplinarian bodies of the schools.

- **Focus group interviews**

Kitzinger *in Oates (2000:186)* defines focus groups as ‘group discussions organized to explore a specific set of issues such as people’s views and experiences’. Dexter *in Clarke (1999:72)* describes interviews as a ‘conversation with a purpose’. In this study, the researcher got the opportunity to get more insight into the experiences of individual participants and to analyse the interaction between participants by being part of focus group interviews (Catterall and Maclaran *in Oates, 2000:187*). Morgan *in Oates (2000:187)* states that focus groups are useful when it comes to investigating what participants think, but excel at uncovering why participants think as they do. During such interaction, participants think and reason aloud and their changing attitudes within the group and the group dynamics as a whole can thus be observed and documented.

Focus group interviews are a method used to gather rich, descriptive data in a small group format from participants who have agreed to focus on a topic of mutual interest. For the purpose of this study, learners, educators and parents serving on the SGBs of the sampling schools got the opportunity to express their views and concerns. Anderson *in Wilkinson and Birmingham (2003:90)* vie that a focus group is a carefully planned and moderated informal discussion
where one person’s ideas bounce off another’s, creating a chain reaction of informative dialogue. The purpose of such dialogue is to address a specific topic in depth, to elicit a wide range of opinions, attitudes, feelings or perceptions from individuals who share common experiences relative to the dimension under study. Madriz (2000:835) adds to this that participants have the opportunity to share ideas, beliefs and attitudes in the company of people from the same socio-economic environment, ethnicity and/or background, making the experience more gratifying and stimulating than individual interviews.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher as the facilitator of the discussion made use of open-ended questioning. Steward and Shamdasani in Oates (2000:190) suggest that the ideal number for a group is between eight and twelve members. Two groups of learners of between five and ten learners from each sample school were questioned on their perceptions and experiences on the state of discipline at their particular school and what role the SGB played in maintaining discipline at their school. Educators of the sampling schools were also divided into groups of five to ten members and had the opportunity to express themselves on their experiences and perceptions regarding the state of discipline at their schools and the role the SGB were playing with regard to discipline.

All parent SGB members who agreed to take part in the study, were divided into groups of approximately eight members each. Questions posed to them focused on their training, their perception of their role as members of the SGB of the school, and their experiences, particularly regarding discipline at their school. The researcher constructed an open-ended questionnaire, and the purpose of such questioning was to stimulate and aid respondents’ perceptions, understandings, feelings and interpretations around the research topic and to augment the participation of all participants. During the interactions, the researcher used a tape recorder to capture all responses. The recordings were subsequently transcribed for easy access during the analysis phase.
• **Scrutiny of relevant documents**

Documents can be defined as mute evidence that have to be interpreted without the benefit of indigenous commentary (Hodder, 2000:703). As secondary data, relevant documents have been used to further supplement the other data collected. Scrutinising of relevant documents denotes the analysis of any written material that contains information about the phenomenon being researched (Strydom and Delport in De Vos, 2002:321). The researcher requested the SGBs of the sample schools to make available specific documentation that could contribute to a better understanding of how they operate. Official documents that were compiled and maintained on a continuous basis by the school, such as the Constitution of the School Governing Body, the Code of Conduct for learners, the minutes of previous School Governing Body meetings and the minutes of disciplinary hearings of learners, were scrutinised. The researcher used the documentation from the different SGBs as evidence to evaluate against theory on the functioning of SGBs in general. These documents were valuable sources of information that mirrored the work and effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of the specific SGBs.

**Problems encountered in data collection**

One of the main problems encountered, was the difficulty in getting the completed questionnaires back from educators at sample schools. The initial intention was to visit schools and sit in while educators completed the forms. This was not possible, because some educators could not attend the sessions to complete the questions immediately and so took the questionnaires, promising to return them promptly, but failed to do so.

Secondly, the interviews sessions with parents serving on the SGBs of the sample schools were not well attended. Various meetings were scheduled at times that they pronounced convenient, yet many did not turn up. When interview sessions eventually took place, groups were small. In one case, only the Chairperson of the relevant SGB was interviewed.
3.5.5 Data analysis

Analysis involves breaking up the data into manageable themes, patterns, trends and relationships (Mouton, 2001:108; McMillan and Schumacher, 1993:486). This allows the researcher to organize the data into smaller sections, so that any obvious repetitions or errors may be easily noticed.

The action of data analysis can be described as a process of bringing order, structure and interpretation to a massive amount of data in search of general statements about relationships and underlying themes that builds grounded theory (Marshall and Rossman, 2006:154). Analysing the data for this study posed a challenge to the researcher to make sense of, or give meaning to this massive body of data. This was achieved by reducing its volume by identifying what was important and by constructing a structure through which the real meaning of what the data revealed, was communicated, in accordance with a suggestion by Patton (Best and Khan, 2003:258). Burns (2000:431) recommends that data analysis can be done by systematically arranging and presenting the data.

De Vos (2002:344) states that the classification of the data collected entails unpacking the data with the intension of finding categories or themes of information. Marshall and Rossman (2006:156) regard this categorizing process as the most fundamental operation in the analysis of qualitative data, because it requires from the researcher to discover significant classes of things, persons and events and the properties that differentiate them. These manageable themes are than written into different narratives.

For the purpose of this study, the typical methodical procedures as prescribed by Marshall and Rossman (2006:156) have been applied. This procedure was divided into eight phases, as described below.

Phase one started with the organising of the data. The researcher listed note cards to the data that have been gathered and performed the editing necessary.
The researcher then recorded the data according to the dates, names, times and places where, when, and from whom it was gathered.

In Phase two, the researcher immersed himself in the data through reading and rereading it in order to become intimately familiar with it. People, events and quotations were at this stage the focus of the researcher's attention. The researcher then highlighted how much of the qualitative reporting consisted of descriptive data. This data was recorded onto a predeveloped data-recording chart. Careful attention was applied in the reduction of data to make sure that no important data was discarded or not captured.

Phase three was the most complex, because it relied on the researcher's editing and immersion strategies. Generating categories and themes involved noting patterns evident in the setting and expressed by participants, to identify the prominent grounded categories of the meaning held by participants in the situation.

Phase four consisted of the coding of the data. This was the formal representation of analytic thinking through intellectual analysis to generate categories and themes. The researcher used different codes, for example the abbreviations of key words, colored dots, numbers and even color highlighting, for the different data categories.

Phase five was the process where the researcher wrote notes, reflective memos, thoughts and insights for the generating of insights that moved the analysis from the ordinary and obvious to the creative. Writing throughout the analytical process, also described as the transformational process, was of great value, because it encouraged the researcher to repeatedly reflect back to the beginning.

Phase six focused on the offering of interpretations to the developed themes and categories. The researcher gave integrative interpretations of what he has learned, by bringing meaning and coherence to the themes, patterns and
categories, developing linkages and a story line that made sense and brought meaning. The evaluation of the data for its usefulness and centrality was also part of this phase.

Phase seven required from the researcher to engage critically, challenging the very patterns that seemed apparent. The researcher directed his focus on the search for other plausible explanations that always existed, but had to demonstrate why his explanation was the most plausible.

Phase eight concluded the process by writing the report which cannot be separated from the analytical process. The researcher wrote his report choosing words to summarize and reflect the complexity of the data, engage in the act of interpreting and give meaning to the data.

Keeping these steps in mind the researcher transcribed the audiotapes of the interviews and confirmed with the respondents where clarity was needed. The researcher described interpretations based on data in such manner that can fully identify with the conclusions and interpretations.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

To manage the data, the researcher had to take into consideration certain ethical considerations and procedures that needed to be applied when conducting research. Such ethical considerations are required by the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU). Permission to conduct the research, was obtained beforehand from the NMMU Research Ethics Committee (Human).

May in Flew (1997:54) defines the concept ‘ethics’ as a set of standards by which a particular group or community decides to regulate its behaviour and to distinguish what is legitimate or acceptable in pursuit of its aims. Basic ethical principles are therefore based on what is right or just, in the interests of not only the project, but also those participating in the research. To conduct research in
an ethical manner means carrying out research competently, managing resources honestly, acknowledging those who contributed guidance or assistance, communicating the results accurately, and considering the consequences of the research for society (Brink, 2001:37). Ethical considerations also include that researchers involved in research should have special concerns related to the protection of the rights of humans who participate in the study. The right to treat information of human respondents as private and confidential must take priority.

Wiersma (2000:418) emphasises the need to obtain permission from the approving body (Department of Education in the case of this study) if the research is conducted in an educational setting such as a school district. Before embarking on this study, the researcher first obtained permission from the Department of Education. This was followed by getting permission from the authorities at the selected schools.

All participants were informed what the purpose of the research was, and that participation would be on a voluntary basis. Parents of the learners who were drawn to participate in the study also had to give permission through a signed letter of consent.

Recorded data were reported on in composite and therefore guaranteed anonymity. To develop mutual trust with the purpose of developing a positive researcher-participant relationship, participants were informed that all collected data was for research purposes only and would be treated with the utmost confidentiality. In the interest of the research project, the researcher interacted in a professional manner with participants to ensure maximum participation.

3.7 SUMMARY

In this chapter, the researcher endeavored to delineate the design and methodology used for this qualitative research. This chapter focused on the reasons for adopting a qualitative approach and outlined the methods of
sampling and data collection adopted in this study. The chapter concluded by discussing the vital aspect of ethical considerations.

Chapter Four will focus on the analysis and interpretation of the data collected for this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSIS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the research findings and a detailed analysis of the data collected through questionnaires, focus group interviews, observations and relevant documents. The collected data will provide insight into the experiences and perceptions concerning discipline of learners, educators and parent members of school governing bodies. All participants from whom data were collected, came from or were connected to selected public schools in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth.

Although this research methodology was based on qualitative principles, the researcher will in some instances make use of numbers or percentages in order to illustrate more comprehensively.

From the collected data, specific central themes emerged during analysis. Within each theme, categories and sub-categories crystallised. These are discussed under each separate theme.

4.2 THEME ONE A: STATE OF DISCIPLINE

4.2.1 School A

4.2.1.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

- Learners: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school? Explain your answer.

The overwhelming majority of respondents at School A felt that the discipline of learners was in disarray and that drastic action was needed. Some respondents mentioned the strong influence that gangsterism and the selling and use of soft
drugs such as marijuana (dagga) had on the violent and disrespectful behaviour of many learners. One of the learners wrote, “I think teachers can’t keep the children in order”, accentuating the seemingly powerless state of educators to maintain discipline.

- **Educators: What kind of disciplinary problems do you experience at your school? (List)**

All respondents cited transgressions ranging from minor transgressions such as not doing homework to major transgressions like the verbal abuse of educators and the abuse of prohibited substances (drugs and alcohol) on the school premises. One aspect that surfaced prominently, was the lack of respect among many learners towards educators and figures of authority in general. “Learners don’t care how they talk to us” and “they are plain rude” are but some of the expressions educators voiced.

- **Parent SGB members: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school?**

The responses varied from “moderate” to “needs urgent attention”. The latter response came from a member who was involved in the teaching profession; the individuals who did not find much wrong in the state of discipline at their school had very little contact with, or insight in, its daily running. What was also evident, was that especially female educators felt vulnerable and at risk because of the verbal abuse and threats from some learners. “They don’t care how they speak to their teachers”, one commented. Most felt powerless to act. The majority of respondents agreed that the state of learner discipline at School A was not conducive to learning and that the matter should be addressed urgently. “Educators have no more power to discipline rude learners” making it difficult to maintain discipline. It can be concluded that educators perceived that they had largely lost the battle on learner discipline. The restoration of order and discipline was seen as a daunting task.
4.2.1.2 Data gathered from Interviews

• Learners

From the interviews with learners of School A, it was evident that they were unanimous in their opinion that school discipline needed urgent attention. One learner replied, “hier is geen dissipline op die skool nie” (“there is no discipline at this school”), confirming the appalling state of discipline at his school. Learners also referred to the rebellious attitude of learners towards prefects and educators. One learner stated, “… as die prefekte hulle iets sê, dan luister hulle nie” (“… if the prefects tell them something, they do not listen”).

Some learners seemed to have lost faith in their educators’ ability to maintain discipline, as was clear from responses like “Die onderwysers doen niks nie, meneer” (“The educators don’t do anything, Sir”). Some learners expressed the viewpoint that while educators tried their best, learners simply refused to listen to their educators or abide by school rules. One more mature learner made the remark, “Miskien is dit in hulle huise wat hulle probleme het, en nou loop dit hiernatoe” (“Maybe it’s because of problems at home, and now it affects their behavior at school”), referring to problems within the home environment.

• Educators

All participating educators from School A expressed great concern about the state of discipline at this school. Learners’ conduct seems to be underpinned by a general lack of respect to self and others. “Learners seem have no more respect for us or the school and it is definitely affecting our work as educators.”

One major concern of the educators was the negative impact that the prevailing poor discipline had on the progress of the learners, as this was definitely influencing their examination results. At this school, the 2007 matriculation results were the worst in the history of the school, and the educators felt that the deteriorating discipline had played a major role in the appalling results.
Another concern of educators was the absence of support from the Department of Education to schools in the maintaining of discipline. Educators perceived the unilateral decision of the Department of Education to abolish corporal punishment and its failure to provide an effective alternative as one of the reasons for the terrible state of discipline in schools. One educator stated, “Learners know that we can do nothing”. Educators felt that the abolition of corporal punishment had encouraged learners to do as they please; a situation of great concern to educators.

- Parent SGB members

Most parent SGB members from School A who were interviewed, could not comment much on the state of discipline in the school, apart from what they had heard from their children and other learners or educators. One of the parents expressed his shock regarding the usage of drugs by many learners, “… rook dagga op die skoolterrein (“… smoking marijuana on the school premises”).

Many parent SGB members acknowledged that they were not really directly involved in the day-to-day activities of the school, but stated that they were fully aware of the disciplinary problems at the school. Remarks such as the following were indicative of their shock at, and condemnation of, the poor state of discipline at the school:

“Dissipline is ‘n probleem, die gedrag, hier is ‘n kultuur op ons skool om ongedissiplineerd te wees” (“Discipline is a problem, the behavior, there is a culture of being undisciplined in our school”).

“Kinders is net bloot onbeskof en gee nie om hoe praat hulle nie” (“Learners are openly rude and do not care how they speak”).
It was mentioned that although the misbehaving learners were in the minority, they disrupted teaching and learning through their controlling, aggressive, vindictive and destructive behaviour and attitude.

4.2.1.3 Data gathered through Observation

- General

The researcher observed that quite a number of learners were loitering about the school premises or creating noise during teaching periods because some educators were not in their classrooms. The reasons for educators’ absence varied from sickness to a host of other reasons. The educators who were in their classrooms, simply carried on with their teaching duties, seemingly oblivious to the situation.

At School A, the researcher observed a number of learners hiding behind the school buildings, possibly ‘bunking’ class. Approximately twenty learners were loitering outside the front school gate, not bothering to enter the premises. The researcher concluded that these learners were late and were reluctant to face reprimands if they should enter. What was very disturbing to the researcher, was that the above situation was seemingly commonplace, as no figure of authority showed any interest in getting the learners back into the classrooms.

During intervals, learners could leave the school premises freely and go home (“jump”), as no prefects or educators were doing duty at the gates or on the school grounds. During intervals, learners also moved towards the sport fields, where they smoked openly.

The researcher observed that some learners brought clothing, other than their school uniform, to school. After the intervals, a lot of learners reappeared donned in casual clothes, openly breaching the dress code of the school. Prefects who were supposed to be doing duty on the playgrounds were seemingly oblivious to this wardrobe changes during intervals. It seemed to the
researcher that neither the educators nor the school authorities wanted to take the initiative to deal with any of the problems discussed above.

- **Physical condition of the school**

School A was surrounded with palisade fencing. On the inside, fencing was used to keep learners in demarcated areas on the school grounds. All entry and exit points had lockable gates.

The outside façade of the school building was still in a fairly good condition, being built of durable face-brick. However, the plastered walls inside exhibited quite a range of graffiti. The interior classroom walls were also covered in graffiti, and it seemed as if educators no longer bothered to clean it or display educational charts and media to establish an inviting and print-rich learning environment. The principal of School A did, however, mention that the school was in the process of repainting the interiors of all the classrooms. Classroom doors were also covered in graffiti and lacked locks or handles, with many displaying gaping holes caused by kicking and vandalism.

Most school furniture, such as desks and tables, were covered in graffiti or showed damage from sharp objects. Most of the blackboards were also vandalised, to the extent that they had become almost unusable.

All the windows of the school building were well protected with stone guards, and only a few windows needed to be replaced. Another positive aspect was that the school grounds and sports fields were in a very good condition. The researcher learnt that the SGB of the school employed someone on a full-time basis to look after the sports fields and school grounds.

- **Socio-economic environment**

School A served a community beset with a variety of socio-economic problems. The researcher's first observation was the high level of unemployment. A large
number of young to middle-aged adults were roaming the streets, seemingly without purpose, every day.

The researcher furthermore perceived a high incidence of substance abuse. Alcohol and drugs could be bought freely on the streets, while illegal alcohol and drug outlets were common in the area. The researcher observed not only adults, but also young children buying and using. Highly intoxicated individuals were lying around comatose early in the day, while others displayed aggressive and abusive behaviour, obviously under the influence of either drugs or alcohol.

Overcrowding seemed to be a major problem. Many erven had numerous shacks, without added provision for decent sanitation. In these yards or small dwellings, space to play was either extremely limited or non-existent. The children therefore took to the streets to play, where they were at risk to traffic as well as unfavorable attention.

4.2.1.4 Interpretation

From the responses from the participating learners, it became clear that the majority experienced school discipline to be problematic. Even those who admitted to being culprits themselves, expressed the opinion that the state of discipline at their school needed urgent intervention.

Responses from educators indicated feelings of despondency and despair. Many obviously found the challenge to restore discipline daunting. Female educators felt particularly threatened and helpless because of constant victimisation from unruly teenage boys.

It was interesting to note that some of the parent SGB members did not seem to grasp the extent of the problem. This could be attributed to their lack of involvement in the day-to-day activities of the school or to a lack of involvement and sincere interest in their children's school careers.
From observation, it became clear that the socio-economic environment was also contributing negatively to the disciplinary problems experienced at School A. The environment was beset with social problems like drug and alcohol abuse, to which learners were exposed on a daily basis. In spite of their constant exposure to drugs and alcohol, most learners received little or no guidance from their parents or guardians on dealing with temptation and/or peer pressure. Poor choices and inappropriate behaviour among learners could in most cases be attributed to poor or limited guidance in developing important life skills from adults at home.

The physical condition of the school in itself did not provide learners with much reason to misbehave. In fact, the physical condition of the school should actually serve as encouragement for proper behaviour, because much had been done by the school management to make the school grounds safe and pleasant. For example, fencing had been erected and the graffiti was being eliminated by repainting the walls. With this in mind, it can be deduced that the problem of poor discipline might be vested in the very people (parents and educators) who should model self-discipline and enforce school rules and appropriate behavior.

4.2.2 School B

4.2.2.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

Learners: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school? Explain your answer.

Learners gave different opinions on the state of discipline at School B. More than half stated that discipline was “not good”, while the rest were of the opinion that discipline was in a fairly “controlled” state, indicating that some measure of discipline was present. Most learners were of the opinion that the majority of learners were behaving well and that it was only a small minority of learners that contributed to the disciplinary problems at their school.
Educators: What kind of disciplinary problems do you experience at your school? (List)

The majority of respondents felt that the state of discipline at School B needed to be addressed urgently. Respondents listed various transgressions, such as “bunking” and “not doing homework” to more serious transgressions like “vandalising of school and educators’ property”. Transgressions like “selling illegal substances” on the school premises were also noted, for which learners could be criminally charged.

Educators clearly expressed their dissatisfaction with school management and the educational authorities, openly blaming them partly for the disciplinary situation in schools. Not one educator hinted that educators themselves were partly to blame or should make a concerted effort to change the situation.

Parent SGB members: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school?

Parents serving in School B’s SGB had different views on the state of discipline at their school. Some reported that “discipline seems to be under control”; “learners seemed to be behaving”; and “it seems that teachers are in control”. Such answers are a clear indication that the parents seemed to be unaware of any disciplinary problems existing at their school and that they were under the impression that learners were generally behaving well. The other half felt that learner discipline “needs to be addressed”, with the purpose of improving their behaviour. Some parents felt that learners showed no respect and that the school should intervene urgently. At this school, only a few of the parents who served as SGB members were actively involved at the school on a daily basis and therefore had first-hand experience of the behaviour of learners.
4.2.2.2 Data gathered from Interviews

Learners

The very first learner responded “Baie swak meneer” (“Very poor, Sir”). The remaining learners responded by giving a variety of reasons.

“Kinders wat nie in hul klasse is wanneer hulle veronderstel is om te wees nie” (“Learners not being in their classes when they are supposed to be”).

“Kinders wat staan en rook” (“Learners that stand and smoke”).

“Kinders het nie meer respek vir die opsigters nie wat hul ma of pa kon gewees het” (“Learners have no respect for the caretakers, who could have been their mother or father”).

“Ons respekteer nie meer mekaar nie” (“There is no respect among us any more”).

“Ons respekteer nie die onderwysers nie” (“We do not have respect for the educators”)

These remarks indicate a general lack of respect amongst misbehaving learners, who wished to make the school ungovernable. Many respondents were of the opinion that the lack of respect, self-respect and self-discipline among learners influenced the school environment negatively. Not only were these learners cheeky, disrespectful and disruptive in class, they also enjoyed provoking other learners into arguments or fighting.

Educators

At School B, the main concern educators had, was that it was “always the same learners who we have disciplinary problems with”. The fundamental sentiment
that educators shared, was that they had no counteraction for the rudeness and disrespect of learners and that they had lost confidence in the educational authorities.

The response of one educator indicated her annoyance:

“The reason for our bad state of discipline is our useless Department of Education”.

Many of the educators agreed with this statement.

One female educator added the following comment:

“We are actually helpless when they are rude, because they are not even scared to be sent to the Governing Council.”

Other remarks from educators included:

“Sometimes I don’t feel like coming to school, because of certain learners.”

“They don’t care to do homework, tasks or study for tests, resulting in low marks, but what do they care.”

Such remarks were a clear indication of the frustration and stress that educators endured. The respondents in general recognised the negative results of disrespect from learners and its disastrous impact on learning and teaching in the classroom and on the majority of willing learners and committed educators.

**Parent SGB members**

Parents serving on the SGB of School B mentioned that the general problems brought to their attention included ‘bunking’, late-coming, smoking and rude and disruptive behaviour among learners in the classroom. From their experiences
as Governing Body members, they commented that learners most likely to misbehave were those coming from other schools, where they were either no longer welcome or had left because they themselves wanted a change, for some reason or other. It could be deduced that some of these learners’ behavior was not acceptable at their previous schools.

Some SGB parent members observed that parents were not always cooperative and that some were in denial about their children’s behaviour. One SGB parent who was involved at the school on a daily basis, mentioned that “… party leerders is uitdagend” (“… some learners are defiant”). The parent also stated that some girls were wearing their school uniforms too short and that learners indulged in substance abuse on the school premises.

“… drink en rook dagga op die skool” (“… abuse alcohol and smoke marijuana on the school premises”).

4.2.2.3 Data gathered from Observation

- General

At School B, the first impression gained was that the vast majority of the learners adhered to the school dress code and that most learners looked neat. Those who did not adhere to the school dress code, could be spotted immediately, as they stood out conspicuously.

The school building was enclosed. Learners could not stand in front of classes during instruction time, as the doors of the classrooms were facing each other. A few learners were observed obviously ‘bunking’, but they were standing outside at the back or side of the school building.

During intervals, learners wandered outside of the enclosed school building to the fence, where vendors were selling various items. At the fence, no prefects
or educators were present to monitor what was being sold. It was noticed that vendors were selling cigarettes to learners.

- **Physical condition of the school**

  The school ground of School B was enclosed with steel fencing. Both the exterior and the interior of the school building were in a very neat condition, because the school had been built fairly recently. There was not much graffiti on the walls, and the condition of doors and windows was good, while the desks and other classroom furniture were also fairly new and in good condition. Within the enclosed school premises, management had taken the initiative to place rubbish bins in many strategic spots in an attempt to curb littering.

- **Socio-economic environment**

  Socio-economic conditions in the surrounding area of School B were of a low standard and the high rate of unemployment was evident from the condition of the surrounding houses and the many adult males and females who were loitering in the streets.

  Directly around the school premises itself, there were mostly small sub-economic houses, with back-yard shacks. No extra provision for sanitation had been made. Most of these houses and shacks each housed between four to eight people.

  Based on the many legal and illegal outlets, alcohol abuse seemed to be rife. Drunkenness in public and verbal abuse by drunks were common phenomena, witnessed by young learners on a daily basis.
4.2.2.4 Interpretation

The majority of learners expressed their disappointment and dissatisfaction with the general behaviour and discipline of their peers. Most perceived discipline at their school to be out of control, emphasising that it needed serious attention from the authorities.

The educators seemed to be in agreement with the learners. The school seemed to be unable to deal with the misbehaving minority and there were recurring problems, to which the SGB and educators could not find solutions. Educators who were confronted with ill-disciplined learners realised the impact such behavior had on the general atmosphere and functioning of the school.

The researcher gained the impression that some SGB members of School B were either poorly informed or did not really feel committed to become involved, beyond merely serving as passive members of the SGB. Those SGB parent members who were more directly involved with their children and school activities realised the severity of the disciplinary problems and expressed their real concern.

The building structure of the school had some positive impact on discipline, by making it difficult for learners to loiter outside of the classrooms during lesson hours, as they could be easily spotted.

4.2.3 School C

4.2.3.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

Learners: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school? Explain your answer.
Most of the respondents from School C described the state of discipline at their school as “poor”, with learners showing no respect to each other or towards educators.

Only one of the respondents from School C described the state of discipline as “good”:

Comments included:

“There is room for improvement”.

“Not good, but improving”.

“Not good”.

Educators: What kind of disciplinary problems do you experience at your school? (List)

Educators from this school listed various disciplinary problems, ranging from minor to more serious transgressions. Less serious transgressions listed, included non-completion of work, failure to do assignments, and late-coming. More serious transgressions included ‘bunking’ and jumping; disruptiveness in classrooms; absenteeism; vandalism (graffiti on the walls, desks and doors); foul and abusive language; and smoking on the school grounds.

Educators felt that learners just did as they pleased, because School C basically had no procedures in place to curb or limit any transgression of school or classroom rules.

Parent SGB members: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school?
SGB parents cited the discipline at this particular school as poor. Comments included the following:

“… rude learners.”

“Learners were out of order.”

“… unmannered.”

“Bring back corporal punishment.”

These remarks clearly expressed desperation about the depressing state of discipline at this school. Parent members on the SGB expressed the view that school management was not able to solve the problem of discipline alone, but needed help from the Department of Education. However, no suggestions were made regarding what kind of help they needed or expected.

4.2.3.2 Data gathered from Interviews

Learners

At School C, the learners themselves were not happy with the behaviour of their peers. However, they reiterated that the misbehaving learners were in the minority.

“Learners are rude to their friends and to educators, but most of us do respect the teachers.”

“It is not all of us that are rude to our teachers.”

Clearly, the teachers felt offended at being tarred with the same brush as misbehaving learners.
Responses indicated that learners were using drugs and using the school as marketplace to make money by selling cigarettes.

“Baie van die kinders kom skool toe gerook” (“Many come to school intoxicated (smoked dagga”).

“As hulle gerook is, is hulle onbeskof met ander kinders” (“When they are intoxicated, they become rude to other learners”).

“… verkoop sigarette op die skool” (“… sell cigarettes on the school premises”)

One learner also mentioned that some of these learners were involved with drug dealers, abusing this ‘status’ to scare fellow learners who could implicate them in any transgression. Clearly, these learners enjoyed power and influence in the school.

“Die prefekte is ook bang vir hulle” (“The prefects are also scared of them”).

**Educators**

The majority of educators at school C were of the opinion that the school rules were constantly being broken and that there were no effective strategies in place to curb poor discipline.

Comments included:

“… no respect for the rules set out in the school’s Code of Conduct for learners.”

“Learners do not abide by the Code of Conduct”.

“… no respect for school rules.”
“Learners smoke dagga and drink and parents can’t control their own children.”

“Parents allow their children to drink at home.”

There was a clear perception that discipline at home was lacking. One educator’s concern was that if the parents themselves could not control their children, it would make it even more difficult for them as educators to do so, as learners’ behaviour was modelled on what they experienced at home.

“Learners come from houses where there are no good examples.”

Educators expressed their serious concern about the situation and the negative influence such poor discipline had on all teaching and learning. Although many educators expressed the need for something drastic to be done to improve the situation, no specific recommendations were put forth.

**Parent SGB members**

Parents serving on the SGB, who were daily involved at the school, expressed great concern about the lack of discipline among learners.

“Die kinders is baie onbeskof en het nie eers respek vir ons as ouers nie” (“Learners are very rude and don’t even respect us as parents”).

“Ouers is bang vir hulle kinders” (“Parents are scared of their own children”).

Lack of respect seemed to be a major issue, as parents felt that without respect, not much teaching, learning or positive development was possible. Furthermore, when parents lost control over their children, the task of the educator was made so much more difficult.

Another concern that came up was the issue of learners roaming the streets during school hours. During school hours, children wearing school uniforms
were roaming the streets and getting caught in all kinds of mischief, from shoplifting to vandalism. This reflected negatively on the school itself.

The parents stated that learners were openly defying the Code of Conduct of the school.

“Hulle drink en rook openlik voor grootmense en dit op die skoolgronde” (“They drink and smoke openly in front of adults and doing so on the school premises”).

From this quote, one may deduce that the learners had little or no fear of any possible negative consequences to their conduct.

The general consensus was that corporal punishment, applied in a fair and reasonable manner, might be the only solution to the problem of poor discipline and related aspects.

“Bring die lat terug, meneer!” (“Bring back the cane, Sir!”) one of the parent SGB member suggested, with a large number of SGB members in agreement.

4.2.3.3 Data gathered from Observations

• General

At School C, not many learners were visible outside the classrooms during instruction time. The SGB had appointed a person, either a parent or a security guard, to oversee that no learner wandered around the school grounds during instruction time. This arrangement seemed to be fairly effective; however, there were still those learners who used the sports field behind the school as refuge when ‘bunking’ classes.
Break-times are also perceived as problematic by the researcher. During this unsupervised period of time, learners moved towards the fence to purchase items from vendors. Unfortunately, not only food was being sold, but also cigarettes and other illegal substances. The security guard or parent supposed to be on duty, apparently also took a break during this time!

During breaks, learners left the school grounds without the permission of the principal or educators. Some climbed over the fence, while others crawled through holes in the fence. This gave the learners the opportunity to get access to drugs or alcohol at nearby shebeens or taverns.

- Physical condition of the school

The condition of the school building (School C) was the worst among the four selected schools. This school was the oldest of the four schools, and it seemed as if the Department of Education had never upgraded or effected any repairs since its opening day. The interior walls of the classrooms were covered in graffiti, doors had been kicked in, and window panes were missing. The desks were in a dilapidated state and needed to be replaced, as many of them were unusable, due to seats or tops being missing or broken.

Although a new palisade fence had been erected the previous year and was still in a good condition, learners still improvised ways to leave the school premises: they either squeezed their way through openings or scaled the fence.

The school grounds were generally in a poorly kept condition. The grass was long and unkempt, and the sports field barely had any lawn. Nobody seemed to care about the litter being strewn during the intervals, and before and after school.
• **Socio-economic environment**

The houses in the area in which this school was situated, were of a sub-economic detached type. The shortage of domestic accommodation was evident from the many shacks or Wendy houses (wooden structures) squeezed into the small backyards.

Unlicensed taverns and shebeens selling liquor were present in every street, resulting in a high percentage of residents abusing alcohol at all hours of the day and night and school children gaining easy access to alcohol, emulating the behaviour modelled by the adults in their society.

The many liquor outlets were probably established due to the prevailing unemployment, in an attempt to earn an income. Many residents in the neighbourhood were running “house shops”, where a variety of convenience items usually available from a small café or grocer (fruit and vegetables, soft drinks, bread and cigarettes) was sold.

The children from the neighborhood did not have the benefit of public parks and playgrounds: As the yards were built up, they normally ended up playing in the streets. Here they were exposed to negative influences such as drug trafficking and public drunkenness, in addition to the imminent danger of traffic on these busy public streets.

**4.2.3.4 Interpretation**

The majority of learners at School C seemed to be in agreement that school discipline was in a very poor state. Learners believed, however, that it was only a small group of learners who showed no respect for order or for the people around them. It would also appear that these learners were involved with drugs and that that also had a negative influence on their behaviour. These misbehaving learners also used their association with drug dealers in the community to intimidate school prefects from doing their duty.
Educator respondents seemed to be despondent about the ineffective strategies the school management had in place to control discipline, believing that until more effective strategies were applied, ill-disciplined learners would persist in transgressing the Code of Conduct of the school. They also felt that their hands were tied, because learners came from a community where they had no positive role models and home environments and where parents were not setting good examples. Some educators had opted to adopt a ‘don’t care’ attitude towards learners’ misbehaviour, because the latter were abusing their “new” constitutional rights to do and say as they pleased, as the school had no disciplinary system in place to counter bad behaviour.

It seemed as if parent SGB members only became aware of learners’ pitiable behaviour through their first-hand experiences in classrooms when educators were absent. Parents had also come to the realisation that learners had little respect for them as parents and that something drastically needed to be done to improve the situation. The respondents also acknowledged the need for school management to bring the poor state of discipline at the school under the attention of the Department of Education (DoE), to get the latter involved in finding a solution to the problem.

The general condition of the school and the home environment of learners were not conducive to effective education. The school premises were in need of drastic upliftment in order for learners to find themselves in circumstances more favourable to effective learning.

4.2.4 School D

4.2.4.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

Learners: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school? Explain your answer.
Different opinions on the state of school discipline were given by respondents from School D. Approximately one third of the respondents stated that the state of discipline at the school was improving, thanks to drastic intervention strategies from the SGB. An explosive situation had erupted between educators and misbehaving learners, which necessitated immediate action from the authorities. Basically, on two separate occasions, learners respectively threw an egg and a brick at two educators on the school premises. This happened when the educators reprimanded learners who were being disruptive in class. An improvement came about after the isolation of approximately 60 disruptive learners at the school.

The majority of the learners, however, cited the state of discipline as “quite weak”, “very undisciplined”, “no respect”, “room for improvement”, “poor”, “no respect for educators”, “bad”, “rude” and “unsatisfactory”. Various reasons were given as to why the discipline of the school was in such poor state. These included:

“Discipline enforcement is too mild.”

“More severe punishment is necessary.”

“Learners doing as they please.”

“The school is too tolerant towards troublemakers.”

**Educators: What kind of disciplinary problems do you experience at your school? (List)**

Educators cited a wide range of problems, ranging from minor transgressions to serious violations. The minor transgressions cited, were much in line with what happened at other schools. However, more serious violations included “destructiveness to school property”, “vandalism”, “gangsterism”, “burning school property”, “assault” and “stealing”.
Parent SGB members: How would you describe the state of discipline at your school?

From the responses, it became quite clear that parents serving on the SGB were unaware of the poor state of discipline at this school. Many of the respondents stated that they only became aware of the problem when they were called in by the SGB to discuss the attempted assaults on educators. Their unawareness may have been due to them not being actively involved in more of the school’s activities or their own children’s lives. However, the crisis situation that erupted, necessitated their immediate active involvement. Since they became directly involved and embarked on a collective effort, a vast improvement in discipline had been recorded, thanks to the introduction of various disciplinary strategies, such as the isolation of unruly learners.

4.2.4.2 Data gathered from Interviews

Learners

On the state of discipline at School D, learners shared their optimism at the current improvement.

“Discipline is improving every day.”

“… because of the collective effort.”

“Learners were very rude” but urgent “intervention improved the situation.”

The response from most of the learners indicated that this school had experienced big problems where discipline was concerned.

The attempted assaults on the two educators forced the educators to take action against the unruly learners. One of the learners stated:
“Educators don’t know how to handle these unruly learners any more.”

The participating learners also identified the need for action to improve the situation, as it was affecting learning and teaching in the classroom.

One learner stated that rude learners who persistently transgressed school rules “must be suspended or expelled”, because their behaviour was infringing on the rights of learners who were eager to learn.

“Taking them out of the school will make our school environment much more enjoyable to learn in.”

**Educators**

Educators voiced their disgust and disappointment at the behaviour of certain learners at the school.

“Some learners just don’t have respect for us any more.”

“If the DoE does not do something immediately, the whole school will eventually suffer, because of the small minority misbehaving.”

The concern was also expressed that the misbehaving minority would have a bad influence on others, who may eventually also start to behave in that manner.

Some educators were, however, very optimistic over the “still improving” situation, because of the plan of action that had been implemented to control most of the unruly learners. This plan of action was perceived to have had a positive outcome on behaviour in general, as learners now knew what was expected of them.
Parent SGB members

Parents serving on the SGB agreed that the school had experienced problems earlier in the year, but insisted that the situation had since improved.

“At the moment, we seem to be very stable as far as discipline is concerned.”

“There is better cooperation from the kids.”

“Discipline is fairly under control.”

During the interview, it emerged that the parents and the Department of Education had been called in to address the issue of unruly learners. Following that meeting, a plan of action was introduced, with the permission of the Department of Education. This plan of action entailed the isolation of unruly learners by means of a time-out measure of punishment, where unruly learners were isolated from the other learners.

“These takings away of privileges and isolation definitely have a positive influence and we are hoping that it will continue in the long run”.

4.2.4.3 Data gathered from Observations

• General

The layout of the school building was such that it secured itself. All the classrooms opened into corridors, that lead to the Administration Section. The locked gates were opened only at regular intervals. During instruction time, the only access to the front gate was through the front door of the Administration Section, which was opened only on request. Learners who arrived late, had to enter through the front gate, effectively monitored by a strict individual who was employed by the SGB on a full-time basis.
During intervals, the side gates were unlocked and learners had the opportunity to go to the school fences to buy snacks from vendors. No prefects or educators were on duty to monitor what was being sold. The main school gates remained close during intervals so that no learner could leave the school premises without permission. Some learners were, however, observed scaling the fence.

- **Physical condition of the school**

School D was definitely in the best condition of the four sampling schools. This school was the second-oldest of the four schools, but had been kept in an excellent condition over all the years.

At the access points, there were bins for the dispensation of litter when entering after break. The school had its own auditorium, a clubhouse (next to the cricket field) and cricket nets. Steel fencing, still in a good condition, had been erected around the school perimeter. However, some graffiti was seen on the interior walls and in the corridors.

During instruction time, the school’s exit/entrance points were locked and no learner had access to the outside. The school also had a security camera in the Administrative Section, accommodating the offices and all administration equipment. This seemed to serve as effective deterrent to those who might have considered vandalism or theft.

- **Socio-economic environment**

The area in which School D was situated, showed evidence of better socio-economic conditions than the other three schools. The condition and type of the houses, as well as the established gardens, tidy yards and the absence of many shacks, all pointed to a more stable middle-class society.
The researcher learnt that the community had vetoed the opening of too many taverns, and the number of taverns was indeed very limited. This had a positive effect, in that public drunkenness was not very common.

Well-kept fields for sporting codes, such as cricket, hockey, soccer and tennis as well as a public swimming pool, were available for residents. Although the yards were quite spacious, the availability of such recreational facilities also contributed to keep children off the streets.

4.2.4.4 Interpretation

Learners were well aware of the developments around the disciplinary problem that was playing itself off at their school. From their responses, it was clear that they welcomed the collective strategy to isolate those learners that intruded on their basic right to receive a good education. Discipline had since improved drastically, which in turn improved the attitude of learners and will most likely also improve their academic results.

From the responses received from educators, it was clear that they were disgusted and disappointed at what had been happening at their school. They themselves could offer no solution to the problem, and therefore called on the SGB to get actively involved. What was disturbing, was the fact that learners were committing more serious violations, which forced educators to make an urgent appeal to parents and the Department of Education to intervene. Following this intervention, an improvement in discipline was evident, and it immediately brought an improved relationship between learners and educators, which boosted the morale of educators. The more disciplined environment also had a positive effect on teaching and learning. Within the first term following the intervention, the learners’ results improved markedly.

The parents serving on the SGB had apparently been oblivious to the prevailing problems, something that indicated a serious lack of involvement and focus on
their part. However, when confronted with the facts and severity of the problem, all pulled together in an attempt to solve the problem.

The school building in general contributed to the positive behaviour and discipline of learners. Learners did not have much freedom to roam about in the school building during instruction time, which prevented them from committing disciplinary misdemeanors. Intervals, however, seemed to be problematic, as management did not make provision for monitoring learners' behaviour on the playgrounds and the items being sold to learners at the school fence. Traders could therefore be selling anything, from sweets to drugs, to learners.

### 4.2.5 Comparison between selected schools

The schools selected for this study were largely experiencing the same type of disciplinary problems. Factors that were similar at all four participating schools were the age groups, the racial mix and, to a large extent, the socio-economic conditions of learners. The latter, interestingly enough, seems not to have such a dominant influence as one would imagine; perhaps because the differences were not that big. However, an important fact that emerged, was that the socio-economic conditions of learners in these instances had little or no effect on their behaviour, as educators at all four selected schools struggled with almost identical disciplinary problems. The fact that not more schools from a bigger variety of socio-economic environments could be compared to determine the influence of the socio-economic environment on school behavior is, however, a major shortcoming of this study.

What seems to have had a significant role in controlling learners’ movements as an aspect of discipline were the physical layout of school buildings and the security measures in place. The physical condition and layout of the four schools differed, and it seemed to have a direct effect on the behavior of learners. Schools that were better enclosed and more secure had better control over the learners than those schools with buildings that were more dispersed and open and had more entrances.
Linked to the latter is also the physical condition and appeal of the buildings. A neat, safe and inviting environment will go a long way towards motivating positive behaviour.

4.2.6 THEME ONE B: Improving state of discipline

4.2.6.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

The question below was posed to the learners to get their opinion on what the SGB of their particular school could do to improve the state of discipline.

Learners: What do you think the SGB can do to improve the state of discipline at your school?

4.2.6.1.1 School A

The respondents to this question had different views of what the SGB could do to improve discipline at their school. One of the issues respondents felt strongly about, was the perceived absence of members of the SGB at their school. They felt that “members must be more visible” and in the process became “more involved in the daily school activities”. Some of the tasks suggested that SGB parents could assume, included:

“….. counselling of learners with behaviour problems.”

“….. supervision in classrooms.”

“….. managing some of our daily activities.”

“….. talking and listening to our problems.”
“….. creating more extra-mural activities.”

“….. hold meetings explaining to us of the Code of Conduct.”

“….. creating a more learner friendly space.”

Respondents also felt strongly that they needed to know and understand the purpose of the SGB as well as who the people were who must assist educators, who were clearly not able to manage the discipline of the school on their own.

4.2.6.1.2 School B

Respondents at this school offered a variety of ideas and measures the SGB could implement to improve and maintain discipline. The majority of respondents agreed that the existing situation was unacceptable and that discipline needed to be improved. One of the sentiments that emerged very strongly, was that more harsh methods were required to discipline misbehaving learners. Some of the respondents suggested methods such as “expelling of learners” and the “re-introduction of corporal punishment”. Members of the SGB must also “make all of us more aware of our own responsibility towards good discipline” and must “implement more effective methods in disciplining those who do not toe the line”. The SGB must also “consider using abnormal methods of punishment”, read one of the remarks, but this learner did not elaborate or give any examples. Other measures to be implemented by SGBs, included, “involving student leaders to present our opinions regarding possible solutions”; “more extra-mural activities”; “rehab classes”; and “community service for guilty learners”.

4.2.6.1.3 School C

The provision of more extramural activities was one of the most popular suggestions for curbing bad behaviour that emerged from responses at School C. Most respondents maintained that they were largely unoccupied during their free time. Having facilities such as a library or playing different sports would
“keep them away from doing bad things on the school grounds”. This sums up the general sentiment of learners. Interesting was that respondents did not mention the role of the SGB per sé in getting the mentioned facilities.

4.2.6.1.4 School D

Participants at School D responded with vigor to this question, expressing strong feelings such as:

“… strict enforcement of the Code of Conduct.”

“… suspension and expulsion.”

“… corporal punishment.”

“Bring in security guards and police for drug users.”

“… SGB members checking corridors and toilets.”

“Get rid of rude learners.”

“Tackle problem learners immediately”.

“The SGB must appeal to the Department of Education for permission to expel serious behaviour transgressors without consulting with it (DoE).”

The “lack of recreational facilities” could also be investigated by the SGB in an attempt to get learners to engage in positive extramural activities. Cleaning the school premises and repairing damages were also suggested as punishment, while it was also suggested that the SGB should be more visible on the school premises.
4.2.6.1.5 Interpretation

Learners at School A very clearly pointed out that the perceived absence of the SGB in the school was one of the reasons why learners persisted in their inappropriate behaviour. The mere presence of parents in a position of authority at the school may well have a positive influence on learners’ behaviour. Interestingly enough, the learners acknowledged that they needed adults, in this case their parents, to guide them in their behaviour. Learners furthermore indicated that the importance of the Code of Conduct was underestimated by the SGB and that its finer details must be explained to the learners and enforced as a matter of urgency, as clarity on all aspects of the Code of Conduct would serve to guide the learners in their behaviour.

Respondents at School B regarded the improvement of discipline at their school as a matter of urgency. Their responses on possible disciplinary strategies revealed their desperation to see an improvement in discipline at their school. The learners regarded the involvement of the SGB as pivotal in improving the behaviour of learners, yet at the same time, they felt that they as learners should have a say during discussions on how to improve discipline.

The poor physical condition of buildings, vandalised classroom interiors and run-down recreational facilities at School C were regarded as the main reasons why discipline was in such poor state. Learners cited boredom as one of the reasons why they engaged in behaviour that was not appropriate. Many learners argued that the SGB must work towards providing facilities so that they could entertain themselves when free time did occur during the school day.

The poor disciplinary situation that prevailed at School D had reached breaking point and had deteriorated into a matter of desperate urgency before strong intervention was taken. Learners expressed the need for drastic measures, such as the reintroduction of corporal punishment into schools, which emphasised their desire to see change. According to them, more harsh punishment enforced by the SGB would encourage good discipline among
learners. Many also felt that the SGB must obtain the involvement of the Department of Education, because the SGB did not have enough power to enforce certain decisions, like the expulsion of learners that behaved atrociously.

From all the before said it became clear that learners had no clear idea of the role and power of members of the SGBs. The learners took it for granted that all SGB members will be free and available at all times.

4.2.7 Comparison between selected schools

Learners from the different schools were in agreement that the parents serving on the school governing bodies must definitely become more involved in various activities at their respective schools, such as supervision in classrooms, providing extramural activities and counselling problematic learners.

Schools A, B and C, where the parents serving on the SGBs were not involved in the schools' other activities, will continue to struggle with disciplinary problems unless parents change their attitude towards their commitment to their children and the schools. At School D, change immediately occurred after a collective effort from learners, educators and parent SGB members, in conjunction with the Department of Education. It was especially the extra efforts by parent SGB members that sent out the message to learners that the school should be a place of learning and teaching.

4.3 THEME TWO: DEALING WITH DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

The question below was posed to educators in an attempt to discover how they dealt with disciplinary problems and what disciplinary measures were in place at their respective schools.
Educators: How are these problems addressed in your school?

4.3.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

4.3.1.1 School A

A large percentage of respondents felt that not much was being done to address disciplinary problems. The method most commonly used at School A for minor transgressions like not doing homework or late-coming, was detention. For more serious transgressions, like bunking school, learners were sent to the grade HODs, who would then call in their parents to discuss the matter. Learners were then punished by staying in for a three-hour detention class on a Friday afternoon. If a transgression was of a very serious nature, the learner was referred to the principal, where the same procedure would be followed. This was the full extent of punishment for serious transgressions.

4.3.1.2 School B

Respondents at this school stated that misbehaving learners were referred to the Heads of Department for their Grades, who then requested the parents to accompany these learners to school. The Grade HODs discussed the transgression and, if the learner had been found guilty of more than one offence, the transgressor would be referred to the Disciplinary Committee of the SGB. The Disciplinary Committee would then address the problem by means of a hearing. If found guilty, punishment would be inculcated, which meant that if a learner was found guilty of, for example, stealing, and the Code of Conduct stated that such learner must be suspended for five days, punishment would be applied accordingly.

4.3.1.3 School C

At School C, the respondents noted that detention was the main strategy to punish minor transgressions. If detention failed, the parents would be asked to
accompany their child to school, where the problem would then be discussed between parents, one of the senior staff members, and the principal. However, often parents also did not respond to requests to come to school. This was then where the disciplinary process ended, with the school management simply hoping that the learners would not repeat their unacceptable behaviour. Unfortunately, these measures did not seem to be effective in stopping learners from repeating their misbehaviour.

4.3.1.4 School D

This participating school was selected as comparison against the three previous schools, because it was located in a socio-economic area of a higher standard. This school had a Governing Body appointed disciplinarian who dealt with any learner who transgressed its Code of Conduct. Respondents emphasised that a disciplinarian was available during all school hours and that educators referred learners to him when the need arose. The commonly used method of punishment at this school was referred to as time out sessions, where transgressors were isolated from other learners. For more serious transgressions, learners would be sent home and requested to return, accompanied by their parents, to consult with the disciplinarian. If found guilty, the learners were punished according to the guidelines stipulated in the Code of Conduct. In terms of the Code of Conduct of this school, learners who were, for example, caught smoking dagga on the school premises, must contact an organisation that helps people with drug problems. Evidence of rehabilitation sessions had to be presented to the SGB afterwards.

4.3.2 Data gathered from Interviews

No new information surfaced during the interviews, and the information given in the questionnaires was confirmed. What was very interesting, was how educators perceived the success or failure of the different measures.
4.3.2.1 School A

Educators felt that the disciplinary measures in place at the school were a waste of time, because the same learners repeatedly broke the rules. Some learners stated that their school had no disciplinary measures in place.

4.3.2.2 School B

If found guilty of any transgression after a hearing, the learner would be punished by, for example, being instructed to clean the school premises. If this was a repeat offence, the learner would be suspended for five days. Respondents, however, felt that this served no purpose, because the same ill-mannered learners would be subjected to this process repeatedly. The educators at this school were not aware of any learner who had been referred to the Department of Education to be expelled.

4.3.2.3 School C

From the discussions with educators at School C, it was evident that the disciplinary process at this school did not have any positive effect on the behaviour of most learners. Detention was the only tool of discipline, and educators shared the sentiment that it was not an effective tool, as it was failing in its purpose and educators who were to supervise the sessions felt it was a waste of time.

4.3.2.4 School D

During time out, learners would be kept away from the rest of the class in a set-up where they were not allowed to talk to one another while they were completing work given to them by educators. They were only allowed to join the normal classes after they had promised to behave and had proven to the disciplinarian in charge of “time out” classes that their behavior has improved. If
this punishment failed, the learner would be referred to the Disciplinary Committee of the SGB, where a decision would be made regarding the next step of action, according to the guidelines of the school’s Code of Conduct.

4.3.2.5 Interpretation

From the questionnaires and interviews, educators mentioned different strategies applied by the different schools. For example, Schools A and C preferred detention; School B preferred sending learners to a Disciplinary Committee; and School D preferred to use a time-out system. These strategies were in place because educators and some of the SGBs considered them the best options under the circumstances. Educators at the selected schools were, however, left with a lot of frustration because of the poor discipline among and arrogant demeanor of learners they were experiencing in the classroom and on the school grounds. Understandably, the educators felt that the disciplinary strategies employed, were not effective and that there was a need for alternative measures. Of the four schools, the most positive results were being achieved by School D, where learners obviously disliked the time-out system. Many avoided this punishment by adhering to the rules.

4.3.3 Comparison between selected schools

Of the four schools, the system in place that was addressing disciplinary problems most effectively, was that of School D. Its success could be attributed to various factors. In the first place, the use of a specially appointed disciplinarian was of great value. This person was paid for disciplining the learners. The supervision of learners during time-out sessions was part of his workload and job description. Due to this, educators did not feel that they were punishing themselves by sending learners to time-out sessions which they themselves could be required to supervise after hours. If time-out occurred in class time, educators could go on attending to other learners, while the culprits forfeited the popular periods such as Physical Training or breaks. The disciplinarian was therefore of great assistance to educators, as they no longer
had to waste valuable instruction time on disciplining learners. However, the SGB of School D could be more instrumental in maintaining school discipline, rather than leaving this responsibility to the disciplinarian alone.

Schools A and C were not successful, because educators alone were not able to solve disciplinary problems. School B had only limited success in this regard, and the involvement of the SGB promised to improve its disciplinary system. However, the school’s disciplinary procedures still needed enhancement.

4.4 THEME THREE: ROLE OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY REGARDING MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE

The questions below regarding the effectiveness of SGBs and their role in maintaining discipline were posed to educators and learners.

Learners: Does the SGB play a role in maintaining discipline at your school? If yes, explain their role and give answers.

Educators: What are your views on the SGB’s role regarding maintaining discipline at your school?

4.4.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

4.4.1.1 School A

Learners

The majority of respondents at School A reasoned that because they did not know the members serving on their SGB, they were not able to give an opinion on their effectiveness. Few of the individuals thought parents serving on the SGB could fulfill an important role if they were more involved in everyday activities at school, but because of their lack of real involvement, they were not contributing to an improvement in discipline in any way.
One learner made the following remark:

“It (SGB) could, but it doesn’t, since there is not one SGB member at our school.”

This remark pinpointed the non-visibility of the SGB parent members at the school.

Educators

An overwhelming majority of respondents from this school agreed that because of the absence and no physical involvement of its SGB, it was impossible to give an opinion on how effective the SGB could be. According to the educators, the SGB of their school “was in no way ever involved in maintaining discipline.” Respondents felt that “they (SGB) can be effective if they do what they are supposed to do” and that they should play a much bigger role to establish an ideal learning environment. The presence of parent SGB members during intervals was but one way in which parents could show their involvement.

4.4.1.2 School B

Learners

Most of the learners at School B noted that the SGB at their school was in full control of discipline. The SGB of this participating school conducted at least two disciplinary hearings per month. During these hearings, learners were also given the opportunity to state their side. If they were found guilty of misconduct, they were disciplined. Different techniques of discipline were applied, depending on the nature of the transgression, including detention and cleaning of the school premises. According to respondents, parent SGB members also assisted educators with disciplinary problems, when needed. Parent SGB members also
sometimes made themselves available to supervise in classrooms when educators were absent and reprimanded learners who misbehaved in classes.

**Educators**

Educators at School B described the SGB as “ineffective”, “very ineffective”, “invisible” and “not very effective” and “failing with regard to maintaining discipline”. Some respondents stated that their perceptions about the role of SGBs were based on “no communication” and “no collaboration or cooperation” between the parents serving on the SGB and the staff. The educators were of the opinion that the parents were “not seriously committed” and therefore actually causing a breakdown in the working relationship between themselves and the school.

4.4.1.3 School C

**Learners**

Learners’ responses indicated that the parent SGB members of their school were trying their best to maintain discipline by making sure that learners abided by the Code of Conduct of the school. The learners wanted the SGB parent members to be more available to talk to them. Especially the girls wanted the parents to advise them about the phenomenon of teenage pregnancies, indicating a need for guidance on life skill issues.

**Educators**

Roughly one third of the respondents felt that their SGB was not effective in maintaining discipline, while another third perceived their SGB as effective to a certain extent. The remaining third believed that their SGB was good at maintaining discipline at their school. In the researcher’s view, this division in opinions is evidence that there was uncertainty regarding the effectiveness of the SGB.
4.4.1.4 School D

Learners

An overwhelming number of learners at School D remarked that the SGB was currently fully in control of discipline, following an explosive situation that had developed a few months before. After the incident, the SGB was actually forced to become more involved with the maintenance of discipline. Most felt that at present the SGB was trying to maintain a firm hand on the improving state of discipline and that discipline at the school had vastly improved since the SGB, parents, educators and the Department of Education embarked on a collective effort to deal with the undisciplined learners.

Educators

Responses from educators regarding the SGB’s effectiveness portrayed a depressing view. Responses varied from “play a minor role”; “slow in dealing with issues”; “not effective”; “not visible”; “not aware”; and “not equipped”. Two respondents indicated that they did not believe that the SGB members had sufficient knowledge to deal with the problems.

“I don’t think they (SGB) have an idea of what is going on in our school.”

“… ineffective, because they are uneducated about disciplinary measures.”

However, recent developments encouraged some educators, as seen by responses such as:

“They are constantly trying to improve the system.”

“… vastly improving.”

“They (SGB) now conduct disciplinary hearings.”
4.4.2 Data gathered from Interviews

4.4.2.1 School A

Learners

The first learner responded with the following words “ek hoor van ‘n beheerraad, maar ek sien dit nie” (“I hear about the SGB, but I don’t see one”). This implied that the governing body was not visible at the school and that the learners had no experience of any involvement by it in school activities. Some of the learners mentioned that the SGB of the school had over the previous five years never been introduced to them. Learners shared the opinion that the SGB was not in any way playing a role in discipline at the school.

Educators

Educators of School A described the SGB as “a non-existent organisation”, which was only there in name. Parents serving on the SGB were “not prepared to help with classrooms supervision when one of us is absent”. “They (parents) have to be properly trained to be able to fulfill their duties”. Educators were aware that most SGB parents were “not highly educated people” and were basically “elected because they are available”. The general feeling that educators at this school shared, was that the parents serving on the SGB were not contributing in maintaining discipline and needed to be properly trained before being elected to serve on any governing body.

4.4.2.2 School B

Learners

At School B, learners thought that their SGB was making a satisfactory contribution to maintaining discipline. From the discussion, it was clear that learners were well aware of the disciplinary powers of the SGB and that it could
suspend learners who broke the school rules. One of the learners mentioned that the SGB helped the teachers with unruly learners and was there to “punish learners that misbehave”.

Educators

Many educators noted that the SGB was “failing in maintaining discipline” at the school. Educators further expressed their concern regarding the “non-involvement of the SGB in disciplinary matters” and that this was not making their task as educators any easier.

“They (SGB) are never there when we need immediate action”.

Some responses indicated that the staff themselves did not show much faith in or did not work closely with their SGB; a situation not at all conducive to a joint effort to solve a major problem such as poor discipline.

“SGB members are only elected because they’re not working and can be called upon to attend urgent meetings.”

“There is no communication between the SGB and the staff.”

4.4.2.3 School C

Learners

Some of the learners were of the opinion that the SGB at their school was “in control of discipline”. There were also those who felt that “learners are behaving badly every day” and that “nothing was being done” to control them. Some argued that if those culprits were roaming the school grounds without any action taken against them, “the SGB was not in control”. Many learners furthermore believed that the “misbehaving learners should be removed or banned from the
school grounds”; although they also felt that if these learners were removed/banned from school, they would simply roam the streets, which was also not good. No suitable alternative was suggested.

**Educators**

Educators at School C acknowledged the effort of some SGB members to help with discipline at the school. However, this effort “was not enough to maintain good discipline” at the school and “it basically serves no purpose in assisting educators”. Some of the educators were of the view that the individual effort of one or two SGB members could not make up for the failure of the rest of the organisation. In their view, the SGB was an organisation “appointed with a specific purpose in the school, but was failing dismally in all aspects, including in maintaining discipline. One educator concluded that parents were simply not interested in the progress of the school.

**4.4.2.4 School D**

**Learners**

Responses such as “the SGB is handling discipline at our school” and “they are more involved than ever before” indicated a positive perception of the SGB. Learners strongly believed that the SGB, with the help of the appointed disciplinarian, were influencing learner behaviour positively, because learners knew that a no-nonsense approach would be applied by the SGB if they transgressed.

“Discipline is improving daily, because the teachers and the SGB are working together.”

“Learners are much more cautious to misbehave.”
Educators

Educators expressed their disgust at the initial incompetence of the SGB concerning discipline; however, some responses indicated a positive change in the situation and the Disciplinary Committee was functioning with a large measure of success.

“There is a vast improvement.”

“I see a big improvement in the way they (SGB) function and the influence it has on the learners.”

Educators had embarked on the drastic measure of discontinuing instruction in order for the SGB to get involved.

“Now there are disciplinary hearings every alternative week.”

“Misbehaving learners are being dealt with regularly.”

4.4.2.5 Interpretation

From the questionnaires and interviews, learners and educators at Schools A, B and C agreed that their schools experienced serious problems regarding discipline. Most learners and educators were also aware that their SGBs were not functioning well and therefore not fulfilling their responsibilities as disciplinarian bodies at the respective schools. Learners as well as educators acknowledged the importance of the SGB in maintaining discipline and agreed that if parents became more committed, their presence in schools could most definitely make a difference.

School D served as a good example of a school where change was brought about after all role-players became aware of the importance of commitment to
their task and of working together towards the same goal. Educators were not able to maintain discipline on their own and brought this under the attention of the school management, the SGB and the Department of Education, which necessitated all of them to become involved and plan strategies for intervention. Change was possible after the attitude and commitment of all role-players took on a more constructive dimension and, in retrospect, if all had been informed and trained for and committed to their task, discipline might not have deteriorated to this extent in the first place. One of the positive spin-offs of this changed environment was that it generated a more positive attitude among educators and learners, which motivated learners to learn and educators to walk the extra mile with learners. One learner remarked that “the attitude of educators changed positively”.

4.4.3 Comparison between selected schools

Learners at the four schools had different opinions on the role that their SGBs were playing regarding discipline at their respective schools. It was only at School D where the overwhelming majority of the learners felt that their SGB was in control of discipline. At School A, almost all the learners were of the view that their SGB was non-existent, while at Schools B and C, learners were divided in their opinion on the effectiveness of their SGBs regarding maintaining discipline. From the above, it seemed that learners’ views, but also that of educators, were determined by their experiences and observations of the involvement and visibility of the SGB at their school.

Educators at three of the four participating schools were unimpressed with the role that the SGBs were playing at their respective schools. At Schools A, B and C, educators were still struggling on their own to enforce discipline, while at School D, educators were more positive, following the support and commitment they received from the parents serving as members on the SGB. The commitment from those parents and other SGB members had brought about a significant change, which served as encouragement to them as educators.
4.5 AWARENESS OF DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

The question below was posed to educators only, as the researcher did not consider the learners to be informed enough to answer it.

Educators: In your view, to what extent is the SGB aware of the disciplinary problems educators are experiencing at your school?

4.5.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

4.5.1.1 School A

The overwhelming majority of the respondents were under the impression that the parents serving on the SGB were not aware of the disciplinary problems educators were confronted with at the school. This was because of their “absence and non-functioning” at this particular school. One of the respondents wrote: “It seems that we are the only ones that have to deal with discipline”, voicing the sentiments of the majority of educators at this school. A small minority believed that the SGB was, to a lesser or larger degree, aware of the situation, as the principal was supposed to be reporting to the SGB on all issues, including the state of school discipline, on a regular basis. Serious violations were supposed to be heard by the SGB, so members therefore could not say that they were unaware of the situation; unless these hearings never took place.

4.5.1.2 School B

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that parent SGB members were aware of all school issues, including the state of school discipline. Respondents proclaimed that the SGB was kept informed by the principal; that regular disciplinary hearings took place every alternative Tuesday; and that the educator representatives reported regularly to the SGB. A small percentage of educators believed that “the non-involvement of the SGB members created a
communication gap” and could partly be responsible for their professed ignorance of the situation.

4.5.1.3 School C

Most educators from School C responded that the SGB parent members were fully aware of the problems that existed at their school. A minority felt that “the SGB were oblivious to most problems” because of the gap in communication between themselves and management.

4.5.1.4 School D

The majority of respondents were of the opinion that the parents serving on the SGB were fully aware of the disciplinary problems educators were confronted with on a daily basis. The disciplinarian responsible for the handling of disciplinary problems kept all members of the SGB informed by means of phone calls and written reports on disciplinary matters at the school. More frequent meetings between SGB members and educators took place since the aforesaid incidents (attempted physical attacks on educators) at the school.

4.5.1.5 Interpretation

From the information, it was clear that most educators felt that the parents serving on the SGBs of the different schools must become more involved in the various activities of their respective schools in order to be fully informed. Educators felt that parents who were not involved, were uninformed and ignorant and as such could not contribute to any solution.

However, many educators were of the opinion that parents were well aware of the situation, as the schools had enough mechanisms in place for SGB members to be informed or make themselves aware of what was happening concerning discipline at their schools. Parents were either in denial or scared to face their responsibilities as members of a disciplinary body.
4.5.2 Comparison between selected schools

School A seemed to be the only school where the educators felt that the majority of parents serving on the SGB were not aware of the disciplinary problems that prevailed at their school. This perception might be because the SGB at this school was hardly ever visible or heard of. At Schools B, C and D, educators were of the opinion that the majority of SGB parent members were fully aware of the state of discipline at their schools, as communication took place through various mechanisms. Where a small minority claimed to be oblivious to the existing problems due to non-receival of information, it became clear that they were not involved in activities at their schools or took much personal interest in either the information or the activities of their children.

4.6 COMPETENCY/ABILITY TO SOLVE DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

The following question was very important in determining the educators’ perception of and trust in SGBs’ ability to solve disciplinary problems.

**Question to educators: To what extent is the SGB able to solve disciplinary problems at your school?**

4.6.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

4.6.1.1 School A

One of the respondents at School A posed the following question: “If they (SGB) are not involved, how will they solve problems”? This captures the general feeling amongst respondents. One of the respondents added that, “The SGB has such a big contribution to make, because of them being parents of the learners, and they are supposed to have first-hand knowledge of their children.” Some respondents felt that their SGB’s inability to solve problems was due to the fact that it depended too much on the Department of Education, while the Department of Education paid scant attention to the cases referred to it.
4.6.1.2 School B

All of the respondents at School B agreed that their SGB was generally not able to solve disciplinary problems and was only called upon by educators as a last resort. Respondents felt that the SGB needed to work closer with educators and become more available during school hours. The feeling was that there must be a stronger, more visible structure in place to deal with disciplinary problems and that there was a need for better cooperation between educators and the SGB.

4.6.1.3 School C

Educators at School C felt that “the bureaucracy and interference of the Department of Education gave limited powers to the SGB to suspend and ultimately to expel learners”. This was seen as one of the main reasons why the SGB was failing to solve disciplinary problems. Other respondents felt that if the SGB was used effectively, it could be of great help in solving or curbing disciplinary problems. Interestingly, no response indicated outright that the respondent considered the SGB as not being able to solve the disciplinary problems.

4.6.1.4 School D

“The SGB seems to be a toothless body, unable to remove problem learners who commit serious violations out of the school environment” read one of the responses. Most respondents agreed with the view that “the SGB is to no extent able to solve disciplinary problems, although they sometimes try”. Educators felt that because the SGB had appointed a disciplinarian, it had distanced itself from its obligations and passed challenging situations on to the school management and the disciplinarian.
4.6.1.5 Interpretation

Educators were extremely critical towards their SGBs, because of the immediate and pressing problems they as educators were facing at school. From the responses, it may be deduced that the majority of respondents were in agreement that most parents who served as members of the SGB were not competent or able to resolve the disciplinary problems at the school. Educators felt that these parents needed to receive training and be developed in order to improve their competency levels and at the same time increase their self-confidence regarding their role as SGB members.

4.6.2 Comparison between selected schools

The opinions of the educators at the selected schools did not vary much with regard to the ability or non-ability of the parents who served as SGB members at the respective schools. The general consensus was that most of the parents lacked training, development and experience for their task. In the next theme, aspects of literacy, training for the task as SGB member and general competency levels will come under the spotlight.

4.7 THEME FOUR: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES (SGBs)

Under this theme, the training and development of parents who serve on SGBs comes under scrutiny. This information is supplemented with information about the actual literacy levels of the parents serving as SGB members.

4.7.1 Training, Development and Literacy Level

How would you describe the training and development that members of your SGB receive to execute their duty as the disciplinary body of the school?
4.7.1.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires

- Educators

School A

The educators at School A unanimously stated that they had no knowledge of any training that was available to the parents elected to serve on the SGB. Educators did not seem to have any knowledge of workshops that SGB members could attend.

School B

The educators at this school indicated that they also had no knowledge of any training sessions that were available and conveyed the general belief that no such training took place at all. Only one educator vaguely recalled that there were workshops for SGBs, but he was not sure if any SGB members had attended such workshops.

Educators indicated that most parents at their school displayed lower levels of literacy. Only two of the parents on the SGB had a Grade Twelve qualification, while the rest were in occupations that did not require a Grade Twelve qualification (entrepreneurs or factory workers).

School C

The majority of the educators described the training of parent SGB members as either “elementary”, “no training at all” or “non-existing”. However, one of the respondents described the training as “excellent”. The researcher could not determine how the educator could be so certain of the excellence of the training.
In general, the educators indicated that, to their knowledge, most of the parents were not in possession of a Grade Twelve Certificate.

School D

Remarks such as “inadequate”, “must still take place”, “not received” and “not sure” indicated that none of the educators were aware of any training sessions being offered or planned for current parent SGB members in the near future.

4.7.1.2 Data gathered from Interviews

- Parent SGB members

School A

Only two respondents had passed Grade Twelve and a tertiary qualification. The rest of the respondents had a Grade Ten and lower qualification and some were currently unemployed. Only two of these parents had received any skills training to equip them for their task as SGB members.

One parent acknowledged that he had attended one workshop on finances during 2007, while another had attended a workshop on governance, with the main focus on financial management. SGB members acknowledged that some literature (in English) had been handed out to them, but with no guidance to how it should be used or interpreted. As these handouts were not available for scrutiny, the researcher has no idea what information it contained.

School B

A small number of the parents serving as members of the SGB had attended a workshop during 2007, but none attended or were notified of any workshops for SGB members during 2008. Those who had attended the workshop, stated that the main focus had been on financial management and that no guidance was
received regarding ways to maintain discipline. Some literature had been sent to schools; however, they (parents) found it difficult to interpret the information, while members often had divergent views on the interpretation and application of the information. Furthermore, most of the literature the Department of Education had sent to schools, was in English, the second language of most of the parents.

School C

Parents serving on the SGB of this school were not aware of any of them receiving training from the Department of Education in the previous two years. However, they acknowledged that the school had received information on finances and the admission requirements of learners. Of all the parents serving on the SGB at this school, only one had a Grade Twelve Certificate and was doing skilled work. Four of the respondents were unemployed, with the other four either self-employed or employed in a factory.

School D

Only one parent, in this instance the Chairperson of the SGB, had attended a workshop, at which different aspects of the South African Schools Act were discussed. The same parent went to a second workshop the following year but found that the same information was discussed, without any reference to practical ways of improving efficiency in schools. SGB parent members felt in general that no proper training to develop them had been presented and that the Department of Education seemed to be “dragging their feet” in getting involved, despite numerous appeals in this regard.

Four of the parents were in possession of a Grade Twelve Certificate, with two having a higher (tertiary) qualification. The rest of the respondents possessed lower academic qualifications and were either self-employed, factory workers or unemployed.
4.7.1.3 Interpretation

From the above, it was obvious that the majority of parents at the selected schools had low literacy levels and were in dire need of training and guidance to equip them for their duties and responsibilities as SGB members. The conclusion drawn, is that it seems as if the Department of Education is failing in its duty to provide frequent and adequate training to parents serving on SGBs in order to fulfill their duties effectively. The SGBs in the participating schools were clearly left to cope on their own and received very little or no support in the governance task they were supposed to execute.

The literature received, was published in English only; the second language of the majority of SGB members at the selected schools. The Department of Education expected of them to read, interpret and apply the information without considering their level of education or providing guidance and support through training. Parents who were not well educated, could find the information extremely difficult to understand and the members often came up with different interpretations of the literature. If this literature was not discussed, analysed and properly understood, it would be of no or little value to parents.

Where workshops had been presented, it seems as if the facilitators of these workshops focused mainly on aspects of governance related to financial management, neglecting important aspects such as the management of discipline in schools. It was therefore left to the individual members to become aware of what was required from them around their duties as SGB members.

The majority of the parent SGB members serving the four schools had a lower qualification than Grade Twelve. Of the thirty-six respondents, only three had a higher (tertiary) qualification. This implied that only a small minority had a fair chance of being up to the task. A definite lack and shortage of skills in all aspects of governance was evident among the parents serving on the SGBs of all four schools.
It can be assumed that parents who are elected to serve on the SGB are there because of their willingness to spend their time and energy on serving the best interests of the school. Parents who may have acquired the necessary skills to make a constructive contribution were either not willing or not available, because of possible time constraints or other reasons. This, however, does not mean that all parents serving on an SGB is totally incompetent or not making a positive contribution. Many are willing to try and inspite of lacking certain skills do give their best.

4.7.1.4 Comparison between selected schools

From the four schools, only three parents serving as SGB members had attended workshops over a period of two years; these workshops had a limited focus, namely financial management. The rest of the members had not received any training or attended any workshops. Training and development of parent SGB members at all selected schools were virtually non-existent. From the information gathered from the parents serving on SGBs, no official notification of any workshops or training courses had been received for the year 2008.

At all of the selected schools, the majority of parents were not academically highly qualified. Most of the parents had either a Grade Eight qualification or lower, with a small minority in possession of a Grade Twelve or higher qualification. Parents who possessed tertiary qualifications, were stationed at School A and School D.

4.7.2 Relationship with the broader parent community

Do you think that parents at your school are in any way contributing in maintaining discipline at this school? If yes, name some examples.

4.7.2.1 Data gathered from Questionnaires
• School A

According to the responses from learners, educators and SGB members, the parent community was not really contributing to or involved in maintaining discipline at this school. Most parents did not even attend scheduled meetings when invited. The respondents remarked that “parents do not care and leave it to the educators to discipline learners”. Parents were only seen at the school when they had to fetch their children’s reports and when they were called in to attend disciplinary hearings, and then some also do not turn up.

• School B

Active parent SGB members at School B were confronted with the same problem of parents’ general apathy towards helping the SGB to maintain discipline at their school. One of the main complaints of parent SGB members was that when parents were called in to discuss disciplinary problems, they insisted that their children were innocent. There also seemed to be a lack of commitment and support from parents, who showed great reluctance to render any kind of help, such as supervising a class while a teacher was absent.

• School C

Respondents at this school mentioned that there was little evidence of a unified relationship between the parent community and the SGB. Parents serving on the SGB who were actively involved in school activities felt that the broader parent community believed that they as parents had no role to play once the SGB had been elected. They furthermore felt that the parent community was under the false impression that the SGB served in the capacity of parent representatives and would assume all parental responsibilities, including the disciplining of their children.
• School D

Recent disciplinary problems at this school and the events afterwards brought about a positive change and parents became more involved because they realised the need to intervene. The sentiment was expressed that “hopefully parents will not only respond to crisis situations” in the future and would remain involved on an ongoing basis.

4.7.2.2 Interpretation

Parental involvement in maintaining discipline at school was important to make the parent representative body (SGB) stronger. What surfaced strongly from Schools A, B and C, was the absence of parental involvement. This made the task of the SGB in curbing disciplinary problems more complicated. School D was a good example of a united effort between parents, educators and the SGB in resolving problems. SGBs as representatives of the parents, especially at schools such as A, B and C, must work on changing the mindsets of all parents who still believe that the school governors, managers and educators are exclusively responsible for their children’s behaviour and conduct during school hours. Parents need to understand that the SGB is only a partial voice of the parental community and can do nothing without broad consultation and support.

4.7.3 Comparison between selected schools

The parents of the broader parent communities of Schools A, B and C were not giving their SGBs the necessary support and assistance. Parents were not attending meetings at which important decisions were made about their children’s education, conduct and the general governance of the school. Parents just did not seem to be interested in supporting the SGB. However, the broader parent community at School D demonstrated greater commitment, supporting their SGB in making decisions that were in the best interests of their children’s education and for teaching and learning at the school.
4.8 STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF PARENTS SERVING ON THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY

Based on the questionnaires, interviews and observations during meetings, SGBs’ weaknesses were unfortunately outbalancing their strengths. However, the major strength of those involved was definitely their willingness to work and to try and make a difference in their schools and in the education of their children. Many parent members were adult enough to accept and acknowledge their own weaknesses and were willing to accept assistance, in the interest of their children’s education.

One of the main weaknesses of the majority of the parent SGB members was certainly their lack of commitment when it came to attending meetings. At all four schools, only a committed few were always present at scheduled meetings. Of the elected members, only three to four at each of the four schools were actively involved, while the rest were there in name only.

Another weakness was the low level of literacy and the lack of skills of most SGB parents. Members also did not seem to take the initiative to improve their own education through, for example, ABET (Adult Basic Education and Training) or to get themselves skilled and thus set a positive example to their own children.

From observations, it also seemed as if principals still clung to power and control, particularly over aspects like finances and appointments. In terms of the South African Schools Act, such powers are supposed to be entirely vested in the SGBs. One may assume that principals think that SGB members are not skilled or trained adequately to be entrusted with important issues such as finances and appointments.
4.8.1 Interpretation

From the information gathered, parent members serving on the SGB professed to be willing to attend workshops, but the truth was that many did not even attend SGB meetings. Their absence from meetings without any valid reason placed a lot of pressure on the committed three to four members, who had to manage all the functions of the organisation. Regarding workshops; these must be provided by the Department of Education at regular intervals and strategic times and places. Training and workshops for SGB members apparently do not enjoy priority in the Department of Education’s planning, because schools and SGBs are not informed well in advance so that members can plan and make an attempt to attend. It should also be made compulsory for SGB parents to attend.

Most parents serving on the SGB of the selected schools displayed a lack of relevant skills; a weakness in the execution of their duties. Without the necessary training and development, little or no improvement will be possible. More training and development can help members who are not highly skilled or educated to improve their ability to fulfill their duties on the SGB; a situation that will also improve self-confidence. Principals as managers of schools certainly want to see that the governors of their schools have the capacity to govern properly.

4.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the views and experiences of learners, educators as well as parents serving on SGBs were presented. The focus was mainly on different aspects of discipline and factors that could positively or negatively influence discipline. Under the last theme, factors that had an influence on the effectiveness of SGBs came under scrutiny.

Information from the four schools was analysed, interpreted and compared. In Chapter Five, a discussion on the implications and recommendations for the
selected schools and other interested bodies, such as the Department of Education, will be presented.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter Four, the researcher presented a detailed analysis of the data collected, the interpretation and a discussion of the findings. In Chapter Four, an attempt was made to give a detailed discussion on the possible implications that the findings might have on the selected schools.

On the basis of the implications, the researcher formulated some recommendations to schools that find themselves in similar circumstances.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

5.2.1 THEME ONE A: STATE OF DISCIPLINE

5.2.1.1 School A

In the analysis, it was found that discipline at this school was in a very poor state and constantly deteriorating. This situation most definitely holds serious implications for the future of the school. Learners’ progress will be negatively affected, because the prevailing chaotic conditions are not supportive of effective teaching and learning. The learners from the school will most likely experience a high failure rate in examinations. Those learners who are eager to learn, may eventually find the conditions unbearable and opt to enrol at alternative schools. The exit of these learners will have a negative effect on the enrolment figures, that may bring about a loss of educators; a situation that will complicate the situation even more. If enrolment figures drop, the school will
have an excess of educators – a situation which will result in redeployment to other schools, often against the teachers' will.

Teaching at this school could become an even bigger challenge for educators. The circumstances at the school could become agonising and educators may in due course search for employment at schools where teaching conditions are better. The resulting exodus will leave the school with a shortage of educators, most probably of educators who can teach scarce skills.

A further implication is that parents will generally be cautious to enroll their children at a school where there is no proper discipline or where there is a shortage of qualified teachers in scarce subjects. Only parents who feel that they have no choice, will enroll their children at the school.

The adults of the socio-economic environment learners are living in are not setting a good example with their behaviour. The learners emulate this behaviour at school. The physical environment is also not in a very good condition, as the community does not take much pride in keeping it neat and orderly. This is reflected in the school, because learners tend to be very destructive, for example, by drawing graffiti on the interior walls of classrooms.

5.2.1.2 School B

The analysis showed that learners from School B had different perceptions on the state of discipline at the school. Their perception that discipline at the school was under control could be misleading and might lead to a false sense of comfort that the school had no serious disciplinary problems.

Unacceptable behaviour and poor discipline had a negative impact on these learners’ attitude towards their academic commitment; something that could have negative consequences for their results in the long term. Schools that achieve low pass rates, will experience a decline in numbers, because parents prefer to send their children to schools where high pass rates are achieved.
Learners who wish to be successful, will finally lose faith in the management of the school and this will encourage them to request their parents to look for alternative, more disciplined schools at which they can continue their schooling.

Because of the experiences that educators encounter with disobedient learners, they need adequate support structures. Without support and encouragement, they might begin to feel isolated and become despondent at their task. Educators employed at schools with major disciplinary problems frequently find themselves suffering from stress and anxiety, as they cannot handle the pressure. Such a situation could also result in high absenteeism rates among educators; a situation that could contribute to poor discipline in the classroom. The consequences are that educators often leave the profession or are boarded for medical reasons. The implication is that schools are left with a shortage of educators, and that learners suffer.

As long as parents serving on the SGB of School B plead ignorance about school disciplinary problems, the school will continue to experience such problems, as no action will be taken. SGB members that are not aware of what is going on in their school also deprive the broader parent community of information concerning the teaching and learning of their children.

The socio-economic environment of School B echoes some of the behavioural problems educators experience at the school. Learners are confronted with issues such as alcohol and drug abuse, which reflects in their behaviour at school. Furthermore, while the physical environment of the school is not in an appalling state, learners tend to forget or just do not care to keep the school premises neat and tidy.

5.2.1.3 School C

The findings clearly showed that at this school, the use of illegal substances aggravated the behavioural problems and disobedience among learners. This situation could have disastrous consequences for the school and the
community. Learners who use illegal substances on the school premises or come to school under the influence have little or no control over their behavior and may act irresponsibly or irrationally while in such a state. With the school becoming a market for selling drugs, gangsterism will make bigger inroads into the learner community, with disastrous consequences for all learners and the community at large.

Due to the apathetic attitude of some educators at this school, there is little likelihood of discipline improving in the near future. If learners know that there is no consequences to their misconduct, classroom chaos may erupt, disturbing those educators who do try to teach effectively. Those educators who may still try to keep a firm hand on discipline, could become discouraged and demotivated. The possibility exists that the chaos may finally escalate into the school grounds and could become a real problem.

Proper guidance and role models are sorely lacking in the socio-economic environment in which these learners are growing up in. Educators have to deal with learners who abuse illegal substances, which has a negative influence on their behaviour. Poverty plays a major role in the physical state of the environment. Learners growing up in these conditions sometimes do not attach much value to what they have. This situation could have negative implications for the school, because learners could become destructive towards school property.

5.2.1.4 School D

The findings clearly showed that the learners at School D were aware of the appalling state of school discipline and were willing to work with the school management to transform the school. This means that learners had changed their attitudes and were willing to do something positive to change their behaviour. Disobedient learners were positively influenced by the conduct of their peers. The disciplinary problems had consequently become less frequent and the learning environment at the school had become much more productive.
This productive learning environment in which discipline had become a priority, resulted in much improved academic results. The spin-off of such a situation is that this school now has the potential to grow, because parents want their children to achieve and attend schools where education is the main priority.

Furthermore, the morale of educators at School D changed dramatically, from despondency to optimism. Educators now have the opportunity to concentrate on teaching, without the constant distraction of learner misconduct. On their part, learners understand that there will be consequences to unruly behaviour. Educator absenteeism has also dropped, creating less opportunity for unruliness in unattended classes. In schools where educators take pleasure in their work, they usually put extra effort into achieving quality results, without expecting any extra financial reward.

Parental involvement dramatically improved, as parents realised that their involvement was crucial to discipline. Parents came to face the harsh reality of the defiance that educators had to deal with regularly. Overall relationships between social structures, parents, educators and learners improved markedly. All stakeholders took personal responsibility for the teaching and learning endeavors at the school. This situation has positive implications for future endeavors, where the maximum participation from the broader parent community of the school may be needed.

Socially, learners are being set a sound example by adults on how to behave. However, a minority of learners remain who do not value this example and persist in their unruly conduct. The physical environment, given that it is situated in a disadvantaged community, is of such a nature that it should instill a sense of pride in learners. This should also reflect in their attitude towards their own school environment and the school should gain positively in the behaviour and attitudes of learners to keep the school neat and tidy.
5.3 THEME ONE B: IMPROVING THE STATE OF DISCIPLINE

5.3.1 School A

The analysis indicated that learners viewed the ‘absence’ of an SGB as the main reason for the poor state of discipline at the school. Discipline already in a very poor state, was deteriorating by the day, with the educators the sole figures of authority left to deal with the poor behaviour of learners.

5.3.2 School B

The findings showed that discipline was becoming a priority at this school. Learners were eager to see an improvement in discipline and insisted that the authorities employ methods that would produce better results. In order to achieve better behaved learners, they will have to give their cooperation in working together with the SGB. The implication of this is that the learners will improve their behaviour, which will most probably also enhance the school’s academic progress.

5.3.3 School C

From the findings, it was clear that learners viewed the poor physical state and facilities at their school as major reasons for the poor state of discipline. The SGB members were generally passive partners and stakeholders in the school and did little or nothing to improve the conditions at the school. This means that until the SGB initiates something constructively to improve the physical condition of the school and create proper facilities for learners, discipline will remain a problem.

5.3.4 School D

In the analysis, it was found that discipline at this school was improving daily thanks to a collective effort from learners, educators, parents and the
Department of Education. The improved state of discipline meant that learners were cooperating with the school authorities to improve the general state of discipline. A learning environment in which there is cooperation between all the different stakeholders, creates an opportunity for excellent achievements.

5.4 THEME TWO: DEALING WITH DISCIPLINARY PROBLEMS

From the findings, it became obvious that the management strategies implemented by Schools A, C and, to a large extent, also B, had not succeeded in maintaining discipline among learners. The implication of this is that schools A, B and C will continue to struggle with learners who behave badly and disobey the school rules, as there is no proper and effective deterrent in place. Alternative strategies will have to be sought to bring about any desired change.

In contrast to the first three schools, School D had implemented drastic changes by introducing a “no-tolerance” attitude, in terms of which transgressions were treated in ways learners wanted to avoid. This firm approach has positively impacted on learner behaviour, and the school as a whole has made great strides in discipline. The implication of such a positive change is that teaching and learning, and consequently also results, have improved.

If at schools A and C and, to some extent, School B, learner behaviour remains atrocious, the schools and ultimately the community will suffer the negative consequences of poor education and the social problems associated with it. If the situation in the schools shows no improvement, the Department of Education will have to take drastic action, which may include the replacement or redeployment of educators. A situation like this could potentially disrupt the teaching programme of the year, particularly affecting matriculants who are preparing for their final examinations.
5.5 THEME THREE: ROLE OF THE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODY REGARDING MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE

The data gathered seemed to point to the fact that most of the learners at the selected schools did not know what the responsibilities of SGBs were regarding discipline or who the parent members of the SGBs were. This meant that SGBs enjoyed little or no status and also failed to instill a sense of authority or respect among learners that could have deterred them from transgressing.

Given that most learners at the selected schools did not know who the parent SGB members were, nor had any knowledge of their disciplinary powers, it stands to reason that the “fear factor” will be absent. They will therefore not be likely to modify their behaviour, due to the lack of some perceived authoritative structure that could take action against poor behaviour.

Learners who understand the disciplinary powers of SGBs are more likely to behave well in order to avoid negative or unpleasant consequences, such as being called to a disciplinary hearing. Also, where parents are called upon to assist in school activities, learners will soon realise that such parents enjoy the support of the SGB and school management and as such have a measure of disciplinary powers. The implication of this is that learners in general may become more cautious about indulging in unruly behaviour when there are parents about. This will hopefully develop into a more permanent habit of good behaviour. The more visible SGB members and other figures of authority are, the better learners will behave.

Given the poor state of discipline and sometimes pitiable conditions at previously disadvantaged schools, the morale of educators is very low. Assistance from the Department of Education is often dispiritingly non-existent, so educators usually call upon the SGB for assistance. The SGB has a duty to support teaching and learning and should therefore assist and support educators in every way possible. Educators with a low morale and a negative attitude will hardly be able to give their full commitment to their teaching task.
Consequently, the learners will not be able to gain from all the expertise that such an educator could potentially have contributed to their learning and development. At School D, the change in attitude and commitment of educators that materialised after the change in commitment from the SGB, illustrates this point clearly.

5.6 THEME FOUR: SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES

5.6.1 Training, Development and Literacy Level

The findings indicated that without proper training and development, the majority of parents who served on the SGB of the selected schools may find it virtually impossible to fulfill their duties, including the maintenance of school discipline, effectively. Lack of training and development therefore negatively influences the efficacy of the SGB as a whole.

Where training has taken place, those attending perceived the facilitators to be oblivious to their needs. For instance, difficult concepts were used without explaining them in simple and appropriate language. This rendered attendance of training workshops to a large extent a waste of time. Parents, who were generally illiterate and not skilled in other languages, felt disparaged and perceived their effort at attending these workshops as wasted. At meetings, they often were not able to make any constructive contribution and this might have lead to so many not attending meetings regularly.

From the data gathered, it became clear that some of the parents elected to serve on the SGBs of selected schools had not been elected for the skills or expertise they could contribute to the organisation, but simply based on their availability. Most of these parents had a low literacy level and felt that they therefore could not contribute much to the functionalities of the SGB. The contribution such parents did make, was often limited, because they lacked confidence and felt insecure. These members then became passive members in name only. Such parents, because of their voting powers, could potentially
torpedo SGB activities, with dire consequences for the entire school and its learners.

5.6.2 Relationship with broader parent community

It became evident that at schools where parents were not generally involved in all school activities, the effectiveness of the SGB was jeopardised. As the SGB of a school is considered to be the representative body of the parent community, it serves as their mouthpiece. The vision and mission of the school should therefore be steered by the parent community. Without their “buy-in”, no commitment will follow, resulting in an apathy that will ultimately filter through to the learners.

Non-involvement of the broader parent community and a dysfunctional SGB largely transfer the decision-making powers to the management of schools. Under the previous Education Department, principals were in charge of their schools and unfortunately often abused their position. If the SGB of a school is ineffective because of lack of support from the broader parent community, such abuse of power by principals might re-occur.

The development of a school relies on the participation of all parents of the school community. Schools that flourish, are those where parents become part of fund-raising efforts and volunteer their time and skills to the school; on the other hand, those schools that lack this kind of involvement from parents will not progress and might easily fall into neglect on a wide front.

Having outlined the various implications for the selected schools, recommendations are now made in order to provide guidelines for SGBs to function more effectively to improve discipline in schools.
5.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this research was to investigate how effective school governing bodies were in maintaining discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas. Another aim was to provide guidelines and recommendations for SGBs to improve their effectiveness in maintaining discipline. The implications for the schools used in this research are now amalgamated and the following recommendations are presented.

5.7.1 THEME ONE A: State of discipline

- General

The SGB of the schools should at the commencement of the new school year orientate learners about the Code of Conduct of the school. During the orientation, the school rules must be explained to all learners, especially those enrolled at the school for the first time. The SGB should make sure that all learners understand the content of the Code of Conduct. It must therefore be accessible, clear and unambiguous. Rules and the consequences of breaking rules should be clearly indicated to the learners during this orientation. Bray (2005:133) suggests that a copy of the Code of Conduct must be sent to the Department of Education, and parents and educators must also all receive copies. The Code must furthermore be published in the school magazine and prominently displayed on school notice-boards.

The SGB should set systems in place to keep school principals, as school managers, accountable for keeping good order in the school environment. Principals and management are accountable to the SGB and broader parent community and have to enforce the Code of Conduct of the school. The SGB of the school must also re-evaluate the Code of Conduct on a regular basis, and copies thereof must be sent to parents for comments. After every re-evaluation and amendment, the new copy must be made available to learners and educators. Given our culturally integrated schools, learners should receive
copies in their preferred or home language. Every learner at the school must understand all that is inscribed in the Code of Conduct.

Governing bodies of schools have, in terms of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996b), the responsibility to appoint educators in public schools. Schools sometimes struggle with the Department of Education regarding the appointment of educators. Disciplinary problems often erupt in classes where there are no educators. SGBs must therefore appoint substitute educators, even if on a temporary basis, until the Department of Education appoints someone. SGBs, especially in impoverished areas where there is usually less funds available to compensate substitute educators, must find alternative funding to compensate these educators, even if they have to involve parents to help raise funds. Van Wyk (2007:132) agrees that the SGB may employ teachers additional to those salaried by the Provincial Department of Education, as long as the school raises the necessary funds for such additional teachers. The priority focus must be that the learners must never be without supervision. Parents who are indebted with school fees could also volunteer or sell their labor by supervising classes, in respect of which school fees could be deducted.

The SGB should request educators who are responsible for teaching Life Orientation to include in their curriculum topics such as problem solving, conflict management, moral issues and tolerance. Educators can achieve this by making use of discussions, debating and role-play during instruction periods. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:41) believe that welfare programmes and learner discussion groups can be instrumental in alleviating common problems that may lead to undisciplined behaviour. Hopefully, learners will be able to learn basic moral values, such as being loyal, honest and having respect for the authority of the school and their parents and for their fellow learners. In the classroom, educators and learners can formulate their own classroom rules, and learners should sign an agreement with everyone in the classroom to abide by that disciplinary code.
SGBs are usually aware of the difficulties that educators are experiencing with poor discipline. Educators, on the other hand, are generally not aware of alternative disciplinary measures, following the abolishment of corporal punishment. SGBs should approach the Department of Education for workshops on the application of alternatives to corporal punishment. If the Department of Education remains reluctant to conduct such workshops, the SGB should invite experts and professionals in the field to conduct workshops with educators. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000:40) even suggest that the SGBs make available to the educators literature on the theory and management of discipline to ensure that they adopt a more caring and empathic approach.

Teaching and learning must always be regarded as priority. Shortened school days or teaching periods should therefore be the exception. Principals, as the school manages, are accountable to the SGB and community and must see to it that schools start on time, that teaching starts punctually, and that learners are in their classrooms. Schools at which discipline is a problem, usually experience difficulties with punctuality. Good order right from the start of the school day may prevent the sliding of standards elsewhere. Clarke (2007:66) is of the opinion that SGBs, with principals, should adopt a strategy of promoting extracurricular activities like sport or cultural activities to lengthen the school day in order to foster a sense of belonging in learners. Learners must experience the school as a place of work and play.

Parents seem to forget that discipline should start at home and that they have a contribution to make in order to ease the burden on educators at school. If they as parents are not good behavioural role models or start with discipline at home, the educators and school will not be able to achieve much where discipline is concerned. Parents who are not involved and who do not demonstrate their commitment to help the school will have continuous problems with disobedient learners, to the disadvantage of the school and the broader community. Schools with the input of parents should develop programs on disciplinary techniques which parents can implement at home to improve the behaviour of learners at school.
Learners should be regarded as an integral part of the discipline of the school. The prefects and the Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) of schools, who are the learners' chosen leaders, can play a meaningful role in the disciplinary process. They can, for example, report when strangers enter the school grounds, when vendors sell cigarettes or drugs to learners, or when learners carry weapons.

- **Physical environment**

Van Wyk (2007:133) suggests that SGBs may oversee the maintenance of school property and buildings. SGBs of public schools should see to it that schools are well maintained, neat and clean. Learners who experience such conditions at school will be more likely to be persuaded to keep the school in such condition. The maintenance of a school should be an on-going, closely monitored process. People value a well-kept environment, as it provides a more pleasant setting for teaching and learning.

The SGB has no control over the physical layout of the school, but can still make changes to the buildings to enhance good discipline. To attain better control over learners' activities especially in trouble areas, SGBs can, for example, create fewer entry and exit points to and from the school and re-locate learner activities to places where there is more control. The idea must be to make the school a more disciplined environment, without creating a too restrictive environment for learners.

The SGB and all the relevant stakeholders should develop a programme to make the school safe for all learners and educators. According to Prinsloo (2006:312), Section 24 of the Constitution gives learners the right to receive education in a safe school environment. SGBs have a major responsibility in ensuring that the learners' right to a safe school is realised.

Schools generally overlook the Adopt-a-Cop Programme, which could well produce positive results. Governing bodies, especially in impoverished areas,
should make use of this Programme and invite the relevant SAPS officer to come to the school and talk to learners about crime, violence and drugs. All the negative consequences and legal implications related to such criminal activities should be explained to the learners. In impoverished areas, this might seem difficult, because of the rampant crime and gangsterism, but Clarke (2007:65) suggests that schools must host meetings with the South African Police Services, the Department of Welfare and NGOs who operate in the area.

5.7.2 THEME ONE B: Improving the state of discipline

Schools should consider introducing an orientation programme to orientate SGB members on their roles and responsibilities when they are inducted as SGB members. This can be done in the form of an awareness manual, to guide SGB members in their responsibilities as school governors. Parents as SGB members need to be aware that their roles as governors include being involved in the school on a daily basis.

Educators in public schools are finding it difficult to effectively discipline learners through alternative methods since the abolition of corporal punishment. SGBs should consider arranging workshops on alternative methods to discipline learners. For their educators, trained professionals are available to present such workshops. This will help with the frustrations educators experience when failing in their efforts to enforce discipline.

Maintaining good discipline should be a priority at schools where there are fewer disciplinary problems. SGBs should consider giving learners incentives as inspiration to adhere to the Code of Conduct of the school. One incentive could be to give learners who were not absent over the year, a percentage discount on school fees for the next year and enter their name on a “role of honour” in the classroom.

Schools, especially those in previously disadvantaged areas, are still struggling with poor physical conditions and a lack of decent facilities for learners. SGBs
should, in order to improve the condition of the school, make use of the media to involve the community and businesses at large to embark on a collective effort to make the school more learner-friendly by providing facilities such as sports fields, sporting equipment, libraries and computers. These could also be made available to the community, at a fee.

5.7.3 THEME TWO: Dealing with disciplinary problems

- General

The best way to deal with disciplinary problems is to strictly enforce the Code of Conduct of the school. Van Wyk (2007:136) states that the SGB is legally empowered and, after consultation with educators, parents and learners, must adopt a Code of Conduct for learners and furthermore ensure that learners abide by it. Principals of schools should be held accountable for the strict enforcement of the clear and unambiguous school rules. Serious behavioural problems must be dealt with by the Disciplinary Committee of the SGB, and the errant learner should be given a fair hearing. Tsotetsi, Van Wyk and Lemmer (2008:385) believe that SGB members need training to cope with all prescribed tasks. Some specialised tasks, like the handling of disciplinary hearings, should be addressed in specialised training programmes.

As it seems as if training by the Department of Education is problematic, schools should form clusters and negotiate with schools whose SGBs are highly functional and effective to assist with the training of their SGBs. Furthermore, SGBs and management should never be afraid to consult with neighbouring schools or schools in other areas who have a reasonable success rate in maintaining discipline. By sharing ideas on successes as well as failures, schools can learn from their peers on how to maintain discipline and try to implement similar strategies. In this way, schools in the cluster can support one another.
The local Police must, through the Adopt-a-Cop Programme, be contacted if learners or educators became aware of any learner carrying drugs or dangerous weapons. The Police Services can also embark on spot searches if the SGB and management see the need for such action. The Police Services has the resources and skills to find drugs or weapons concealed by learners and to apprehend the dealers.

SGBs of schools should have a policy in place to empower educators to be able to deal with a multiplicity of possible behavioural problems. Squelsh and Lemmer (1994:42) are of the opinion that discipline needs to be planned and implemented in an organised way. Policies and approaches will differ from school to school because of the unique situation of each. Learners, especially those coming from impoverished areas where the negative may seem normal to them, need to be dealt with in an empathic manner, due to the complex environment and home conditions from which they come. Educators must be empowered to deal correctly with such learners. Information sessions from, for example Childline or social workers, would also be valuable.

- Socio-economic environment

Schools are often situated in poor socio-economic areas, where drugs and alcohol are major problems. Learners find that they do not know how to deal with the major problem confronting them. If such learners appeared before the Disciplinary Committee and were found guilty, the SGB should compel the parents to take them for professional help before they are allowed back into the school. Parents must present proof that such visits took place and report to the SGB on a regular basis of the ongoing rehabilitation or counseling of their children.

Parents on the SGB could start their involvement by taking charge of the assemblies at the beginning of each week. At the assemblies, parents serving on the SGB could explain to learners what their roles and responsibilities are towards the school community and especially towards maintaining discipline at
the school. Stevens, Wyngaard and Van Niekerk (2001:152) state that parents must be encouraged to participate in the educational process with activities such as helping to supervise corridors, playgrounds, toilets and other identified trouble spots.

The SGB should draw up a programme where parents can be used to do terrain duty during intervals and even during teaching periods to ensure that learners are not unnecessarily out of their classes during teaching hours. Parents can also take charge of which items are sold to learners during intervals. The SGB could even employ a security guard, who must be responsible for ensuring that learners do not leave the school premises without the permission of the principal. Van Wyk (2007:135) regards the SGB as a legal structure tasked with ensuring the safety and discipline of learners in the school, and as such, the SGB has the right to implement the rules and regulations it deems necessary for the discipline and safety of its learners.

5.7.4 THEME THREE: The role of the School Governing Body regarding maintaining discipline

- Visibility

The visibility on the school premises of the parents serving on the SGB is imperative for the SGB to be able to maintain discipline. Being visible means that the parent SGB members must be involve at the school on a daily basis. Parents who are unemployed, or not employed on a full-time basis, should play a more active role in this regard, because of the time they have at their disposal. Governing bodies, through their national structures, must seriously consider negotiating with national government to remunerate unemployed parent SGB members for services rendered to their schools. This will most definitely motivate parents to become more involved in their school.

During breaks, parents could monitor trouble areas, like the sports fields, where learners usually go to smoke. Manning the gates and the boundary fences of
the school grounds during intervals may prevent learners from leaving the school premises and stop them from buying cigarettes or drugs.

All unemployed parents should become visible by showing their presence during instruction time, during formal classroom visitations, and during special events, such as sport and recreational activities, fundraising efforts and 'open days'. Learners and educators need to experience parents’ presence in the capacity of the roles they play; for learners as disciplinarians and for educators as that much-needed support structure at the school. Learners as well as educators must be aware of the main purpose of parents’ presence, namely to ensure that learners behave appropriately.

- **Educator support**

Educators who know that they can depend on the support of the SGB in their efforts to maintain good discipline will feel more confident and secure in fulfilling daily responsibilities at the school. Educators who are confident that they have the support of their school management and SGB when disciplining learners will be more likely to succeed in changing learners’ behaviour. Stevens *et al.* (2001:152) are of the opinion that school violence tends to decline when responsible adult supervision and support to educators is consistently present.

The SGB, in its capacity as school governors, should employ a counsellor to help learners who constantly display negative behaviour. Determining the root causes of the negative behaviour and having counselling sessions can be helpful to the learner, home environment and school. Experienced counsellors could help educators and parents who may not have the knowledge and experience to deal with such matters. Counselling learners may also be able to help peers experiencing similar problems.
• Extramural activities

Extramural activities in a more informal setting could be adopted as a perfect catalyst for parent SGB members, educators and learners to become better acquainted with one another. From this interaction, a relationship of mutual respect that enhances good behaviour may develop.

Parents could also arrange for weekend camps and assist with field trips, enabling learners to integrate and socialise and develop mutual respect for one another’s cultures, personalities and interests.

SGBs and educators should also forge a strong partnership for the development of both parties. Creese and Early (1999:27) regard off-site weekends as an excellent opportunity for parents and educators to build such partnerships. Social interaction provides the opportunity to discover what their concerns are and how they perceive issues that distress both groupings.

• Parents

The SGBs of schools should involve the parents of learners who are frequently involved in disciplinary issues to help deal with their children. Learners are usually less inclined to misbehave when they know that their parents will discipline them. This will also give parents the opportunity to learn of the problems their children are having and work on these at home. This can also serve as a starting point to launch a support structure for parents who have difficulties in disciplining their children.
5.7.5 THEME FOUR: School Governing Bodies

5.7.5.1 Training, Development and Literacy Level

- Commitment

Before being inducted as parent SGB members, parents should commit themselves by, for example, signing a letter of commitment to undergo training if they had no former formal training as SGB members. Parents must not be allowed to make themselves available to serve on an SGB if they are not prepared to undergo such training. Van Wyk (2004:53) suggests that training should be enhanced to help parents cope with their tasks. Follow-up training to evaluate their performance must be implemented. Parents who received training and successfully completed such training on any aspect of school governance should also be issued with a certificate from the Department of Education.

Creese and Early (1999:28) suggest that after inducted as new member of the SGB a mentor must take charge of mentoring such member. Part of a mentor’s responsibility should be to give some form of ongoing training and the necessary information and documentation.

Although training and development is the responsibility of the Department of Education, SGBs should not wait for the Department of Education or NGOs appointed by them to start training. They themselves, together with neighbouring schools, should begin to consult with one another and arrange training sessions, even if they have to compensate someone with the required knowledge and experience to present such workshops or training sessions. Management of schools must include in their annual budgets finances for training and the development of SGB members. Essential issues in schools such as discipline that needs specialised training must be prioritised at such sessions.
Trainers/Facilitators

Facilitators in charge of training must understand that the ability of individuals to grasp information differs and that they should conduct workshops with that in mind. The strategies employed at such workshops must make it possible for parents to comprehend everything that is discussed. Facilitators should therefore make use of charts, posters and any other medium to convey information in a clear manner.

Furthermore, provision should be made for different language preferences when workshops are conducted. Training must be provided in the preferred vernacular to be fully understood by parent members, and not in the language that suits the providers. English which is usually used at such workshops is not always understood by parents who speak another language. Tsotetsi et al. (2008:385) see this as a challenge to trainers, especially where schools are situated in rural or disadvantaged areas where the parents may understand their vernacular language only.

Training and development programmes should always take into consideration the needs of the community. Trainers who train SGB members from impoverished communities where discipline may be a problem must target discipline as a priority and provide intensive training on such topic. It would also be helpful if trainers engage beforehand with SGBs to establish the areas in which SGB members lack knowledge or skills. Trainers can use this information to prioritise time allocation. Continuous training is essential after introductory courses, because the expertise is lost after SGB members have served their term and leave.

Planning of training sessions should be done well in advance. Governors must know what will be discussed, in order to prepare themselves to contribute valuable inputs and discuss problems in a meaningful way. Parents will be requested to give their interpretation and understanding of problematic issues, such as what the procedures are to expel a learner guilty of serious misconduct.
Tsotetsi et al. (2008:385) suggest that in order to be effective, training sessions of SGB members must be well structured and organised.

It is unfortunate that the majority of SGB parents, especially those from schools situated in poor socio-economic areas, have a low literacy level. These parents must, however, not be regarded as less valuable, because they can still be used to serve effectively on the SGBs of schools. Providing all parents with appropriate literacy training, such as ABET, will expand the pool of candidates and also lift the general literacy levels of the community at large. Adult educational programmes are an initiative of the National Department of Education that can be utilised by all parents to improve their levels of literacy. SGBs can contribute financially to the studies of those parent SGB members willing to improve their levels of literacy if they themselves do not have the financial means to do so. SGBs could take the initiative to introduce such programmes at their schools for themselves and the community at large, an initiative that will have positive outcomes for all.

SGBs should also create structures that are responsible for the recruitment of SGB members. School management can help SGBs by providing information in the form of a skills audit of all parents that have children enrolled at the school. The learner portfolio consists of all the information needed to compile such an audit. The SGB could scrutinise this information and recruit parents to serve on the SGB according to their skills. The SGBs can also use such information to co-opt parent members who possess the skills needed to improve the competency of the SGB as governing body of the school.

SGBs should do more to improve the level of literacy by providing SGB parents with enough literature concerning governance. Informal discussions on their responsibilities is a good strategy to utilise, as communication on a more informal level will most likely put them at ease and allow learning to proceed more naturally.
5.7.5.2 SGBs’ relationship with the broader parent community

- Parental involvement

One of the possible reasons why parents from poor socio-economic areas withdraw from participating in their children’s school activities is that they fear that the school will put more financial pressure on them. The task of the SGB is to convince parents that the school can initiate strategies to overcome such perceptions and help parents find alternative ways to address their financial commitments to the school. For example, parents can be used to render specific services for remuneration to enable them to pay school fees.

Parents from poor socio-economic areas often have difficulty to attend school meetings, because of financial constraints or the inappropriate timing of meetings. SGBs should make use of flyers and notices at local businesses to announce the dates and times of such meetings. This should be done well in advance, so that parents can plan properly. Van der Westhuizen and Mosoge (2001:194) even recommend that SGBs should provide transport to parents from impoverished areas who may not have their own means of transport.

Parent meetings at which the progress reports of the learners are issued, are usually well attended. These meetings can be used as platforms to address parents, and inform them of their responsibilities regarding school discipline. If a member of the SGB is not capable or sufficiently informed to undertake the task, someone from the community or the Department of Education can be invited.

The SGB should encourage educators and parents to establish parent-teacher associations (PTAs) at schools. This will promote a closer relationship between parents and educators. Parents who are members of the PTA can function as parent service groups who voluntarily provide help with service-related activities. Such activities could include temporary supervision in place of educators who are absent or are attending workshops, and the supervision of
learners doing homework after school. Clarke (2007:62) regards the PTA of a school as a good training ground for future governors.

Parents not on the SGB should be committed to become involved in the activities of their school. Schools, especially in impoverished areas where unemployment is a problem, can serve the community by providing training in specialised skills. Skills such as plumbing, carpentry, welding, needlework and even computer skills should be provided at minimal cost to parents. Parents can in return provide their own skills to the schools by doing maintenance work.

Learners who are not progressing academically can also make use of this service to skill themselves and make fellow learners aware of the importance of caring for their school. Gann (1998:157) states that schools sometimes do not recognise the benefits of this in learners' commitment, attendance, attitude, and behaviour.

- Community organisations

Parents are sometimes part of the business community, or at least buy from and support local business. The business people in communities are very important to the schools. Schools can benefit financially when SGBs form partnerships with businesses. Learners at schools in poor socio-economic areas who, for example, cannot afford to pay school fees or afford school uniforms can be sponsored by these businesses, or learners can be employed on a part-time basis (weekends) to earn money to support themselves.

Schools in impoverished areas often cannot provide recreational facilities for learners. Local businesses could be invited to contribute towards such resources, in return being allowed to erect their boards on the sports field. This is good advertising for the business.

The Department of Social Development and Non-governmental Organisations can be approached by the SGB to provide the school with counsellors to
counsel learners with emotional and behavioural problems. Learners can also be trained to become counsellors who can assist their peers. The SGB should approach the Department to develop recreational facilities for children in the community. Parents themselves can take the responsibility to become involved and run some of these facilities. Love Life games is one of the organisations that provides programmes to learners how to deal with social issues like drugs and alcohol abuse and teenage pregnancies. SGBs that wish to make the learners of their school their priority can use these organisations in their quest to develop a better environment for all community members.

One of the most important functions of the broader community is to provide learners with safe schools. The SGB of a school has to involve the community in which the school is situated in planning for a safer school. Stevens et al. (2001:153) believe that by adopting a bottom-up approach in working together with community agencies, effective educational and behavioural plans to protect the rights of learners and staff can be developed.

5.8 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

Four secondary schools in the Northern Areas of Port Elizabeth were selected for this study. The schools were situated in a relatively small area of Port Elizabeth. To involve more schools from the broader Port Elizabeth area would have been the ideal, but was impractical, because of time and financial constraints.

The selected schools were all situated in previously disadvantaged communities that were still confronted with the same socio-economic challenges as in the apartheid era. Involving schools from more advantaged communities would have contributed to a comparison that would have made the findings more valid and comprehensive.

The learners at the selected schools were predominantly from the so-called coloured population, with a minority from the black community. The inclusion of
schools where other race groups were dominant would have added value to the comparisons and findings.

Three of the four selected schools were in close proximity of each other and the researcher was an educator at one of the schools. The selection of schools was done to make the collection of data and visitations to schools easy. Learners, educators and parent SGB members participated in this study. However, the participation of officials from the Department of Education and members of the broader community to also get their perspectives, would have enhanced this study.

5.9 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The following aspects could be investigated further:

- The competence levels of facilitators responsible for the training and development of parent SGB members.

- A comparative study on the effectiveness of the SGBs at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas against SGBs at former Model C schools.

5.10 CONCLUSION

Changes in the Constitution heralded a new education system, which culminated in restructured legislation. The transformation led to the separation of management and governance in public schools, with parents becoming the most important component in the governance of schools.

New legislation passed regarding the punishment of learners saw the abolition of corporal punishment, and educators had to find alternative disciplinary measures. However, educators were unprepared to act appropriately in this
regard and the situation has resulted in the deterioration of discipline, especially at schools situated in poor socio-economic areas.

A comprehensive study was conducted to look at possible reasons for learners misbehaving and what could be done by schools to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning. Included in this study are the perceptions and experiences of learners, educators and parents serving on the SGBs of the selected schools on the issues concerning discipline at their respective schools.

The purpose for this study was to establish what possible reasons there were for the SGBs to not being able to address school discipline successfully. This chapter focused on the implications of poor discipline for schools. Recommendations were made that may equip parents serving on SGBs to help maintain school discipline.

The researcher feels that all the stated research objectives were reached. The most valuable aspect of this study is considered to be the emphasis on the dissemination of information and sensitisation of school management, educators and members of the SGB regarding the importance of functional SGBs when it comes to all aspects of governance, especially regarding discipline.


Gomes, A.M. 2008. *A Supplementary Coping Skills Programme for Parents of Children Diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*. South Africa: NMMU, Faculty of Education.


Hofstee, E. 2006. *Constructing a Good Dissertation: A Practical Guide To Finishing a Master’s, MBA or Ph.D. on Schedule*. Johannesburg, South Africa: EPE.


APPENDIX A

ETHICS APPROVAL
Ref: [H06-EDU-ASE-016 Approval]

Contact person: Carol Post

27 May 2006

Mr A Hawkins
Education Faculty
NMMU

Dear Mr. Hawkins,

HOW EFFECTIVE ARE SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES REGARDING MAINTAINING DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOLS SITUATED IN POOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC AREAS?

Your anew-entitled application for ethics approval served at the May 2008 meeting of the Faculty Research, Technology and Innovation Committee (ERTIC) was approved by the Committee.

We take pleasure in informing you that the application was approved by the Committee.

The ethics clearance reference number is H06-EDU-ASE-016.

We wish you well with the project. Please inform your co-investigators of the outcome, and convey our best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Prof M M Botha
Chairperson: ERTIC
APPENDIX B

LETTER TO DISTRICT MANAGER
Dear Sir / Madam

Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

I am an M.Ed Research student at Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and am currently involved in conducting research on the effectiveness of school governing bodies in maintaining discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas in the Port Elizabeth area.

I request your permission to do my empirical research in the following secondary schools: Bertram, Arcadia, Sanctor and St Thomas situated in your district.

For the empirical study I will need to conduct interviews and distribute questionnaires. Ethical clearance will be obtained before proceeding with the empirical part of this study.

I would highly appreciate your permission to proceed with this research in the four schools mentioned before.

Thank you.

Yours in education

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MR. A. H. HAWKINS
APPENDIX C

APPROVAL FROM DISTRICT MANAGER
Mr A.H. Hawkins
40 Adam Street
Stonehaven
Port Elizabeth
6059

Dear Mr Hawkins

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT PORT ELIZABETH SCHOOLS

I refer to your letter dated July 2008 and received on 02 June 2009.

Permission is hereby granted for you to conduct your research on the following conditions:

1. your research must be conducted on a voluntary basis;
2. all ethical issues relating to research must be honoured;
3. your research is subject to the internal rules of the school, including its curricular programme and its code of conduct and must not interfere in the day-to-day routine of the school.

Kindly present a copy of this letter to the principal as proof of permission.

I wish you good luck in your research.

Yours faithfully

[Signature]

L.M.T. MBCPA
ACTING DISTRICT DIRECTOR: PORT ELIZABETH
APPENDIX D

LETTER TO PRINCIPALS
Dear Sir / Madam

Re: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH STUDY

I am an M.Ed Research student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University and am currently conducting research on "How effective is school governing bodies in the maintaining of discipline in schools situated in poor socio-economic areas".

I wish to request permission to involve you, selected staff members, parents on the governing body and selected learners as participants for the purpose of this study.

Permission has been granted by the district manager and all ethical clearance is in place.

Thanking you in anticipation.

Yours in education

MR. A. H. HAWKINS
APPENDIX E

LETTER TO PARENTS OF LEARNERS
JULY 2008

Dear Parent

Re: PERMISSION FOR YOUR CHILD TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

I am an M.Ed Research student at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University conducting research on “The effectiveness of school governing bodies maintaining discipline in public schools situated in poor socio-economic areas”.

I wish to request your permission to allow your child to participate in this study, by completing a questionnaire on the topic of the research.

I trust that my request will receive a favorable response. Ethical structures are in place and your child’s name will not be mentioned anywhere.

I thank you in anticipation of your support for my research.

Yours faithfully

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MR. A. H. HAWKINS
APPENDIX F

PARENT CONSENT FORM
INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Title of the research project: How effective is School Governing Bodies maintaining discipline in public schools situated in poor socio-economic areas.

Principal investigator: Alan H Hawkins

Address: 49 Adam Street
Salsoneville
Port Elizabeth
6059

Contact Details: Tel. 041-4810887
Cell. 0837271702

I HEREBY GIVE MY CONSENT VOLUNTARILY THAT MY CHILD PARTICIPATE IN THE ABOVEMENTIONED PROJECT.

Signed/confirmed at (place)…………………..(date)……………………

Name of learner:………………………………

Signature of parent:…………………………..

Signature of witness:…………………………
APPENDIX G

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS
Questionnaire for Educators

Please respond to the following open-ended questions on the effectiveness of the school governing body regarding (SGB) maintaining discipline at your school as sincerely and honestly as possible.

1. What kind of disciplinary problems do you experience at your school? (list)

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2. How are these addressed in your school?

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3. What are your views on the effectiveness of the SGB regarding maintaining good discipline?

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4. In your view, to what extend is the SGB aware of the disciplinary problems educators are experiencing at your school.

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5. To what extend is the SGB able to solve disciplinary problems at your school?

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6. How would you describe the training and development that members of the SGB receive to execute their duty as disciplinary body of the school?
Do you think the disciplinary committee of the SGB at your school are trained and developed enough to conduct a disciplinary hearing according to the guidelines prescribed in the South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996)? Give possible reasons for your answer.

8. To what extend would you say is the SGB aware of their responsibility as a disciplinary body at the school?

9. In your opinion, do you think that the members of the SGB at your school are fully aware of their responsibility as disciplinarian body of the school? Yes/No

10. If no, what do you suggest can be done to help the SGB in this regard?

11. How would you describe the relationship between the governing body members and the broader parent community regarding the state of discipline at the school and problems educators are experiencing?

12. What is being done to keep parents informed on issues like discipline?
13. How do you suggest can the relationship between school and home be improved?

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14. To what extend does the principle and School Management Team (SMT) involve, encourage and support the SGB in the facilitation of disciplinary hearings to help enforce the Code of Conduct at your school?

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15. To what extend are the learners at your school aware of the SGB’s role regarding discipline maintenance.

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16. Do you think that the awareness of the learners regarding the role of the SGB will have an influence on their behavior? Give reasons for your answer.

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17. If you had to rate your SGB’s accomplishments regarding maintaining discipline on a scale 1-5 (1: very poor, 2: poor, 3: satisfactory, 4: good, 5: excellent) how would you rate them? Give an explanation why you rated your SGB on that level.

Rating: 1 2 3 4 5

Reason for my rating:----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

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If you wish to add any information not covered in this questionnaire, please feel free to do so.
THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.

Your assistance is highly appreciated.
APPENDIX H

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENT SGB MEMBERS
Questionnaire for Parents as SGB-members

Please complete the questionnaire (Section A and B) as honestly as possible:

Section A

1. Age: ------------
2. Gender: -----------
3. Home language: -----------
4. Highest grade (standard) passed: ----------
5. Highest tertiary qualification: ------------
6. Any skills training received (apprenticeship or specific training for your work): ------------
7. If yes, please state kind of training received. ------------------------------------------
8. Currently employed or unemployed: --------------
9. Place of employment (government, semi government, private sector or self-employed): ----------
10. What is your job title: --------------
11. What does your job entails?-------------------------------------------------------------

12. Years serving on the current SGB: ----------
13. Any training regarding SGB activities received while serving on the SGB (yes/no): ------------
14. If yes, how many training courses already attended: ---------
15. Specify on which aspects of school governance (e.g. finance, discipline, etc.) you received training on-------------------------------------------------------------------

16. Please list topics where follow-up training were received after first course: ---

17. Language in which course was presented: -----------
18. What language would you prefer to receive training in? ----------
19. Did you serve on any SGB before serving on this one? ----------
20. Outside of the SGB environment, did you acquire any skill that can contribute to the more effective functioning of the SGB? 

Section B.

1. How would you describe the state of discipline at your school?

2. In your opinion, what are possible reasons for the state of discipline described above?

3. How effective is the SGB in the maintaining of discipline in your school?

4. Does the SGB you are serving on have a Code of Conduct for learners?

5. Were you part of drawing up the Code of Conduct?

6. Have you as SGB member been trained to draw up a Code of Conduct for the learners at your school?

7. What are the main standards of maintaining discipline as per your school’s Code of Conduct?

8. Do you think that all SGB members are well acquainted with the guidelines of a Code of Conduct for learners set out in the South African Schools Act (SASA,
9. Has the SGB you sit on at any stage of governance worked on new/alternative measures to maintain discipline? Please list such measures.

10. Do you think the Department of Education (DoE) is doing enough to train and equip SGB members at your school to maintain discipline? If NO, what do you recommend the DoE do?

11. How can the principal and School Management Team (SMT) contribute towards to make the SGB more effective in maintaining discipline?

12. What do you think parents can do to help the SGB in maintaining discipline at your school?

13. Do you think that parents of learners at your school are in any way contributing in maintaining discipline at this school? If yes, name some examples.

14. In your opinion, what can the SGB do to encourage learners to value and respect the Code of Conduct of this school more?
15. Were any learners referred to the SGB for disciplining while you were serving on the SGB? Yes/No  
If yes, what measures were implemented?  

16. Briefly explain the transgression and what the outcome of the hearing was?  

17. Did all members know what procedures to follow during the disciplinary hearing?  

Please feel free to add any information not covered in this questionnaire that you feel is important to take note of.  

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.
APPENDIX I

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS
Your assistance is highly appreciated.

**Questionnaire for Learners**

Please complete the following questionnaire (Section A and Section B) as sincerely and honestly as possible:

**Section A**

4. Area you're staying in: ---------------
5. How many years at this school: ------

**Section B**

1. Since what year have you been enrolled as learner at this particular school? 

2. To your knowledge is there a functional School Governing Body (SGB) at this particular school? If yes, when was the SGB introduced to you for the first time? 

3. Please list the different groups that are represented on the SGB. 

4. Describe what you think the role of the SGB is? 

5. Are you as learners involved in selecting representatives for the SGB? If yes, briefly explain how the process of selecting members to the SGB works. 

6. How would you describe the state of discipline at your school? Explain your answer.
Does the SGB play a role in maintaining discipline at your school? If yes, explain their role and give examples if possible.

8. If you can, give an example of a learner who had to appear before the SGB and explain why and what happened.

9. Do you think that the SGB does play a role in maintaining discipline at your school? If yes, give an example of what they do.

10. What do you think the SGB can do (that they do not do now) to improve discipline at your school.

If you want to make any suggestion on how to improve discipline at your school, please feel free to do so here.

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE.
YOUR ASSISTANCE IS HIGHLY APPRECIATED.