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Collaboration: The key to managing discipline in South African schools

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South African schools are faced with an arguably insurmountable problem as a culture of indiscipline continually increases in schools. Despite being undeterred by the legal framework that guides stakeholders in the discipline crisis in schools, indiscipline in schools has soared to critical levels. Scant literature exists on how stakeholders collaborate in managing discipline in schools. The research reported on here was guided by the primary research question: How do stakeholders collaborate in managing discipline in schools? As such, in this article we explore how stakeholders collaborate in managing discipline in schools. Through purposive sampling, 16 participants from 4 secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal were chosen to take part in semi-structured interviews. The sample of participants comprised school management team members (SMT); the principal, 1 head of department, 1 post-level 1 educator and 1 school governing body (SGB) member from 4 schools in the iLembe education district. Themes that emerged from the data include that implementation of the school code of conduct as one of the most effective strategies in managing discipline in schools. The inclusion of stakeholders such as the local community, the Community Police Forum, the South African Police Services and the Department of Social Development in the successful management of learner discipline surfaced as an important theme. Furthermore, participants asserted that a whole-school approach to the implementation of the code of conduct was successful in managing discipline. The participants revealed that the collaboration of stakeholders in schools was very important for the smooth running of the school, including the management of discipline.

Keywords: assertive; collaboration; discipline; restorative; school stakeholders

Introduction

Since the abolishment of corporal punishment in South African schools, the nature and extent of indiscipline among learners in secondary schools in the Republic of South Africa (RSA) have escalated to such an extent that there seems to be no viable system to combat it. This has triggered our curiosity to dig deep into the phenomenon. Studies reviewed indicate that various intervention strategies have been designed and implemented in an effort to curb indiscipline, but none seems to be effective. Serious misdemeanours among learners continue to spiral out of control (Sekhonyane, 2018). As a result, teaching and learning has been compromised to such an extent that academic performance among learners persists to be negatively affected and the morale of practitioners in the classroom continues to decline. The absence of an effective disciplinary system serves only to encourage miscreants to display anti-social and unacceptable behaviour with impunity.

To date, some strategies have been employed to assist educators and school managers in curbing indiscipline in schools, yet none has been deemed effective in providing a long-term solution to this global problem (Jeannot, 2015). The issue of poor discipline in secondary schools is not peculiar to South African schools. Maphosa and Mammen (2011) reveal that the problem of indiscipline among learners all over the world has been in the spotlight for some time. Although disciplinary problems are not confined to secondary schools, the escalation of such problems is evident as learners transition from primary to secondary schools. This is also noted by Omemu (2017) who states that disciplinary problems make the objectives of setting secondary education, most of the time, a mirage behaviour.

Past disciplinary strategies adopted by educators and school managers were synonymous with instilling fear in learners as a means of maintaining discipline. One such strategy that was widely adopted was the authoritarian discipline strategy. Canter's (1988) classroom management strategy of authoritarian discipline involves encouraging the learner by using positive reinforcement in the form of praise for every positive behaviour acted out and increasing the severity of punishment to correct behaviour that is negative. Contradictory to this school of thought, Panchoo (2016:36) argues that using reinforcement to discipline a learner for behaviour that is negative can merely serve to further damage their self-esteem and self-efficacy. Mtsweni (2008:34) observes that "an authoritarian style of leadership causes learners to resort to violence, because they are frustrated by not having a say in what concerns their well-fare and well-being at school."

Another strategy widely used in the past was the *laissez-faire* strategy. This strategy places focus on giving autonomy to learners to make thoughtful and correct choices with regards to their behaviour, and the instructor intercedes only when the need arises (Bierman, Cole, Dodge, Greenberg, Lochman & McMahon, 1997). However, Nagel (2001:19) states that "a teacher who employs the *laissez-faire* management style could create confusion, frustration and disorder in the class as their cold and uninterested attitude may not be able to motivate learners to do their best in terms of their performances."

Since the 1996 inception of the legislative framework governing all schools in South Africa, there has been a significant paradigm shift in the management of schools. The above-mentioned disciplinary strategies cannot

be implemented as the bases of the approaches, as with many other approaches, it lies deeply entrenched in punitive punishment. Furthermore, behaviour theorists of the past have based their research on the school and classroom situation at the time of conducting research (sometimes even decades ago). However, since then, the classroom environment has changed drastically, rendering those theories inadequate today. Each strategy, when exclusively implemented, has not solved the issue of managing discipline effectively in classrooms. We currently have no viable management strategy to resolve indiscipline in our schools.

In the literature reviewed above, strategies that are used in schools to manage ill-discipline have been identified. However, we argue that working collectively could have a positive influence on the implementation of these strategies. We are of the opinion that discipline should be dealt with through collaborative efforts of educators, SMT members and SGB members. An effective approach, together with collaboration of stakeholders in schools needs to be considered for addressing discipline problems and finding a solution that can be adopted in all schools.

The importance of maintaining discipline in schools is paramount, as it sets the tone for an environment conducive to teaching and learning. This is supported by Sekhonyane (2018:para. 10) who state that, “[e]ach year, the department of education conducts hearings in terms of section 58(b) of the South African Schools Act, as amended, to deal with underperforming schools. One of the major findings from these hearings is that most schools that underperform have discipline issues.” In order for well-disciplined schools to exist, educators, in collaboration with school managers and relevant stakeholders, need to find an effective management strategy to curb indiscipline in schools. The iLembe education district, which is much like other districts in KwaZulu-Natal, comprises numerous secondary schools, which are also facing issues of indiscipline, which negatively affect the functioning and performance of these schools. It is against this background that this research was initiated.

The impetus for this research study was the lack of collaborative strategies of managing discipline. Secondary schools are affected by indiscipline on a daily basis, which, in turn, negatively impacts teaching and learning. Recently, the increase in violence plaguing schools in South Africa has allowed researchers to conclude that schools are fast becoming environments that display violence and ill-discipline. The aim of the study was to explore collaborative strategies for managing discipline in the iLembe education district and the objective was to identify current collaborative strategies used by stakeholders to

manage discipline in secondary schools in the iLembe district.

Literature Review

Maphosa and Mammen (2011) argue that the problem of indiscipline among learners has globally been in the spotlight for some time. Although discipline challenges are not confined to secondary schools, there is a notable escalation of such problems as learners transition from primary to secondary school. Omemu (2017) states that disciplinary problems in secondary schools render the objectives of secondary education futile. Modiba (2015) acknowledges that, in Africa, secondary school learners have an indifferent attitude towards education. This, therefore, indicates the extent to which the South African education system is under siege. Nkosi-Malobane (2019:para. 7) claims that “[t]raditionally, schools used to be one of the safest places learners and educators could be in, however, in recent times, the schooling environment is experiencing challenges such as bullying, gangsterism and serious violent crimes such as murder.” These problems make learners and educators feel less safe, and it makes it harder for learners to learn and for teachers to do their jobs effectively. This underscores the severity of the disciplinary problems currently plaguing South African schools.

Since the decentralisation of the South African education system as occasioned by the democratisation of South Africa, the change from management of central control to a more democratic approach has been posing major implications for the management of discipline. Because of this education reform, the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) was implemented, recognising a new national system for schools. The South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) introduced a code of conduct as framework for discipline in schools, with a strong focus on positive discipline strategies. Since the abolishment of corporal punishment, educators across South Africa have been struggling with finding ways to manage discipline in schools. Maphosa and Shumba (2010) endorse the state of indiscipline in schools by stating that the focus on learners’ rights since the outlawing of corporal punishment has opened the way for learners to disregard authority and show little respect for their educators. Together with corporal punishment being outlawed, educators feel unsupported in managing discipline. Mtsweni (2008) presents the results of a South African study on the role of educators in managing learners, which clearly show that there is little support from the Department of Education (DoE) to propagate school discipline.

Since the 1996 inception of the legislative framework governing all schools in South Africa, there has been a significant paradigm shift in the

management of schools. The above-mentioned disciplinary strategies cannot be implemented since the grounding of these approaches, as with many others, lies deeply entrenched in punitive punishment. Furthermore, behaviour theorists have historically based their research upon the school and classroom situation. However, the drastic changes in the current classroom environment have rendered those theories inadequate. Each strategy, when exclusively implemented, has not solved the issue of managing discipline effectively in classrooms. We currently have no viable management strategy to resolve indiscipline in South African schools. The greatest concern here is the fact that indiscipline is significantly increasing in South African secondary schools and very little is being done to offer protection from acts of indiscipline. Although strategies have been employed to assist educators and school managers in curbing indiscipline in schools, none is deemed effective in providing a long-term solution to this seemingly insurmountable problem. Hence, this knowledge gap opens up an opportunity to form a multi-pronged strategy that can curb indiscipline in schools.

The South African Schools Act (84 of 1996), which came into effect in 1997, opened the doors for more participation by various stakeholders. As a result, participating stakeholders such as parents, educators and learners now serve the fundamental tenet of governance in South African schools. Such stakeholder involvement is invaluable in establishing standards for acceptable behaviour and the effective functioning of schools. The stakeholders' responsibility is to promote the value of good discipline and its subsequent effect on teaching and learning (Mtsweni, 2008). In support of this view, Chinenye and Victor (2018) argue that the management of discipline in schools cannot be the sole responsibility of one school stakeholder only, but should rather be the responsibility of all school stakeholders.

Theoretical Frameworks

Discipline cannot be separated from education management and law and policy grounded in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 (RSA, 1996b) and the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996). Therefore, the assertive discipline model (Canter, 2007) is used in tandem with restorative discipline (Hopkins, 2003) as a joint theoretical lens in this article.

All school stakeholders should seek to motivate learners to behave responsibly instead of adopting the punishment-reward system in maintaining discipline. Hopkins (2003) describes how a collective approach of restorative discipline undertaken by both educators and learners can create a conducive climate for learning. According to Hopkins (2003), accountability is the foundation

of the restorative discipline theory, implying that each person should be responsible for their own actions and take steps to ensure that wrongful actions are rectified. Many schools incorporate punishment to manage discipline, yet disciplinary problems in schools have not lessened nor disappeared over time. Punishment, therefore, seems to serve as a short-term sanction for behaviour only, whereas good behaviour is a more viable, long-term solution to disciplinary problems in the classroom.

In addition to the restorative discipline theory, the assertive discipline theory (Canter, 2007) can be used by educators to maintain discipline in the classroom. This theory stems from the notion that the teacher is in charge, and also teaches learners how to be obedient by using authority to manage learners' behaviour in the classroom. Canter's theory (2007) suggests that educators maintain power in order to eradicate ill-discipline. When educators are assertive in the classroom, the result will be a culture of teaching and learning where learners can learn effectively while being accountable for their actions. The assertive educator will not have to resort to punishment because learners will take necessary actions to rectify bad behaviour through the restorative discipline approach. Canter and Canter (1992) further elaborate that assertive discipline will only be effective if there is involvement of the entire school community with regard to creating and implementing policies for discipline. The assertive discipline theory is evidently entrenched in the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a), Section 8, which explicitly states that: "school governing bodies [SGBs] should include all stakeholders (parents, educators, learners and non-educators at the school) and allow them to make relevant contributions to the creation of a school code of conduct and subsequent school rules."

Methodology

Research Design

Sudheesh, Duggappa and Nethra (2016) posit that the research design of a study should be unmistakably tied to the specific aims of the study. It is within this context that qualitative research was used to answer the primary research question: How do stakeholders collaborate in managing discipline in schools? The choice of qualitative research within an interpretivist paradigm is due to the integration of human interest (Yin, 2018), allowing for soliciting each stakeholder's experience in the management of discipline in their respective schools. These experiences give insight into what they feel their collaborative efforts can yield. In this study we adopted a multiple-case-study design, as it is an in-depth study of the collaborative-discipline strategies of school stakeholders from four secondary schools in the

iLembe education district. Each of the selected schools or cases were similar in that they were all secondary schools, found in the same district, and posed indiscipline as a challenge.

Population and Sample

The population of this study comprised 121 secondary schools in the iLembe district. Four schools from this district were purposively chosen. We purposively selected four participants from each school as the sample; therefore, 16 participants from four schools participated. Creswell (2007) supports such a sample in claiming that researchers intentionally engage in purposeful sampling of participants in this way. The SMT comprising the school principal, one head of department, one educator, and one SGB member (as parent component) of each school were included. We considered each of these participants as knowledgeable sources, as they were responsible for the management of discipline in their respective schools.

Ethics Approval

Permission to conduct the research was sought from the Research Ethics committee at the University of the Free State. Thereafter, permission to conduct the research was gained from the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education. Letters of informed consent and permission to conduct the research were provided to the principals and participants for perusal and permission to conduct the research. All participants were made aware of all research processes. The participants were also informed of the advantages of participating in such a study. We also informed the participants that their involvement in this study would be voluntary and that they would receive absolutely no monetary reward for participating in the study. For the sake of anonymity, the following pseudonyms are used when referring to the four participating secondary schools from the iLembe district: Woodmere High School (WHS), Glencove High School (GHS), Denbar High School (DHS) and Mountview High School (MHS).

Data Collection

In this study we used direct data collection in the form of interviews, which is consistent with qualitative research in which data are collected directly from the source. Data were collected by means of individual interviews, using semi-structured interviews based on an interview schedule. According to Laverty (2018), the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that they are extensive. In this way, questions are pre-determined and the researcher can probe to uncover more information (Yin, 2018). The 30-minute interviews with each participant from

the four schools during a period of 2 weeks were guided by the questions in the interview guide.

Data Analysis

The process of data analysis entailed the researchers finding information to address the objectives and research questions posed in the study. Data were then arranged in order to gain knowledge on the information provided by the participants, and gain meaning from the information provided.

The data were then transcribed. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2018), transcriptions can provide important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview. Once the data were prepared and arranged based on the transcriptions, the coding process began. A description with detailed information from the participants' responses was then generated after which codes were developed for the descriptions. We then arranged the material by sorting it into categories. These categories comprised detailed information as well as extracts from the respondents' responses. Coding was employed to further break down segments of data into recognizable categories to analyse similarities, differences and variations that were present in the data (Cohen et al., 2018). Finally, a table of themes that emerged from the codes was generated.

Results

Theme One: Implementation of School Code of Conduct

The school code of conduct is a requirement stipulated by the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996). The SGB is responsible for the adoption of the code of conduct, even though educators and school managers are responsible for daily discipline in the school. Findings from WHS revealed that the school dealt with misconduct in accordance with the sanctions in the code of conduct. The DoE policy, the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) with the school code of conduct, are therefore implemented at all levels – from educators to the SMT. The SMT of GHS found that working within the confines of the code of conduct was effective in minimising disciplinary problems. However, there is not much clarity in the DoE policy on procedures relating to dealing with criminal activity in schools.

We have a school code of conduct. That is the strategy we use. It is implemented at all levels. It is a document that was agreed upon at the SGB level by all stakeholders. The document also tells us how we should go about implementing discipline procedures in school. So, it's implemented at all levels. Staff members are reminded about how to handle discipline issues at staff meetings and at staff briefings, who to make the referrals to, the protocol, the grade controller first then the deputy

principal. They are given reminders on a constant basis. (Principal, GHS)

The sanctions in the code of conduct serve as a reprieve for poor behaviour, as a verbal warning for misdemeanours usually deters learners from any other act of misconduct. However, the code of conduct should not be viewed as a set of rules serving as punishment, but instead as a legislative framework intended for establishing a culture of positive learning, teaching and behaviour within which learners should conduct themselves. Furthermore, it was interesting to note the admission by the SGB member that they were not skilled in school governance. Below is an excerpt from the response by the SGB member of WHS.

In terms of what we have to manage, to be honest, it is the little knowledge that we have. There's no document besides the South African Schools Act that guides us a little. We use the school code of conduct to try and inflict fear in these kids in the form of suspension and so on. But we don't really go to wits end with the kids. (SGB, WHS)

Rather, their limited knowledge of the legislation and the following up and implementation thereof in matters relating to managing discipline allow them to be a support structure for other stakeholders in the school. Because of their scant knowledge in school governance, they are also assisted by the SMT who is more knowledgeable. As a result, this allows them to work towards a common cause.

Theme Two: Communication with Learners to Establish Rapport

The participants were of the view that communication with learners was an effective strategy in the management of discipline. Findings indicate that due to the lack of parental involvement in the learners' lives, learners look for an open channel of communication to their educators. When educators develop such a relationship with them, they tend to be more willing to accept school rules and understand that school is for their own good in the long term.

You have to be forceful, but in a way to kids where they can still confide in you. But you still have to stamp your authority. They need to know who the teacher is and who the learner is. Be assertive. Start your lesson off by talking to them. I always talk to them. (Educator, GHS)

Learners project onto others many of the hardships that they are faced with in their personal capacities. The participants felt that it was necessary as educators and school managers to understand why learners behave the way they do. The findings also revealed that non-verbal communication from educators was a form of discipline on its own, as learners were able to determine how effective, prepared and interested they were in the lesson. The educators could, as such, set the tone for discipline.

Discipline also is your nonverbal cues, when you walk in the class, by just looking at students, you must have control (Educator, MHS).

Participating stakeholders also believed that getting the support of learners through effective communication with them was highly effective to manage discipline in schools. Findings reveal that, in establishing good rapport with learners, positive learner-teacher relationships influence positive discipline. Each classroom climate contributed to the school climate. It is, therefore, imperative to maintain good rapport with learners as it is directly related to learners being interested in subject matter presented by educators. The findings indicate that when educators maintain good rapport with learners, learners are more motivated to attend lessons, behave respectfully and considerately, and even contribute to the lesson. Participants asserted that good rapport promoted communication between educators and learners, with learners being more attentive and receptive. It also allowed learners to listen and disagree respectfully, therefore, eliminating the need to behave inappropriately.

Theme Three: Assertive Discipline as a Strategy to Manage Discipline

The participants revealed that assertive discipline was an effective management style. This management style, however, had no bearing on discipline outside the classroom. Data revealed that using this management strategy was effective to such an extent that educators who implemented assertive discipline had no disciplinary problems. Maintaining the classroom as a place to learn and foster a climate of respect left little room for indiscipline.

So, when learners come to my class, they know they are coming to my class for one thing and one thing only, it's about work. And I think if you set those rules down right at the outset ... there's very little room for [ill-discipline]. And so, in 30 odd years in the profession, I don't have serious discipline problems in my class. It's formal. ... As long as you stick to that, you won't have too many discipline problems in the class. (Educator, WHS)

The SGB member at GHS also supported the view that the implementation of the principles of assertive discipline was an effective strategy to manage discipline. He stated: "Educators need to set the tone in the classroom. He needs to have rules in the classroom. Once he has classroom rules, he is able to achieve discipline" (Parent, GHS). An excerpt from the response of the educator at DHS is presented below.

Kids are very clever. The moment they know that this teacher is assertive, and this one you can do what you want, discipline will be bad for the teacher that is not the assertive one. Assertive discipline works and they know that if they do

something wrong and you tell them I am going to make a follow-up, maybe call the parents, if you do that, you are assertive and you do what you say you will, not just make empty threats. (Educator, DHS)

The response indicates that when educators used assertiveness in managing their classrooms, learners did not display problematic behaviour. It was reported that learners were quick to determine which educators were assertive. The learners did not display indiscipline in their classrooms because they were aware that poor behaviour led to certain consequences. The departmental head expressed that he found assertive discipline to be effective, as learners were aware of educators' non-tolerance of disturbances in the classroom through displaying assertiveness.

Theme Four: Restorative Discipline as a Strategy to Manage Discipline

Participating stakeholders from WHS revealed that the use of restorative discipline as a management strategy has led to many successes. WHS implemented restorative discipline in all cases of indiscipline. It was reported that the SMT first intervened to determine the cause of the problem and then engaged with learners in realising the extent of their actions, after which a sanction for corrective behaviour would be imposed. The school, therefore, engaged in repairing the harm that society has inflicted on learners by allowing the community to be part of the disciplinary process. As much as learners may regard the sanctions as punishment, sanctions imposed by the SMT were aimed at repairing the harm caused by the learners and involving them in some sort of restoration. WHS applied restorative discipline to all aspects of discipline. Participants maintained that they achieved success by doing so. The strategies employed by WHS are reflective of the alternatives to corporal punishment, where learners can be given additional work which contributes to their own schooling efforts. Below is a response from one of the participants.

We also have a maths centre at school, which is a fully interactive system. It is in operation. Learners see it as punishment but we send those learners who default there to do some maths. Because we are a maths funded school. Parents seem to be very happy with that. We require offenders to do community work on Saturdays and Sundays. That is one of the findings of the SGB and one of the things they do. They have assembly talks, those that end up with problems, they will address the assembly on a problem they have been guilty of. If it's fighting, they prepare talks, if it is drugs, they write essays and give it to the English teachers to mark and it is put into their files. For a school like ours, I don't believe in any kind of harsh punishment. Whatever we do for our learners, it must be positive. At the end of the day, if we haven't improved the child, then we have wasted our time. The positives out of the strategies are for

the better. The positive reinforcement that you have with children turns their lives around. Some of our governors are not educators, for everything that goes on, we remind our governors it is not punitive, but corrective. (SMT, WHS)

Learners are supervised in a secure environment to complete purposeful tasks that will assist them to achieve academic success. They viewed the encouragement to participate in class and rewarding learners with positive feedback as assisting the development of self-confidence. Encouragement to participate thereby engaged learners in the lesson and reduced disruptive behaviour. The educator from MHS also supported the idea of positive reinforcement. His response was as follows:

Positive comments that help to build up the self-confidence. My strategy is I go prepared to class. In my lessons, I bring in real-life stories, and children like that. I allow children to express themselves in my class. I don't tell them that they are wrong, there's no right or wrong, they must give their opinions and enjoy that. Also bring humour in lessons. Don't make it too clinical. (Educator, MHS)

Theme Five: Counselling

Comments by stakeholders from GHS and MHS show that counselling was one of the most effective ways of handling matters related to indiscipline. The excerpts of the responses from MHS and GHS are given below:

Extreme cases are referred for counselling ... we have an open relationship in my class. Communication is the key to everything. To be a successful teacher, you must be able to communicate. You may be a brilliant teacher, know your content in and out, but if the child behind the desk doesn't understand, you aren't effective. (Educator, GHS)

There was a discipline and safety meeting for most schools in the area last week and they found that although in theory these committees exist, they are not functional in schools. And it's one of the biggest problems, and the SGB is responsible for heading that committee. Sometimes, your staff rep isn't your discipline, safety and security officer so that creates a void. So, it all boils down to communication structures that operate at the school level, that play a significant role. Because sometimes there is an unwillingness from the SGB, sometimes it's a lack of communication. (Educator, MHS)

All four interviewees from GHS confirmed that counselling learners yielded success in managing discipline. This was related to the poor family structures in the community. Learners were in need of much guidance and support that they may not have received at home due to the nature of the homes from which they were. However, due to the demands of the curriculum and administration, educators and school managers did not have the time to counsel the number of learners who presented with problems.

Theme Six: Learners as Part of the Decision-making Process

The inclusion of learners in decision-making presented itself as an effective strategy. Data reveal that the participating stakeholders believed that when learners were included in all aspects of decision-making pertaining to them, there was less need for them to resort to indiscipline. A comment by an educator from DHS is presented below.

Make them [learners] a part of the decision-making. I think that is very important! I have been teaching history for 16 years and I have had one child that has failed the subject ... that is because we have an agreement, and that is how I like working with them. They feel like they are part of the process. (Educator, DHS)

The educator at DHS maintained that making learners part of the decision-making process was effective and that there was a positive correlation between disciplinary control and learner achievement.

Discussion

Participants from some schools asserted that a whole-school approach to the implementation of the code of conduct was successful. However, participants from another school reported that the code of conduct was only good on paper but, in reality, it was ineffective. Upon further investigation, it was found that the current SGB of the relevant school had not revisited the code of conduct nor made amendments to it in 6 years. This implies that a revisiting of the code of conduct was required so that all related stakeholders could consent to and adopt a code of conduct that was mutually agreed upon, as is advised by Matodzi (2000). Participants also stressed that in as much as the code of conduct contained stipulations for serious misdemeanours, learners who were suspended reported back to school 7 days later with no evidence of change. More so, participants mentioned that referring learners for expulsion to the head of department was a futile effort. Therefore, some participants believed that although policy for the management of discipline existed, it was deemed to be impractical.

Participants further stated that communication with learners was essential in gaining support and learners were indeed able to work with their educators in ruling out indiscipline from their classrooms. Kolaci (2014) endorses communication as a strategy to manage discipline by ensuring interaction between educators and learners. Educators and SMT members noted practical examples of how communication had assisted them in managing discipline simply by speaking to the learner on a one-on-one basis to determine the reason for the bad behaviour and by providing assistance to the learner. "The need for an open line of communication about inappropriate behaviour" is also reiterated by Mtsweni (2008:32).

Furthermore, communication can be used to enhance positive discipline by creating relationships that display trust and respect between learners and educators.

Participating educators who administered assertive discipline in their classrooms indicated that they had been successful in creating an environment that was conducive to teaching and learning, and that this had also allowed them to gain the respect of all learners in the school. By being assertive, educators built positive relationships with their learners and were able to teach them how to adopt appropriate classroom behaviour, thereby enabling effective teaching and learning. This is in line with Graves (2007) who states that with the use of assertive discipline, it is possible for educators to be assertive in their approach and build positive relationships with their learners. This creates an environment in which learners know which behaviour is acceptable, thereby facilitating effective teaching and learning. By teaching learners to consistently follow rules, discipline is achieved. The premise of assertive discipline is deeply rooted in the legislative framework guiding discipline in schools as it draws away from punishment and moves towards reinforcing positive behaviour.

The use of positive reinforcement to correct learners' inappropriate behaviour was mentioned by many participants. Participants supported the view of Van Jaarsveld (2011:125) who states that "much success is achieved when learners take ownership of their poor behaviour and engaged in the necessary remediation to improve relationships." The use of restorative discipline as a management strategy, therefore, served as the foundation of all legislative frameworks guiding the management of discipline in schools; it is focused on measures that are corrective rather than those that are punitive.

Most participating stakeholders agreed that inasmuch as counselling was effective in reducing and improving discipline problems, the removal of school counsellors by the DoE has left a void which, due to their heavy workloads, cannot be filled by educators. In cases where counsellors were appointed, it was found that learner behaviour had improved. However, the waiting period for learners in need is too long to successfully afford the opportunity to be counselled. From the interviews we also noted that in order for counselling to be regarded as effective, the learners must have already been involved in an act of indiscipline before they qualified for counselling. Hence, counselling presented itself as a remediation strategy rather than a proactive strategy to manage discipline and avoid indiscipline.

Some participating educators reported that allowing learners to be part of the decision-making

process was effective in managing discipline. A sense of shared decision-making allowed learners to feel as if they were included in the educational process; that they were not just bystanders. This is also linked to the theoretical framework of assertive discipline which promotes a wide span of discipline management (Canter & Canter, 2001). "This includes that assertive teachers are firm; act in the best interest of students; build positive, trusting relationships with their students; and teach appropriate classroom behaviour through direct instructions" (Canter & Canter, 2001:223). A participant responded that in such a case, learners developed respect in knowing that they had contributed to the educational process and the management of discipline. Mabeba and Prinsloo (2000) reaffirm the inclusion of learners in decision-making as an important element of the management of discipline by stating that learners value educators who afford them the opportunity to participate in developing rules for acceptable behaviour.

It was found that participating SMT members liaised with the local ward councillor and were introduced to an initiative labelled "the war room." At war room meetings, the SMT, representing the school, would present a report on school functionality and particularly on matters pertaining to discipline. This was found to be the link between the school and various structures and stakeholders in the community that were able to assist the school with managing discipline.

The opinion of the participants in this study cannot be representative of the greater South Africa. However, the value of this study lies in providing useful information to schools in similar contexts and environments, which can lead to better discipline management and educational delivery. Furthermore, the focus of this study was to establish strategies for school stakeholders to use in managing discipline. Participants were, therefore, required to be knowledgeable of the current state of discipline in secondary schools and of all current policies, procedures and practices used by all stakeholders in managing discipline. Unfortunately, not all participating stakeholders were aware of the aforementioned. Therefore, due to this lack of knowledge, some questions could not be answered in full.

The use of a school code of conduct should be implemented by all school stakeholders in all matters pertaining to discipline. In accordance with the South African Schools Act (84 of 1996) (RSA, 1996a), the code of conduct should be revisited regularly, with the necessary changes adopted by all learners, educators and non-educators at all schools individually.

Although the DoE has provided educational practitioners with the document on alternatives to corporal punishment, there seems to not be enough

clarity on the actual strategies that may be used. This is because much of what the document contains is left to the interpretation of educational practitioners. There is an urgent call for more viable and practical strategies.

All stakeholders should work together towards a common cause to successfully manage discipline. Learners, educators, school managers and the SGB of all schools should apply a collaborative approach to implement strategies to manage discipline in secondary schools.

Conclusion

The study revealed that although strategies are in place for the management of discipline, the inclusion of all stakeholders in the implementation of these strategies was found to be crucial in determining their effectiveness. It was established that when stakeholders worked in isolation and did not collaborate, these strategies were deemed ineffective and, therefore, indiscipline remained a bone of contention in schools. However, participating stakeholders still recognised that further collaboration could lead to greater achievement to manage discipline in schools. The goal of successful cases has therefore not been to eradicate indiscipline in these schools, but rather to find collaborative ways in which it can be managed effectively. Hence, the definition of goals and the expected outcomes of their efforts must be realistic.

Ethical Considerations

All ethical standards for doing research, without direct contact with human or animal participants, were followed in the research reported on here.

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Authors' Contributions

All authors contributed equally to this work.

Notes

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