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# Discipline in Lesotho schools: educator strategies

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This article reports from an exploratory, quantitative and critical frame of reference on a study on educator strategies to maintain discipline in Lesotho schools. The data, based on a questionnaire completed by Lesotho educators, were analysed by means of frequencies and the student's t-test. The most popular strategy employed by the respondents as a means of maintaining discipline is to come properly prepared to school, followed by positive discipline. Strategies least used by the respondents are detention and community service. The data reveal that the majority of the respondents use a combination of traditional and progressive strategies. The data also show that the perceived effectiveness of a strategy does not always correspond with its popularity.

## Dissipline in Lesotho skole: opvoeders se strategieë

Vanuit 'n ondersoekende, kwantitatiewe en kritiese verwysingsraamwerk word verslag gelewer oor opvoederstrategieë om dissipline in Lesotho skole te handhaaf. Die data wat verkry is uit vraelyste wat deur Lesotho-opvoeders voltooi is, is met behulp van frekwensies en die studente t-toets geanaliseer. Die gewildste strategie wat deur die respondente gebruik is om dissipline te handhaaf, is om goed voorbereid skool toe te gaan, gevolg deur positiewe dissipline. Strategieë wat die minste deur respondente gebruik word, is detensie en gemeenskapsdiens. Die data het aangedui dat die meeste respondente 'n kombinasie van tradisionele en progressiewe strategieë gebruik. Die data het ook aangetoon dat die sieninge oor die effektiwiteit van 'n strategie nie noodwendig ooreenkom met die gewildheid daarvan nie.

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**D**iscipline at school has two key goals, namely to ensure the safety of educators and learners and to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning. If some learners are afraid to attend school because they always feel threatened or the behaviour of learners in a school disrupts the normal teaching and learning process, this seriously impacts on learners' access to educational opportunities (Joubert *et al* 2004: 78). It is therefore important that a country whose Department of Education's vision is that all its citizens "shall be functionally literate [...] with well-grounded moral and ethical values; adequate social, scientific and technical knowledge and skills by the year 2020" (Kingdom of Lesotho [*s a*]: 1) should strive to create and maintain conditions for effective teaching and learning. This involves orderly and civil behaviour among learners, as well as between learners and educators. These convictions are supported by the Lesotho Minister of Education and Training, Mamphono Khaketla (Moetsana 2007: 56) who affirms that discipline in Lesotho should "promote learning and positive behaviour change".

It is evident from the foregoing exposition and from Article 28(a) of the Lesotho Constitution (Kingdom of Lesotho 1993) that the Lesotho government strives for a school environment that respects human rights and fundamental freedoms, and fosters teaching and learning. While none of the aforementioned documents explicitly refer to school discipline, the said human rights and educational goals can only be realised in an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Although not stated explicitly, the Education Act No 10 of 1995 (cf, for example, Kingdom of Lesotho 1995, Art 18[b]) places the responsibility on principals, educators and management committees of schools to create and maintain safe, disciplined environments. No explicit guidelines on how to promote appropriate behaviour and develop self-discipline, and how to respond to inappropriate behaviour in order to correct or modify it and to restore harmonious relations were made available to these parties (cf Joubert *et al* 2004: 78). It is therefore not surprising that De Wet & Jacobs (2009: 66-80) found that indiscipline is a relatively serious problem in Lesotho. Against this background the following research questions were identified. What strategies are mostly used by Lesotho educators to maintain discipline

in their classes? Is there a link between the educators' strategies and their demographic variables? What are the educators' perceptions on the effectiveness of the disciplinary strategies used?

An exploratory, quantitative and critical frame of reference will be used to answer the above research questions. A concept analysis will be undertaken to critically analyse the relevant literature on discipline and disciplinary strategies in order to inform the analysis of the data. The results of the current study will also be discussed and tentatively juxtaposed with findings of other studies on disciplinarily strategies.

When confronted with the vast body of knowledge on discipline, it becomes clear that perspectives on this phenomenon range from coercion to self-discipline and ultimately to non-discipline. Upon closer scrutiny it is evident that these varied and conflicting perspectives are closely linked to specific views on freedom and authority, and rooted in deterministic and indeterministic schools of thought. On the one hand, there is the belief that discipline should be harsh in order to deter would-be offenders and to employ military-type strategies. On the other hand, and as a reaction to the former, there is the extreme "rights" movement that is against any form of punishment and "external" discipline. The first of these broad perspectives can be grouped under a deterministic paradigm, favouring the authority of the educator and as such restricting the freedom of the learner while the indeterministic paradigm totally rejects the authority of the educator and emphasises the total freedom of the learner. It appears that in an attempt to escape the coercive discipline of a deterministic practice, a lack of authority is regarded as true freedom. Paolo Freire (1998: 95-6) asserts:

Because we were dedicated to overcoming the legacy of authoritarianism so prevalent amongst us, we fell into the opposite error of limitless freedom, excusing the legitimate exercise of authority as being an abuse of authority.

Simplistically viewed, one can trace the emphasis on authority and a lack of freedom in disciplinary strategies to scientism, rationalism, behaviourism and structuralism where the ideal of science is in the foreground. The emphasis is on the prediction and control of human activity. In the (deterministic, authoritarian and totalitarian) utopia of B F Skinner:

[...] the needs and desires of humans will be scientifically predicted, assessed and then 'piloted' in desired directions by appropriately qualified specialists in the field of behavioural technology and on scientific insight into what the human being is, what his/her authentic needs are, and what is best for him/her (Schoeman 2000: 115).

An over-emphasis on freedom can be attributed to irrationalism, relativism, postmodernism and the ideal of the free and autonomous human personality (Schoeman 2000: 112-8). The nihilist existentialists (Heidegger and Sartre), the neo-Marxists of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, Adorno, Habermas and Marcuse) and the post-modernists (Derrida, Lyotard, Baudrillard, Rorty and McIntyre) challenged the Western establishment by protesting against the domination and tyranny exercised by science and coercive authority. Freire (2000: 81) declares that the individual should fight for freedom: "It requires the elimination of teacher authoritarianism and alienating intellectualism". Emanating from this stance, various nuances of freedom, from an anarchist conception to a more moderate view of freedom and authority as sides of the same coin, thus currently underlie disciplinary practices in the school. However, despite the abolition of corporal punishment in many countries, the total negation of the freedom of the learner is embodied in the remnants of military disciplinary practices that are also practised in schools. Besides being (simultaneously) an instrument for emancipation and enlightenment, education is also an instrument of power, control and legitimisation of its authority (Thiessen 1999: 177).

It is apparent that a tension exists between the perceptions of freedom, authority and discipline as grounded in the opposing paradigms. This is especially visible when freedom and authority are regarded as opposites, where both cannot exist simultaneously. This tension appears to be identifiable in the occurrence of both coercive and liberatory strategies to achieve order and discipline in the school.

To inform the design of the questionnaire for the empirical investigation, the following content analysis will attempt to outline the broad features of the opposing views on disciplinary strategies.

## 1. Concept analysis

One of the greatest challenges of an educator is to maintain order in the classroom so as to achieve academic objectives (Shechtman & Leichtenritt 2004: 324) thus creating an optimal work environment (Basom & Frase 2004). School discipline may be described as all the strategies that are used to coordinate, regulate and organise individuals and their activities in the school (Thornberg 2008: 37) and put in place the provisions and procedures necessary to establish and maintain an environment in which teaching and learning can take place (Emmer & Stough 2001: 103). Such definitions are helpful as a starting point, but are so comprehensive that they could include all activities used to maintain discipline - from the cruel and coercive to the nurturing and liberating. This is the reason why many researchers attempt to categorise disciplinary strategies. Traynor (2003: 1), for example, identifies five types of strategies, namely coercive, *laissez-faire*, task-oriented, authoritative and intrinsic; Emmer & Stough (2001: 103-12) distinguish between preventative and reactive strategies; Maslovaty (2000: 429-44) focuses on strategies that address social-moral issues, while Zounhia *et al* (2003: 289-303) distinguish between strategies (such as punishment and reward) used by educators to manage behaviour and strategies that empower learners towards self-determination.

Based on our exposition of opposing frames of reference upon which views on school discipline are based, it was decided to restrict the current analysis of school discipline to two broad categories of disciplinary strategies. First, it appears that the majority of educators utilise disciplinary strategies embedded in behaviourism or neo-behaviourism. These (mostly reactive) activities are based on the principle that educators manage (or control) learner conduct, usually by punishing negative behaviour and/or rewarding positive behaviour (Maag 2001: 65-91, Zirpoli & Melloy 1997: 145-78). Educators operating from a traditional perspective may define school discipline as ranging from all activities that are implemented to control learner behaviour, to enforcing compliance and maintaining order, to a (anarchistic) view of freedom where any external discipline or guidance is seen to restrict the learner's autonomy.

On the other hand, some authors claim that the quality and complexity of human behaviour necessitates a more constructive approach to school discipline (Felderhof 2002: 71, Maslovaty 2000: 431). It is believed that learners should increasingly accept responsibility for their own behaviour, and that good discipline should be based on values rather than rules (Ferreira 2007: 112, Laursen 2003: 78-82, Rogers 2002: 27). Educators operating from a progressive perspective may define school discipline as all activities that contribute to learners' intrinsic motivation, self-management and decision-making skills.

In this study it was therefore decided to emulate the work of modern authors, who distinguish between a traditional (coercive or authoritarian) approach and the more progressive (liberal, restorative or nurturing) orientation to school discipline.<sup>1</sup> It remains challenging, however, to assign specific disciplinary strategies, such as the use of classroom rules or even the implementation of a reward system, to such categories. Most disciplinary actions may be described as either punitive or restorative, depending on factors such as the intention with which they are employed, the personality/perceptions/attitude of the educator (Abbate-Vaughn 2004: 228, Erden & Wolfgang 2004: 3-9), the educator's personal beliefs about his/her own efficacy (Morin & Battalio 2004: 252) or the culture of a school (Safran & Oswald 2003: 369).

The contrasting ways in which classroom rules are developed and used in schools illustrate the dilemma researchers face when categorising disciplinary strategies. Some educators firmly believe that learners should be involved in the development of classroom rules, and that it should be a democratic process (Rogers 2002: 27). This approach is solidly supported by contemporary research (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 18, Barbetta *et al* 2005: 4). However, it appears that in many instances, classroom rules are only legitimised by educators (Thornberg 2008: 37), and are sometimes employed by educators as they deem fit (Cameron & Sheppard 2006: 18). Depending on

1 Cf Goodman 2006: 218, Almog 2005: 2, Fields 2004: 105-6, Geiger 2001: 384, Johnson & Whittington 1994: 261-3.

the variables described above, classroom rules may therefore be used in either an authoritative, punitive or in a democratic, progressive manner. Similarly, it was found that even a reward system may be used proactively to encourage positive learner behaviour, or implemented in a reactive, coercive manner (Ferreira 2007: 173-4).

In the present study, disciplinary strategies were assigned to either a traditional/coercive or a liberal/progressive approach, based on four considerations, namely the way in which each strategy is described in the current literature, informal feedback from educators in Lesotho, and the personal experience of the researchers. In addition, it was decided to assign strategies that could be traced to a typically behaviourist perspective (where the educator assumes the main responsibility for classroom behaviour and manages it by means of rules, punishment and/or rewards), to the “traditional/coercive” approach. Strategies that may nurture personal decision-making skills, or that emphasise the rights of learners, were assigned to the “liberal/progressive” category. It is, however, acknowledged that other researchers may assign some of the strategies to other categories. Because the study is exploratory, and no generalisations are made, it is believed that the provisional categorisation used in this instance is fair and trustworthy.

## 2. Empirical investigation

### 2.1 Research instrument

This study forms part of an international collaborative research project on learner misbehaviour. The researchers were invited to conduct the study on learner misbehaviour in Lesotho. The project leaders<sup>2</sup> from the North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus (South Africa) prepared a questionnaire. While the questions on the nature and frequency of learner misbehaviour (cf De Wet & Jacobs 2009: 61-82 and Figure 1) as well as the strategies used by respondents to address learner misbehaviour (cf Table 2) were identical for

the various countries, the demographic details were particularised to take into consideration the uniqueness of each county (Table 1).<sup>3</sup>

The absence of a universally acceptable definition of learner misbehaviour and differentiating views of what constitutes this type of behaviour have influenced the approach taken in this study, namely to provide educators with a list of behaviour identified by researchers as disruptive to effective teaching and learning (Johnson & Fullwood 2006: 32-3). The checklist of misbehaviours was categorised to simplify statistical analysis. Learner misbehaviour may be categorised in different ways: according to their degree of seriousness, where it usually occurs, the type of punishment which may be imposed for each, the form of culpability required for each, and at whom/what the acts were directed (Wright & Keetley 2003: 14). It was decided to classify the misbehaviours according to the levels of seriousness. The checklist of 27 misbehaviours crystallised into the following categories: low-level indiscipline (moodiness, untidy/incorrect clothing, neglect of duty, absenteeism, latecoming); more challenging behaviour (disruptive behaviour, rudeness, dishonesty, improper language, cheekiness, provocative behaviour, disrespect for educator, telling lies); serious misbehaviour (graffiti, vandalism, theft, pornography, smoking, use of alcohol at school, drug abuse); and aggressive behaviour (*crimen injuria* against learners, *crimen injuria* against educators, bullying, violence, gang activities, sexual harassment of fellow-learners, sexual harassment of educators) (cf Figure 1).

This article will focus on the strategies employed by the respondents to address learner misbehaviour, as well as the association between different respondent categories (for example, teaching experience, gender and post level) and the various overarching strategies to address misbehaviour in Lesotho (Tables 3 to 8). The perceptions of the respondents on the effectiveness of various strategies will also be examined.

According to Durrheim & Painter (2007: 147), validity refers to the degree to which an instrument measures what it claims to measure. This definition has two aspects: that the instrument actually mea-

3 We wish to thank Ms M A Matsela from the National University of Lesotho for her insightful comments in this regard.



sures the concept in question and that the concept is measured accurately (Delpont 2005: 160). In this study, two categories of validity, namely content and face validity are addressed. Content validity is obtained by consulting the viewpoint of experts when compiling the instrument. The questionnaire should thus be representative of existing knowledge on the issue (Goddard & Melville 2001: 47). An in-depth literature study was undertaken prior to the empirical study and it confirmed that the questionnaire covered existing knowledge on learner misbehaviour and disciplinary strategies. Content validity was thus ensured. Face validity is the simplest and least scientific definition of validity and concerns the superficial appearance or face value of an instrument. In other words: does the instrument measure the variable that it claims to measure? Despite the subjectivity of this category of validity, face validity is an important characteristic of a research instrument, for without it researchers will encounter resistance on the part of respondents, which may, in turn, adversely affect the results obtained (Delpont 2005: 161). Colleagues from the academe and the teaching profession were asked to scrutinise the questionnaire. All agreed that it appears that the instrument is a relevant measure pertaining to the topic under investigation; thus, face validity was ensured.

Reliability implies that the instrument or procedure measures are consistent (Pietersen & Maree 2007: 216, Goddard & Melville 2001: 41). The Cronbach *alpha* reliability coefficients for the items on low-level indiscipline, more challenging behaviour, serious misbehaviour and aggressive behaviour were calculated at 0.7491, 0.8453, 0.7950 and 0.7879, respectively (cf Figure 1). The reliability coefficients for the items on the effectiveness of strategies used to maintain discipline were calculated at 0.8242 (cf Table 9). According to Pietersen & Maree (2007: 216), it is generally accepted that a score of 0.7 or higher implies an acceptable level of reliability. The responses are accordingly considered to be reliable.

## 2.2 Sample, procedure and data analysis

The studied population comprised educators from all schools in Lesotho. The accessibility of schools by taxi in this mountainous kingdom with its poor infrastructure influenced the sample selection. However, according to Cooper & Schindler (2003: 201), a convenient sample may be used in exploratory studies on topics and/or among populations in which little research has been conducted. Two Lesotho citizens, who were engaged in further studies at the University of the Free State, were responsible for the administration of the questionnaires. They personally distributed the questionnaires to educators in Lesotho at the beginning of November 2007. Although prior arrangements had been made by them to collect the completed questionnaires during the last week of November, they were forced to revisit a large number of schools during December to attempt to collect the outstanding questionnaires. Despite this, only 511 of the 800 questionnaires that were distributed were returned. Of these, 497 (62.1%) could be used. However, not all the respondents completed all the questions. Of the respondents 208 did not respond to the items regarding strategies that they employ to maintain discipline, thus leaving the researchers with a sample of 289 respondents.

Data were analysed using the StataIC 10 software package. The Student's t-test statistical analyses procedure was used to explore the differences, based on the mean scores of the responses, between the various subgroups of respondents. Only 95% and higher levels of significance are reported for the mentioned tests.

## 2.3 Ethical measures

Care was taken to adhere to ethical measures during research on a topic that may be sensitive to some educators. In order to ensure the safety and rights of the respondents, they were informed in writing of the prevailing ethical considerations (Strydom 2005: 57-68), for example the school and the participants' voluntary participation, anonymity and confidentiality. To ensure anonymity and confidentiality, educators were asked to return their completed questionnaires in sealed, unmarked envelopes.

Table 1: Sample details: different categories of educators ( $n=289$ )

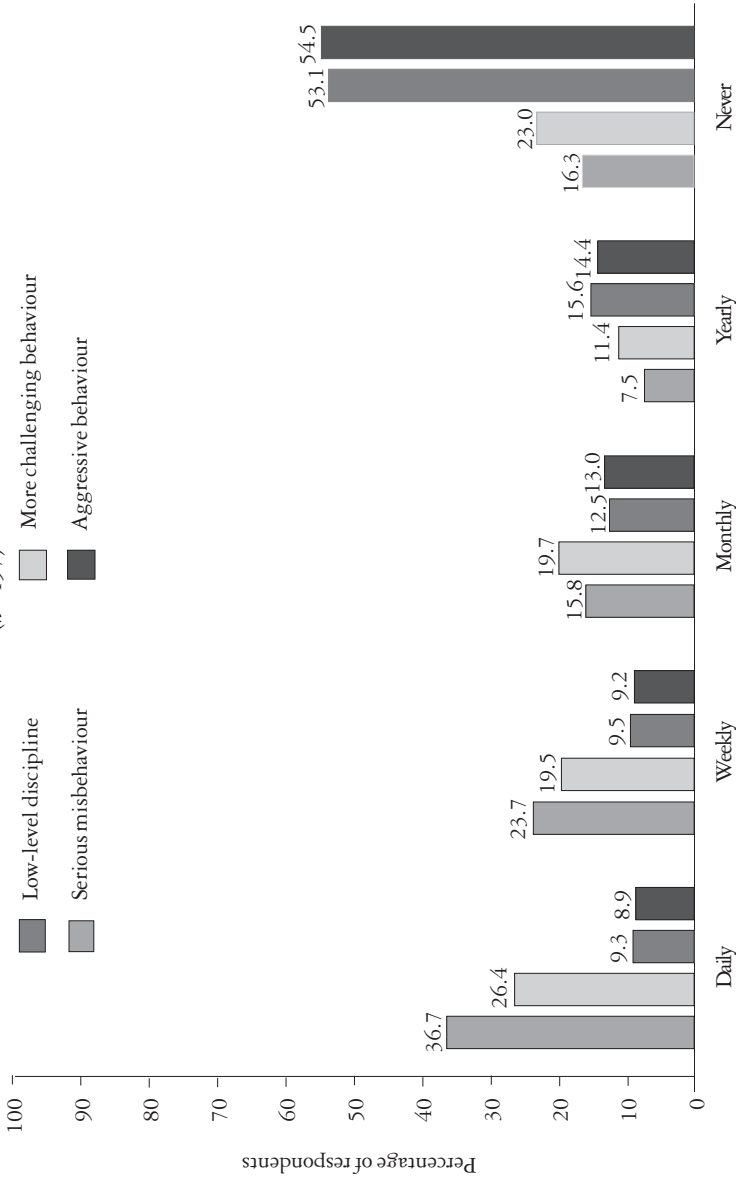
	<i>f</i>	%
Teaching experience in complete years		
0-9	152	52.60
10-19	73	25.26
20-29	29	10.03
30-39	13	4.50
40-49	3	1.04
No response	19	6.57
Gender		
Male	92	31.83
Female	197	68.17
Post level		
Educator assistant or student educator	2	0.69
Educator	253	87.54
Head of department	13	4.50
Deputy principal	12	4.15
Principal	12	4.15

### 3. Results

Although the aim of this article is not to discuss learner misbehaviour in Lesotho, it was deemed necessary to give a diagrammatical, enumerative display of the nature and frequency of different types of misbehaviour to be addressed by the respondents.

Low-level indiscipline and more challenging behaviour seem to be the two main categories of misbehaviour in Lesotho schools. Of the 497 respondents, 36.7% indicated that they have to deal with low-level indiscipline (for example, late coming, absenteeism, neglect of duty, inappropriate dress) on a daily basis while an additional 23.7% indicated that they have to deal with this on a weekly basis. More challenging behaviours (for example, disruptive and provocative behaviour, the telling of lies, dishonesty) seem to be fairly common in Lesotho – 26.4% of the respondents have to deal with this on a daily basis, while an additional 19.5% are faced with such behaviour on a weekly basis. In addition, educators are faced daily with occurrences

Figure 1: The nature and frequency of the different categories of misbehaviour to be addressed by the respondents (n=497)



of more serious misbehaviour (9.3%) (for example theft, vandalism, drug-abuse) and aggressive behaviour (8.9%) (for example bullying, violence, gang activities).<sup>4</sup>

Respondents were asked to indicate which of the listed strategies they use to maintain discipline in their classes. These responses are indicated in Table 2, together with the classifications according to the style of discipline, namely traditional (coercive/authoritarian) and progressive (liberal/restorative).

The most popular strategy employed by the respondents as a means of maintaining discipline is to come properly prepared to school (83.04%) followed by positive discipline (78.20%), discussions or meetings with the parents of the learners (77.85%), a system of classroom rules (77.16%) and thorough knowledge by the educator (74.74%). Strategies least used by the respondents are detention (20.76%) community service (22.15%) and isolation outside the classroom (31.49%).

The vast majority (93.43%) of the respondents use a combination of traditional and progressive strategies to maintain discipline. Only 18 (6.23%) of them indicated that they use solely traditional strategies, while only 1 (0.35%) of the 289 respondents uses solely progressive discipline strategies.

Table 2: Strategies used by respondents to maintain discipline in their classes (from most popular to least popular strategy) (*n*=289)

Strategy used	<i>f</i>	%	Style of discipline
Proper preparation by educator	240	83.04	Traditional
Positive discipline	226	78.20	Progressive
Discussion or meeting with parents	225	77.85	Traditional
System of classroom rules	223	77.16	Traditional
Thorough knowledge by educator	216	74.74	Traditional
Emphasising values	191	66.09	Progressive
Reward	189	65.40	Traditional

4 The details of these occurrences are reported in a separate article (De Wet & Jacobs 2009: 61-82).

Strategy used	<i>f</i>	%	Style of discipline
Encouraging pride among the learners	166	57.44	Progressive
Extra work	159	55.02	Traditional
Refer to principal	149	51.56	Traditional
Encouraging traditions	147	50.87	Progressive
Reprimand	146	50.52	Traditional
Learner participation in compiling the code of conduct	138	47.75	Progressive
Corporal punishment	132	45.67	Traditional
Isolation within the classroom	127	43.94	Traditional
Regular prayers by educator	126	43.60	Progressive
Refer to disciplinary committee	119	41.18	Traditional
Merits-demerits points system	111	38.41	Traditional
Deprivation of privileges	93	32.18	Traditional
Isolation outside the classroom	91	31.49	Traditional
Community service	64	22.15	Progressive
Detention	60	20.76	Traditional

In order to compare whether traditional or progressive strategies are more commonly employed as a means to maintain discipline (even if used in combination), the mean score per respondent for the traditional and the mean score per respondent for the progressive strategies were calculated. These scores will be referred to as the traditional score and the progressive score of the respondents, respectively. A respondent's indication that a specific strategy is used was coded as 1, while a score of 0 was coded when the respondent indicated that a specific strategy is not used. The higher these mean scores, the more commonly that category of strategy (style of discipline) is used.

The averages of these figures were compared. While the average traditional score is 0.5287 the average progressive score is 0.5230. The relative number of traditional strategies followed by the respondents is thus only slightly higher than the relative number of progressive strategies followed by respondents.

These figures were further analysed in terms of demographic differences. The fairly robust Student's *t*-test was used to measure whether, based on the mean scores of the groups, statistically significant differences between the various groups exist.

The respondents were first grouped according to their teaching experience in completed years into the categories less than 10 years and 10 years or more. The details of the specific strategies employed by the two groups of respondents are given in Table 3. The rank order (RO) of the different strategies per group is also indicated.

Table 3: Specific strategies employed by respondents, grouped according to years of experience (in completed years) ( $n=270$ )<sup>5</sup>

Strategy used	Teaching experience in completed years					
	less than 10 ( $n=152$ )			10 or more ( $n=118$ )		
	<i>f</i>	%	RO	<i>f</i>	%	RO
Traditional strategies						
Corporal punishment	79	51.97	7	47	39.83	10
Deprivation of privileges	54	35.53	14	36	30.51	13
Detention	33	21.71	15	22	18.64	15
Discussion or meeting with parents	118	77.63	2	95	80.51	2
Extra work	87	57.24	6	63	53.39	7
Isolation outside the classroom	58	38.16	13	27	22.88	14
Isolation within the classroom	74	48.68	9	49	41.53	9
Merits-demerits points system	59	38.82	12	47	39.83	10
Proper preparation by educator	126	82.89	1	97	82.20	1
Refer to disciplinary committee	65	42.76	11	47	39.83	10
Refer to principal	73	48.03	10	69	58.47	6
Reprimand	76	50.00	8	58	49.15	8
Reward	97	63.82	5	83	70.34	5
System of classroom rules	114	75.00	3	94	79.66	3
Thorough knowledge by educator	105	69.08	4	94	79.66	3
Progressive strategies						
Community service	36	23.68	7	25	21.19	7
Emphasising values	96	63.16	2	85	72.03	2
Encouraging learner pride	89	58.55	3	65	55.08	3
Encouraging traditions	70	46.05	5	65	55.08	3
Learner participation in compiling a code of conduct	70	46.05	4	58	49.15	5
Positive discipline	118	77.63	1	94	79.66	1
Regular prayers by educator	67	44.08	6	50	42.37	6

5 19 of the 289 respondents did not indicate their teaching experience and their responses are thus not included in the table.

Although the two groups of respondents differ in the number of traditional strategies they follow, they agree to a large extent on which strategy they use the most. Some differences can, however, be noted. While 58.47% of the respondents with 10 or more years' experience refer learners to the principal (RO=6), only 48.03% of their less experienced counterparts do so (RO=10). Respondents with fewer than 10 years' experience tend to use corporal punishment more frequently as a means to maintain discipline (mean score = 51.97%; RO=7) than respondents with 10 years' or more experience (mean score = 39.83%; RO=10). The statistical significance of the differences in the responses of these two groups was investigated and the information displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Nature of strategies employed by respondents, grouped according to years of experience (in completed years) ( $n=270$ )

Nature of strategies employed	Years experience	Number of respondents	Mean Score	Standard deviation	Test statistics	
			$\bar{x}$	$S$	$t$	$p$
Traditional	Fewer than 10	152	0.5392#	0.2189	0.5453	0.5860
	10 or more	118	0.5245	0.2214		
Progressive	Fewer than 10	152	0.5132	0.2672	0.6650	0.5066
	10 or more	118	0.5350#	0.2683		

# group with the highest mean score

\* statistically significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ )

While the number of traditional strategies employed by respondents with fewer than 10 years' teaching experience is slightly higher (traditional mean score = 0.5392) compared to that of their more experienced counterparts (traditional mean score = 0.5245), respondents with 10 years' or more experience are more inclined to use progressive discipline strategies (progressive mean score = 0.5350 compared to the progressive mean score of 0.5132 of the less experienced group). These differences in the number of strategies used (based on the mean score) are, however, not statistically significant.



The respondents were grouped according to gender, and the differences of strategies employed were analysed. The results are given in Table 5.

Table 5: Specific strategies employed by respondents, grouped according to gender (*n*=289)

Strategy used	Gender					
	Male ( <i>n</i> =92)			Female ( <i>n</i> =197)		
	<i>f</i>	%	RO	<i>f</i>	%	RO
Traditional strategies						
Corporal punishment	47	51.09	8	85	43.15	10
Deprivation of privileges	32	34.78	14	61	30.96	13
Detention	21	22.83	15	39	19.80	15
Discussion/meeting with parents of learners	69	75.00	4	156	79.19	2
Extra work	49	53.26	7	110	55.84	6
Isolation outside the classroom	35	38.04	13	56	28.43	14
Isolation within the classroom	37	40.22	12	90	45.69	8
Merit-demerit point system	42	45.65	10	69	35.03	12
Proper preparation by educator	77	83.70	1	163	82.74	1
Referral to disciplinary committee	43	46.74	9	76	38.58	11
Referral to principal	41	44.57	11	108	54.82	7
Reprimand	57	61.96	5	89	45.18	9
Reward	53	57.61	6	136	69.04	5
System of classroom rules	72	78.26	2	151	76.65	3
Thorough knowledge by educator	72	78.26	2	144	73.10	4
Progressive strategies						
Community service	18	19.57	7	46	23.35	7
Emphasising values	60	65.22	2	131	66.50	2
Encouraging learner pride	55	59.78	3	111	56.35	3
Encouraging traditions	42	45.65	5	105	53.30	4
Learner participation in compiling a code of conduct	46	50.00	4	92	46.70	5
Positive discipline	76	82.61	1	150	76.14	1
Regular prayers by educator	38	41.30	6	88	44.67	6

Although the popularity of the various progressive strategies are alike between the sexes (vide similar RO), a number of different

patterns in the popularity of the various traditional strategies emerged. While 61.96% of the male respondents indicated that they reprimand learners as a means of maintaining discipline (RO=5), only 45.18% of the female respondents do so (RO=9). Female respondents tend to refer learners to the principal (54.82%; RO=7) and to isolate learners within the classroom (45.18%; RO=8) more often than their male counterparts (44.57%; RO=11 and 40.22%; RO=12, respectively).

The statistical significance of the differences in the responses of these two groups was investigated and the information displayed in Table 6.

Table 6: Nature of strategies employed by respondents, grouped according to gender ( $n=289$ )

Nature of strategies employed	Gender	Number of respondents	Mean Score	Standard deviation	Test statistics	
			$\bar{x}$	$S$	$t$	$p$
Traditional	Male	92	0.5433#	0.2215	0.7728	0.4403
	Female	197	0.5219	0.2172		
Progressive	Male	92	0.5202	0.2566	0.1179	0.9062
	Female	197	0.5243#	0.2785		

# group with the highest mean score.

\* statistically significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ )

While male respondents employ more of the traditional strategies than their female counterparts (vide mean scores), the number of progressive strategies used by females are slightly higher than those used by male respondents. However, no statistically significant differences were observed regarding the relative number of traditional or progressive strategies used by the two groups.

The respondents were further grouped according to post level, and the differences in the number of strategies employed were analysed. Educators, student educators and educator assistants were grouped together as educators, while heads of departments, deputy principals and principals were grouped together as school management team (SMT) members. The frequencies of the responses are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7: Specific strategies employed by respondents, grouped according to post level (*n*=289)

Strategy used	Post level					
	Educator ( <i>n</i> =92)			SMT ( <i>n</i> =197)		
	<i>f</i>	%	RO	<i>f</i>	%	RO
Traditional strategies						
Corporal punishment	113	44.31	9	19	55.88	9
Deprivation of privileges	79	30.98	14	14	41.18	13
Detention	52	20.39	15	8	23.53	15
Discussion/meeting with parents of learners	197	77.25	2	28	82.35	4
Extra work	136	53.33	6	23	67.65	6
Isolation outside the classroom	80	31.37	13	11	32.35	14
Isolation within the classroom	110	43.14	10	17	50.00	10
Merit-demerit point system	96	37.65	12	15	44.12	12
Proper preparation by educator	209	81.96	1	31	91.18	1
Referral to disciplinary committee	104	40.78	11	15	44.12	11
Referral to principal	130	50.98	7	19	55.88	8
Reprimand	57	61.96	5	89	45.18	9
Reward	123	48.24	8	23	67.65	7
System of classroom rules	193	75.69	3	30	88.24	2
Thorough knowledge by educator	187	73.33	4	29	85.29	3
Progressive strategies						
Community service	57	22.35	7	7	20.59	7
Emphasising values	165	64.71	2	26	76.47	2
Encouraging learner pride	146	57.25	3	20	58.82	3
Encouraging traditions	129	50.59	4	18	52.94	5
Learner participation in compiling a code of conduct	118	46.27	5	20	58.82	4
Positive discipline	196	76.86	1	30	88.24	1
Regular prayers by educator	110	43.14	6	16	47.06	6

The popularity of the various strategies employed by educators and SMT members are comparable (vide similar RO), but a few differences should be noted. While 67.65% of the SMT respondents indicated that they reprimand learners, only 48.24% of the educator-respondents do so. A relatively large percentage of the SMT respondents (55.88% ) indicated that they use corporal punishment

to maintain discipline. The strategy most often used by educator and SMT respondents alike is proper preparation, while the least popular strategies to maintain discipline by educator respondents as well as SMT respondents are detention and community service. The only strategy employed relatively more frequently by educator respondents than SMT respondents is community service.

The statistical significance of the differences in the number of strategies employed between educators and SMT members were tested and the results displayed in Table 8.

Table 8: Nature of strategies employed by respondents, grouped according to post level ( $n=289$ )

Nature of strategies employed	Post level	Number of respondents	Mean Score	Standard deviation	Test statistics	
			$\bar{x}$	$S$	$t$	$p$
Traditional	Educator	255	0.5191	0.2164	2.0537	0.0409*
	SMT	34	0.6006#	0.2239		
Progressive	Educator	255	0.5160	0.2711	1.1979	0.2320
	SMT	34	0.5753#	0.2711		

# group with the highest mean score

\* statistically significant difference ( $p \leq 0.05$ )

Members of the SMT employ more strategies to maintain discipline (compare higher mean scores). The relative number of traditional strategies used by educators differs statistically significantly from those used by SMT members ( $t=2.0537$ ,  $df=287$ ,  $p=0.0409$ ). The difference in the number of progressive strategies employed is not statistically significant.

The respondents were also asked to indicate on a 4-point scale how effective they perceived each of the strategies to be. A score of 4 indicates that the strategy is perceived to be very effective and 1 indicates that is perceived to be very ineffective. The mean score of all the respondents regarding the traditional strategies was 3.0016 compared to the mean score of 3.0286 regarding the progressive

strategies. Respondents are thus slightly more positive about progressive strategies. However, as was indicated in the discussion subsequent to Table 2, traditional strategies are slightly more preferable in terms of the frequency of use (traditional score of 0.3058 compared to a progressive score of 0.3041). Thus, although the progressive strategies are perceived to be slightly more effective, they are less often used.

Table 9 gives (traditional and progressive strategies separately) and ranks the mean scores of the respondents regarding the effectiveness of the strategie, based on this mean score. The popularity of the various strategies is given in terms of the number of respondents who indicated that they use them (cf Table 2) and are also ranked in terms of popularity.

Table 9: Effectiveness of the strategies, measured in terms of the mean score compared with the popularity of the strategies, measured in frequency ( $n=298$ )

	Effectiveness of strategy			
	Mean score	RO	<i>f</i>	RO
Traditional strategies				
Corporal punishment	2.648	11	132	9
Deprivation of privileges	2.614	13	93	13
Detention	2.521	14	60	15
Discussion/meeting with parents of learners	3.375	4	225	2
Extra work	2.846	10	159	6
Isolation outside the classroom	2.356	15	91	14
Isolation within the classroom	2.628	12	127	10
Merit-demerit point system	2.979	8	111	12
Proper preparation by educator	3.531	1	240	1
Referral to disciplinary committee	3.037	7	119	11
Referral to principal	3.043	6	149	7
Reprimand	2.847	9	146	8
Reward	3.379	3	189	5
System of classroom rules	3.333	5	223	3
Thorough knowledge by educator	3.428	2	216	4

	Effectiveness of strategy			
	Mean score	RO	<i>f</i>	RO
Progressive strategies				
Community service	2.546	7	64	7
Emphasising values	3.117	2	191	2
Encouraging learner pride among the learners	3.063	3	166	3
Encouraging traditions	2.847	6	147	4
Learner participation in compiling a code of conduct	2.994	4	138	5
Positive discipline	3.408	1	226	1
Regular prayers by educator	2.976	5	126	6

The perceived effectiveness of a strategy does not always correspond with the popularity of that strategy. While referral to a disciplinary committee is perceived to be the seventh best traditional strategy to follow, it is ranked eleventh in terms of the frequency with which it is used by respondents. Corporal punishment is considered not very effective (ranked twelfth out of the 15 traditional strategies) yet it is ranked ninth in terms of frequency of use. The most effective traditional strategy for maintaining discipline is perceived to be proper preparation by the educator and this is also the most popular traditional strategy applied by the respondents.

#### 4. Discussion

It is difficult to link educators exclusively to one of the two categories of school discipline used in this article, because participants often indicate the use of strategies that span the tidy categorisation represented in Table 2. The majority (93.43%) of the respondents who took part in the study use a combination of traditional and progressive strategies to maintain discipline. A mere 6.23% indicated that they use solely traditional strategies, while only 0.35% use solely progressive discipline strategies. This pattern of support for using a combination of traditional and progressive strategies is also reported by Traynor (2003) and Goodman (2006: 218). By contrast, Johnson & Whittington (1994: 265) find clearly discernable patterns of support for a specific approach to school discipline, where the

vast majority of educators held either traditional/punitive or progressive/liberal views. This phenomenon of using a combination of traditional and progressive strategies can be attributed to the tension that exists between the educators' overemphasis on either the freedom of the learner or the authority of the educator.

Two of the most popular strategies employed by the respondents as a means of maintaining discipline is to come properly prepared to school (83.04%), and a thorough knowledge by the educator (74.74%). Informal conversations with Lesotho educators indicate that some educators may perceive themselves to be the sole providers of knowledge, the only authority in class. This is the reason why these two strategies were allocated to the traditional/authoritarian category (cf Table 2). It is nonetheless important to emphasise that these strategies are fundamental to good classroom management (Ferreira 2007: 49, 173, Steward 2004: 328). Against this background it is disturbing to note that nearly 20% of educators do not regard proper preparation by the educator as important in the maintenance of discipline, and that nearly 25% do not believe that their own thorough knowledge contributes to good discipline in the classroom.

Positive discipline was identified as the second most popular disciplinary strategy (Table 2). It is encouraging to note that 78.20% of the respondents indicated that they use a strategy that is, according to researchers (De Klerk & Rens 2003: 357, Maag 2001: 178), conducive to teaching and learning. Positive discipline is, however, more than a strategy, as has been implied by the questionnaire. It is an all-encompassing approach to discipline. According to Pienaar (2003: 263-5), positive discipline is "constructive, corrective [and] rights-based". Pienaar (2003: 263) lists aspects of classroom management (for example, well-prepared lessons, educator's self-discipline, involving learners in the establishment of classroom rules, positive relations with learners, keeping learners busy) and classroom policy as positive disciplinary strategies. The view of positive discipline resonates with a starting point that regards freedom and authority not as opposites (as mutually exclusive), but as two sides of the same coin. Freire (1998: 95-6) insists that "freedom without limit is as impossible as freedom that is suffocated or contracted". The idea

of Dewey is similar, being of the opinion that discipline can be regarded as a positive achievement, a result of genuine education, and the ability to pursue one's own ends. Discipline is therefore "identical with freedom" and "without discipline freedom is self-defeating; one cannot attain one's goals. Freedom without discipline becomes the freedom to not reach the goals" (Dewey 1932: 183).

A relatively large percentage (77.85%) of the respondents who participated in the study indicated that they value parental involvement, and that meetings with parents are an important strategy when disciplinary problems do occur. Other researchers concur with this sentiment and emphasise the vital need for cooperation between home and school (Angelides *et al* 2006: 304, Mitchem 2005: 188-91, Cavanagh & Dellar 2001: 3). However, research indicates that this collaboration may be fraught with problems, and that it is not an easy relationship to establish or manage (Ferreira 2007: 73 & 130, Margolis 2005: 6). It appears that educators often blame parents for disciplinary problems at school, and describe parental values and behaviour as a serious hindrance to good school discipline (Araújo 2005: 245). The following factors may complicate the use of this strategy in Lesotho: many Lesotho parents are illiterate (Moetsana 2007: 73), 17% of the total population of Lesotho are orphans (Kimanane 2005: 1), and many parents live and work in South Africa (Nts'ekhe 2007: 23). Although the extended family may play an important role in this regard, further research is needed to establish how the extended family can be used to instil discipline.

Despite the often found resistance to the use of rewards in schools (Ferreira 2007: 81, 111-2, Jensen 1998: 269) where it is sometimes described as bribery (Maag 2001: 180, Kohn 1995, Lauridsen 1978: 9), 65.4% of the respondents who took part in this study indicated that they use it (cf Table 2). In spite of research findings to the contrary (Lerner 2006: 532-3, Rogers, 1997: 58-9), fears still exist that rewards may be counter-productive and detrimental to the development of intrinsic motivation (Davis *et al* 2006: 211-2; Deci *et al* 1999: 627 & 631). The types of rewards recommended by proponents of this stra-



tegy include positive feedback, positive letters sent home, more free time or participation in preferred activities.<sup>6</sup>

Referrals to the principal are used by 51.56% of the educators who took part in the study (Table 2). More than half the respondents thus use a strategy that is often regarded in Lesotho as “the final step in the disciplinary process” (Moetsana 2007: 38). Moetsana (2007: 38-9) reports that in many Lesotho schools, disciplinary problems are dealt with according to a specific hierarchy: misbehaviour is addressed first by the classroom educator, then by the grade tutor, the deputy principal, the disciplinary committee and finally the head educator. The involved educator sends the learner to the grade tutor who first tries to solve the learner’s problem by talking to the learner in the involved educator’s presence. If the learner’s behaviour does not improve, the grade tutor reports to the deputy principal. The deputy will see the learner and may give him/her a serious warning. Should the learner continue to misbehave, the deputy refers the matter to the disciplinary committee, and the learner appears before this committee. The committee then investigates the matter and writes a report that is handed to the principal. The principal will annotate the misbehaviour in a record book and invite the parents in writing to come to the school and discuss the behaviour problem. Such a letter is referred to as a letter of warning. No learner may receive more than three letters of warning. Should this be the case, the learner will be suspended for two to three weeks, or may be expelled from school, depending on the gravity of the misbehaviour. In Lesotho, referrals to the principal may therefore have severe consequences for a learner’s future.

Reprimand is reported to be twelfth out of the total of 22 strategies listed, with 50.52% of respondents indicating that they use it in class (cf Table 2). Anecdotal evidence suggests that reprimanding is commonly used among educators. It is often the first disciplinary strategy that educators employ. This contradiction between anecdotal evidence and the results from our study necessitate a follow-up, in-depth study, to establish what the respondents understood by this strategy.

6 Cf Garrahy *et al* 2005: 60, Obenchain & Taylor 2005: 10; Stormont *et al* 2005: 46, Safran & Oswald 2003: 368.

Fewer than half of the respondents indicated that they use corporal punishment (cf Table 2). Earlier studies by Monyooe (1996: 121-2, 1993: 516 & 1986: 58), however, showed that corporal punishment was reported as the most frequently used disciplinary strategy in schools in Lesotho. Two of the participants who took part in De Wet's (2006: 23) study on school violence in Lesotho described incidents of corporal punishment in the open-ended section. According to De Wet, these two participants did not question the use of corporal punishment, but the way in which it was administered ("one of the teachers hit a learner with a broom on the head" and "the teacher fought against that pupil using his fist to beat him instead of using a stick in the hand"). Monyooe (1986: 58) found that "most of the rules that govern corporal punishment in schools were violated". Against the background of the foregoing, Ferreira (2007: 133) rightly comments that it appears that corporal punishment is part of the culture in Lesotho, and that the perception exists that learners will not respect educators who do not "give them a few lashes". Corporal punishment (emanating from a deterministic frame of reference) is also frequently (and often brutally) used in Botswana (Tafa 2002: 20) and in South Africa (Ferreira 2007: 134, Masitsa 2007: 156, Maree & Cherian 2004: 74), although it was officially abolished in South Africa in 1996.

Strategies least used by the respondents are detention (20.76%), community service (22.15%) and isolation outside the classroom (31.49%) (cf Table 2). In this respect, Lesotho educators seem to differ from their colleagues in the USA, where detention is a popular strategy (Fields 2004: 104); and where the strategies that are least often used are time out, assigning extra work and sending learners to the principal (Geiger 2001: 389). In many schools in South Africa, detention, isolation and to a lesser degree community service, are considered important ways to enforce school rules (Ferreira 2007: 119). It appears that detention and community service are not used very frequently in Lesotho, because it is often not possible for learners to remain after school. Transport problems and the fact that many learners have to walk long distances to school contribute to this situation. In addition, it is reported that educators seldom use isolation outside the classroom, because there is no supervision available for

learners who are not in class; this may create additional disciplinary problems (Moetsana 2007: 28).

The results of the investigation into the link between strategies and demographic variables will subsequently be tentatively juxtaposed with international research findings.

The investigation into the possible influence of teaching experience on the use of disciplinary strategies reveals that educators with fewer than 10 years' teaching experience are more inclined to use traditional strategies than their more experienced colleagues (cf Table 4). The following descriptive statistics from Table 3 exemplify this trend: while 38.16% of the less experienced educators isolate learners outside the classroom, only 22.88% of the more experienced educators resort to this strategy; 51.97% of the less experienced educators administer corporal punishment in comparison to 39.83% of the respondents with 10 years' or more teaching experience. The opposite appears to hold true pertaining to more progressive strategies (cf Table 4). This corresponds with other research indicating that educators with a lack of experience and insufficient knowledge tend to use more restrictive approaches to discipline (Almog 2005: 4), and that more experienced educators tend to be more tolerant of undesirable behaviour (Kokkinos *et al* 2004: 110). This study also revealed that respondents from the different groups agree to a large extent on which strategies they use the most (cf Table 3). Both groups have indicated, for example, that they use reward as the fifth most frequent strategy. Witzel & Mercer (2003: 89), however, find that novice educators use extrinsic motivation, such as rewards, more frequently than any other classroom management technique.

The study also shows that experienced educators are more likely to refer misbehaving learners to their principals (58.47%) than those educators with fewer than ten years' experience (48.03%). The ensuing speculative discussion of this seemingly strange result should be read against the backdrop of Fields' (2004: 104) comment that there is a general understanding among educators that they should deal with mild problems themselves, and refer cases of more serious and chronic misbehaviour. The following question may therefore be posed: why do the more experienced educators in Lesotho more often

refer learners to the principal than their less experienced counterparts? Part of the answer may be found in what, according to Fields (2004: 104), is the perception among young educators that a referral to the principal may be interpreted as an acknowledgement of their own failure to maintain order. More experienced educators often find it easier to admit that they often need assistance.

The popularity of the various strategies employed by educators and SMT members are comparable (vide similar RO), but a few differences may be noted (Table 7). While 41.18% of the SMT respondents indicated that they deprive misbehaving learners of privileges, only 30.98% of the educator respondents do so. The fact that 55.88% of members of the SMT report that they use corporal punishment, as opposed to only 44.31% of educators, may be attributed to the fact that educators refer learners with serious or chronic misbehaviour to members of the SMT. Although a hierarchy of disciplinary procedures, as described by Moetsana (2007: 38-9) should be in place, it is possible that the SMT deals with these problems simply by administering corporal punishment. It should, however, be noted that 88.24% of the SMT respondents indicated that they use positive disciplinary practices.

The perceived effectiveness of a strategy does not always correspond with its popularity (cf Table 9). The question should therefore be posed: why do educators use strategies that are less effective in preference to other strategies which they deem to be more effective? The answer may probably be found at several levels, but the main factors that play a role in this regard would be related to time, training and belief systems (Houchins *et al* 2005: 383), with the latter emanating from a tension between deterministic and indeterministic frameworks of reference, emphasising either the freedom of the learner or the authority of the educator.

The time factor also plays a fundamental role in all decision-making processes in the classroom. Educators will usually choose a strategy that is perceived to be less time-consuming (such as a system of classroom rules). Strategies that would take extra time for supervision and marking, such as extra work or detention, are often not used, for this very reason. The use of a merit-demerit system seems to

be unpopular because educators perceive the additional administrative tasks to be an unnecessary and time-consuming burden (Ferreira 2007: 76). This is one of the reasons why corporal punishment is still frequently used – it consumes only a little of the educator's time.

The second important factor that influences educators' disciplinary decisions is related to their own training. Some strategies are not well-known in the traditional educational context. For example, the deprivation of privileges and learner participation in compiling a code of conduct do not form part of the traditional educator's arsenal. In addition, these strategies may impact negatively on behaviour if they are not implemented correctly.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the strategies chosen by educators are deeply influenced by their own beliefs and values. Although educators do not always articulate this, it is clear that discipline policies and practices are value-laden (Goodman 2006, Johnson & Whittington 1994: 263). Even when educators are confronted with research-based evidence of strategies that are effective in establishing positive behaviour, they tend not to use them if these strategies do not comply with their own values. For example, educators who operate from an authoritarian (deterministic) frame of reference find it impossible to use rewards and positive discipline effectively (Ferreira 2007: 174). On the other hand, anarchistic views of freedom, born in indeterminism, places freedom ahead of the responsibility of the learner and the legitimate authority of the educator, thus leading to a situation where educators who believe in the total (indeterministic) freedom of the learner do not make use of strategies that appeal to the responsibility of the learner.

It may also be deduced that the changes needed, before educators will consistently employ more effective strategies, begin with alterations in time, training and shifts in personal beliefs (Houchins *et al* 2005: 383) which will not easily be achieved. An important aspect of future research should address this dilemma in greater depth.

If discipline is to be other than power-wielding or anarchism, it must be grounded in a balanced perspective of freedom and authority, which emphasises neither military (deterministic) nor anarchistic

(indeterministic) disciplinary strategies, but a positive view of discipline rooted in responsibility (of both the educator and the learner). This would root out the tension experienced by educators with regard to the choice of disciplinary strategies: the belief that the absence of authority does not necessarily mean that the learner is free, but rather, that the use of legitimate authority indeed guarantees the freedom of the learner.

## 5. Conclusion

This article examined Lesotho educators' strategies to maintain discipline against the background of data on the nature and frequency of the different categories of learner misbehaviour. It is evident from the survey responses that learner misbehaviour, especially low-level indiscipline (for example late coming, absenteeism, neglect of duty, inappropriate dress), as well as more challenging behaviour (for example disruptive and provocative behaviour, the telling of lies, dishonesty) is a pervasive problem in Lesotho schools. The most popular strategy employed by the respondents as a means of maintaining discipline is to come properly prepared to school, followed by positive discipline, discussions or meetings with the parents of the learners, a system of classroom rules and thorough knowledge by the educator. Strategies least used by the respondents are detention, community service and isolation outside the classroom. The majority of the respondents use a combination of traditional and progressive strategies to discipline misbehaving learners. The study showed that years of experience, gender and post level do not have a statistically significant influence on Lesotho educators' preference for using either traditional or progressive strategies to maintain discipline in their classrooms. The study also found that the perceived effectiveness of a strategy does not always correspond with its popularity. The foregoing may be ascribed to the time factor (educators usually choose a strategy that is less time-consuming), educators' training (some progressive strategies are not well-known among educators) and educators' beliefs and values.

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