

Learner Discipline and Democratic Rights: Stakeholders' Perspectives on the Effectiveness of Discipline Policies



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ABSTRACT

This article investigated how school stakeholders perceive the effectiveness of current policies and government Acts on learner discipline. Learner ill-disciplined behaviour is a daily occurrence in today's classrooms. The question addressed was: What are the stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of the current policies and government Acts on learner discipline? To answer this question, the study adopted the qualitative approach and a case study design. 12 participants were recruited using the purposive non-probability sampling approach from three primary schools in Rakwadu 1 Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The sample comprised three principals, three departmental heads involved in the school disciplinary committees, three class teachers, and three representatives of the school's governing body. Data was gathered using interviews and document analysis. Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory underpinned the study. The study found that policies and government Acts on learner discipline were ineffective. They failed to help schools to successfully manage ill-discipline. It was also found that stakeholders had inadequate knowledge of policies and government Acts on discipline. It was recommended that the Basic Education Department provide training to school stakeholders regarding policies and government Acts pertaining to learner discipline. The paper will contribute significantly to transformative scholarship on the promotion of teaching and learning. The article may also be helpful to stakeholders who are hard-pressed to find answers for their schools.

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INTRODUCTION

Over the years, the absence of learner discipline has been a persistent issue and has been observed to be increasing at national and international levels.¹ Studies conducted on ill-discipline have pointed out several factors. Literature found that ill-discipline was caused by increased levels of drug usage.² To advance the claim, a study discovered that ill-discipline was caused by learners' sociocultural issues.³ Yet, another study found that it is caused, amongst others, by a lack of parental engagement.⁴ Of these studies,

¹ M. Simuforosa and N. Rosemary, "Learner Indiscipline in Schools," *Review of Arts and Humanities* 3, no. 2 (2014): 79–88.

² Jiří Mareš, "Students' Indiscipline in the Classroom," *Pedagogická Orientace* 28, no. 4 (2018): 556–98.

³ Belle Louis Jinot, "The Causes of a Lack of Discipline among Secondary School Learners in Mauritius," *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* 9, no. 1 (2018).

⁴ Phephelaphi Matilda Mnisi, "Teachers' Perceptions of Learner Discipline in the Intermediate Phase Schools of the Sikhulile Circuit: Enhlazeneni Region in Mpumalanga Province" (2021).

there appears to be no study that has looked at how the ineffectiveness of policies and Acts may influence the management of ill-discipline at schools.

Recent research indicates that learner discipline is becoming increasingly widespread in South African schools as well and that managing it without violating the rights of learners is a challenge.⁵ While this is the case, the stakeholders are expected to ensure that discipline prevails at schools. To achieve this goal, Section 8 of the South African School Act and the Guidelines for the Consideration of Governing Bodies in Adopting a Code of Conduct for Learners provide them the authority to discipline learners in order to keep the classroom safe and well-organised.⁶ On the other hand, government plans to assist schools in upholding discipline are outlined in policies, laws and government gazettes. School stakeholders ought to promote accountability, tolerance and respect in the classroom. In this study, the stakeholders refer to class teachers, departmental heads serving in the schools' disciplinary committees, principals and members of school governing bodies of the three sampled schools. The relationships between learners and their teachers need to be based on reciprocal respect, decency and accountability. Nonetheless, discipline should be "corrective and educational, rather than punitive and punishing" in order to maintain order.⁷ However, the fact that corporal punishment was outlawed made the situation worse for some stakeholders.

What is even more confusing is that the focus placed on learners' rights rather than their responsibilities supersedes the authority that teachers are apparently granted to reprimand learners.⁸ This places a great deal of pressure on school stakeholders to manage learner discipline without compromising the rights of learners. It appears that school stakeholders in the school system know very little or nothing about government Acts and policies on discipline and how these should be understood, interpreted and implemented. This makes it difficult for stakeholders to uphold proper discipline at their schools.⁹ Therefore, this study seeks to answer the question: What are stakeholders' perceptions of the effectiveness of the current policies and government Acts on learner discipline? To answer this question, the study seeks the views of 12 participants using the purposive non-probability sampling approach from three primary schools in Rakwadu 1 Circuit, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The findings are discussed in subsequent sections.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies show that South African schools deal with a high volume of learner disciplinary cases, which makes it challenging for them to efficiently handle ill-discipline.¹⁰ As a result, it is critical that government Acts and policies pertaining to learner discipline are effective in combating a lack of discipline. Literature assists in determining the issues that lead to the ineffectiveness of policies and government Acts on learner discipline in South African schools.

Knowledge of policies and governments Acts on learner discipline

As previously mentioned, legislation stipulates the duty of school stakeholders to oversee learner behaviour. As the leader of the school, the school principal and the school management team (SMT) have an obligation to ensure that policies on discipline are executed.¹¹ Also, teachers must understand and have knowledge of such policies, be engaged in their drafting, and follow and observe them for effective learner

⁵ Masilonyana Motseke, "Managing Ill-Discipline among Learners in Disadvantaged Schools," *Africa Education Review* 17, no. 3 (2020): 22–36.

⁶ Annamagriet De Wet and Charles J Russo, "Discipline and Learner Rights: Guidelines for School Governing Bodies and Educators," *Journal of Education Studies* 8, no. 1 (2009): 7–20.

⁷ Letlhoye Segalo and Awelani Melvin Rambuda, "South African Public School Teachers' Views on Right to Discipline Learners," *South African Journal of Education* 38, no. 2 (2018): 1–7.

⁸ Aggrey Kayabu Makendano and Vimbi Petrus Mahlangu, "Learner Discipline versus Learner Freedom in Secondary Schools," *Sjesr* 4, no. 4 (2021): 1–9.

⁹ Olufunmilayo Tenidade Obadire and Dzivhonele Albert Sinthumule, "Learner Discipline in the Post-Corporal Punishment Era: What an Experience!," *South African Journal of Education* 41, no. 2 (2021).

¹⁰ Makendano and Mahlangu, "Learner Discipline versus Learner Freedom in Secondary Schools."

¹¹ Thembinkosi Lennox Nhlapho, "Exploring the Implementation of Discipline Policy: A Case Study of Three Primary Schools at Isipingo Circuit" (2018).

discipline.¹² The SMT, teachers, SGBs and school disciplinary committees (SDCs) are obliged to ensure the implementation of policies on learner discipline.

SGBs were established to oversee learner misbehaviour after the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA) was passed.¹³ Accordingly, SGBs must establish a formally organised and functioning SDC as their primary subcommittee.¹⁴ For SDC members to properly create and execute their learner disciplinary codes at a school level, they must also possess sufficient knowledge concerning educational regulations regarding school discipline. As policy responsibility bearers with the authority to uphold school discipline and to ensure that there is no gap between policy and practice, SDCs must be aware of policies on learner discipline, and make sure that all stakeholders involved in the school system properly implement and adhere to them.

The issue is that reports of learners' ill-disciplined behaviour at schools persist despite the DoE's provision of schools with a discipline policy that all stakeholders involved are expected to follow. There ought to be robust and well-informed school stakeholders who are well-versed in the legislation that is permissible.

Permissible perceptions and legislation

All people are created equal and have the right to equal protection under the law, as stated in Section 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.¹⁵ Schoolchildren are entitled to a right to safety, protection, and an environment free from harassment, including corporal punishment. The South African Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 (South Africa, 1996a) and the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (South Africa, 1996b) both significantly influence how learners' behaviour is managed in schools without violating their rights.¹⁶ The principal and his or her SMT have a responsibility to make sure that teachers adhere to the constitution.

The South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996a) gives school governing bodies the authority to adopt a code of conduct.¹⁷ To guarantee a disciplined teaching and learning school atmosphere, and the learner's best interest, it is equally crucial that these rules be correctly implemented and enforced, and that there is no possibility of abuse or misuse of authoritative powers.

This explanation makes it clear that the Constitution forbids corporal punishment in any form as well as other harsh kinds of discipline that disregard human dignity. It is imperative that disciplinary actions do not make a learner feel anxious, uncomfortable, afraid, or humiliated. These policies have been created to help schools create their own codes of conduct and other disciplinary procedures to ensure that learners are treated with respect in the classroom. Schools should have effective learner discipline policies that are founded on strong school stakeholders who understand the nature of a code of conduct that covers learners' rights and the legal implications involved.¹⁸

Learners' rights and the manifestation of tension emanating from discipline policies and government Acts on learner discipline

Significant changes have been made in the way in which learner discipline is managed at schools since the South African Constitution and the South African Schools Act were ratified. Section 12 of the Constitution guarantees a person's freedom and security, emphasising that they must not be subjected to torture or cruel punishment and must be free from all forms of violence.¹⁹ Teachers who employ corporal punishment to maintain discipline find this upsetting. Conversely, teachers have fallen prey to ill-disciplined learners resulting from the abolishment of corporal punishment and the overemphasis on learners' rights. Tension occurs when learners have to be disciplined. Following the outlawing of corporal

¹² Thembinkosi Tshabalala, Augustine Zano Muranda, and Philip Gazimbe Gazimbe, "Challenges Faced by School Heads in Handling Teacher Disciplinary Issues in Primary Schools in Umguza District," *Nova Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 4 (2016).

¹³ South Africa, *South African Schools Act* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

¹⁴ Republic of South Africa, *South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996* (Pretoria: Government Printers, 1996).

¹⁵ Segalo and Rambuda, "South African Public School Teachers' Views on Right to Discipline Learners."

¹⁶ Obadire and Sinthumule, "Learner Discipline in the Post-Corporal Punishment Era: What an Experience!"

¹⁷ South Africa, *South African Schools Act*.

¹⁸ Goodwill Sifiso Dlamini, "The Role of School Governing Bodies in Managing Learner Discipline in No-Fee Public Schools" (University of Johannesburg, 2022).

¹⁹ Segalo and Rambuda, "South African Public School Teachers' Views on Right to Discipline Learners."

punishment, teachers are supposed to foster a more relaxed environment and have cordial relationships with their learners, but some teachers are still reluctant due to fear of losing their power in the classroom.²⁰

Section 14 guarantees the right to privacy, which includes the prohibition on having one's personal or property checked or confiscated. Stakeholders may encounter tension between this right and their authoritarian duty. For example, when schools wish to search learners or their luggage or seize items in an effort to protect learners from theft, illegal substances, or potentially harmful items like weapons.²¹

Learners' right to a fair, reasonable, and legally mandated administrative disciplinary hearing may hamper teachers' capacity to enforce discipline quickly.²² Following proper procedures is important when disciplining a learner. An excessive focus on learners' rights, which appears to restrict stakeholders' ability to uphold discipline and defend learners' rights may lead to tension and conflict between the necessity for stakeholders to retain their authority and policies that limit their authority.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study used Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Learning Theory (SCLT). The SCLT asserts that learning takes place in a social setting where individuals, their surroundings, and their behaviour interact in a dynamic and reciprocal manner.²³ This framework was used to understand how ill-discipline was influenced by social context. Specifically, the researchers examined how Bandura emphasised the significance of paying attention to other people's behaviours, attitudes, and emotional responses. For example, it was noticed that the policies that were developed to curb ill-discipline did not take cognisance of the socio-cultural milieu of the school context and their environment. This theory holds greater significance as it can help school stakeholders comprehend policies and procedures, remember what they have learned, apply it to the real world, and therefore, promote their professional and intellectual growth.

METHODOLOGY

In an effort to provide answers to the research question: What are the perceptions of school stakeholders of the effectiveness of policies and Acts on learner discipline? and to explore how primary schools manage ill-discipline, the study used the qualitative research approach. Bandura's social cognitive theory served as the basis for the selection of this approach because it enabled the researchers to conduct the study in a real-world setting and to gather rich data from participants' subjective perceptions. The theory also gave an extensive understanding of first-hand information on the perspectives of stakeholders on policies and government Acts on discipline.²⁴

An exploratory case study design provided comprehensive knowledge about the perspectives of stakeholders on the effectiveness of policies and government Acts on discipline. A variety of data collection techniques was used to ensure the trustworthiness of the data.²⁵

A purposive non-probability sampling technique enabled the researchers to choose relevant information-rich cases to improve the rigour of the study and the trustworthiness of its data and findings.²⁶ The sample of the study included 12 participants comprising one principal, one departmental head serving in the disciplinary committee, one school governing body (SGB) and one class teacher involved in managing ill-discipline from the three selected primary schools in a single district of Limpopo Province. These participants were knowledgeable data holders who are directly involved in ill-discipline issues on a daily basis. The schools were purposively chosen because they were located in rural areas where the phenomenon of ill-discipline was thought to be prevalent.

Data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and a document review. Open-ended, semi-structured interview questions provided stakeholders with a platform for sharing their perspectives on the

²⁰ T S Mashau, H N Mutshaeni, and L R Kone, "Learner Discipline: Finding Lawful Alternatives to Corporal Punishment (Learner Discipline)," *International Journal of Educational Sciences* 11, no. 3 (2015): 285–90.

²¹ De Wet and Russo, "Discipline and Learner Rights: Guidelines for School Governing Bodies and Educators."

²² South Africa, *South African Schools Act*.

²³ A Bandura and P Hall, "Albert Bandura and Social Learning Theory," *Learning Theories for Early Years* 78 (2018).

²⁴ Bui Thanh Khoa, Bui Phu Hung, and Mohsen Hejsalem-Brahmi, "Qualitative Research in Social Sciences: Data Collection, Data Analysis and Report Writing," *International Journal of Public Sector Performance Management* 12, no. 1–2 (2023): 187–209.

²⁵ Laura L Lemon and Jameson Hayes, "Enhancing Trustworthiness of Qualitative Findings: Using Leximancer for Qualitative Data Analysis Triangulation," *The Qualitative Report* 25, no. 3 (2020): 604–14.

²⁶ Steve Campbell et al., "Purposive Sampling: Complex or Simple? Research Case Examples," *Journal of Research in Nursing* 25, no. 8 (2020): 652–61.

effectiveness of policies on discipline. The researchers were able to probe more and hold conversations with participants.²⁷ The participants' sentiments were audio-recorded, transcribed, and then subjected to thematic analysis. Textual data from document review were also thematically analysed where communal themes emerged.²⁸

All ethical guidelines were followed upon ethical clearance from the University of Limpopo, the DoE Limpopo Province, and the principals of the three primary schools.²⁹ Prior to the commencement of the research study, participants were given consent forms to sign and were informed that their participation was entirely voluntary.³⁰ The whole study was conducted with adherence to research ethics.

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This study focused on stakeholders' perspectives on the effectiveness of policies and government Acts pertaining to learner discipline. Data gathered led to the generation of sub-themes: the ineffectiveness of existing policies and government Acts on learner discipline; lack of knowledge of policies and government Acts on learner discipline; inadequate stakeholder development workshops; poor managerial practices; and limited powers in ill-discipline management. To support the findings, Bandura's Social Cognitive Learning Theory was applied.

Theme 1: Ineffectiveness of policies and government Acts on learner discipline

Participants believed that the existing learner discipline policies and government Acts are ineffective in managing ill-discipline because they seem to be centred on the rights of learners. Literature supports the fact that learner discipline policies and Acts place a greater focus on learners' rights than the provision of sufficient and useful tools to help schools manage ill-discipline effectively.³¹ TZ stated: *"These policies and Acts on learner discipline are confusing and ineffective in managing ill-discipline because they overemphasize learners' rights at the expense of their obligations."* The data additionally demonstrated that the ineffectiveness of policies and Acts in managing ill-discipline stems from stakeholders' lack of knowledge of these policies and Acts.

Theme 2: Lack of knowledge of policies or government acts on learner discipline

Data revealed that another practice that makes discipline policies and government Acts on learner discipline ineffective is related to school stakeholders' lack of knowledge of government regulations, laws and policies regarding learner discipline, which leads to many schools continuing to use illegal methods such as corporal punishment in spite of the guidelines offered on how to handle this problem. Studies indicate that school stakeholders employ corporal punishment due to their lack of knowledge and a long-standing belief that it disciplines misbehaviour.³² There is a concern that if school stakeholders are not knowledgeable about such policies, there is a likelihood that they may fail to handle ill-discipline properly. DHX remarked:

"I think the reason why these policies are ineffective in assisting us in handling ill-discipline, I believe, is because we lack knowledge about the departmental policies, such as SASA, the code of conduct, and numerous other policies pertaining to learner discipline at schools. And in order to implement all of these, we must be aware of the South African School Act and the Constitution." The study revealed that learner discipline policies and government Acts are ineffective because there is a poor cascade of knowledge regarding these policies, and that they are not trained or workshopped, though they have unique ways of managing ill-discipline.

²⁷ Melissa DeJonckheere and Lisa M Vaughn, "Semistructured Interviewing in Primary Care Research: A Balance of Relationship and Rigour," *Family Medicine and Community Health* 7, no. 2 (2019).

²⁸ Gareth Terry and Nikki Hayfield, *Essentials of Thematic Analysis*. (American Psychological Association, 2021).

²⁹ Sonia Bussu et al., "Engaging with Care: Ethical Issues in Participatory Research," *Qualitative Research* 21, no. 5 (2021): 667–85.

³⁰ Graham R Gibbs, "Analyzing Qualitative Data," 2018.

³¹ Cosmas Maphosa and Almon Shumba, "Educators' Disciplinary Capabilities after the Banning of Corporal Punishment in South African Schools," *South African Journal of Education* 30, no. 3 (2010).

³² Nhlapho, "Exploring the Implementation of Discipline Policy: A Case Study of Three Primary Schools at Isipingo Circuit."

Theme 3: Inadequate Stake-Holder Development Workshops

Data showed that insufficient development workshops offered to school stakeholders resulted in ineffective policies and Acts in managing ill-discipline. The data further revealed that school stakeholders become frustrated and may turn to illegal ways of disciplining learners if they do not receive sufficient in-service training to successfully handle ill-discipline. The number of such cases would increase if stakeholders, for instance, did not receive sufficient in-service training on matters pertaining to the management of ill-discipline.³³

TY stated: *"Since the government simply provided us with learner discipline policies and we never received any training on them, how can they be effective? How can you put something into practice that you don't even understand to use?"*

This indicates that, in light of their limited ability to punish offenders, stakeholders must have greater power in managing ill-discipline, and need assistance since they have limited powers in this regard.

Theme 4: Limited Powers in Managing Ill-Discipline

Research has shown that policies on learner discipline and government Acts may be ineffective because school stakeholders in public schools have limited powers to manage ill discipline.³⁴ School stakeholders fear victimisation from implicated learners and their parents because their power is restricted by government legislation and policies on learner discipline. As a result, learners consistently act irresponsibly because they know that they are protected by laws and regulations.

PY was quoted:

"Learner discipline policies and Acts are ineffective because learners have numerous rights that give them greater power over the management of discipline at schools due to the implementation of SASA no. 84 of 1996, which is backed by Chapter 2 in Section 28(2) of the RSA Constitution. We have limited power to discipline these learners, so they are free to behave as they wish."

The ineffectiveness of policies may be attributed to the poor managerial practices of school stakeholders who may exhibit a lack of awareness of policies and government Acts in managing ill discipline.

Theme 5: Poor Managerial Practices

Policies and government acts on learner discipline may be ineffective due to poor managerial practices by both school stakeholders and the government. Research indicates that departmental representatives contribute to the ineffectiveness of policies and Acts on learner discipline because they rarely visit schools to oversee the application of such policies.³⁵ This practice makes school stakeholders feel neglected. To advance the argument, research confirms that there are instances where school stakeholders handle issues related to disciplining learners without being trained on learner discipline policies and government Acts.³⁶ The authors also confirm that some school principals neglect to record ill-discipline Acts and provide strong evidence against learners who are implicated. In these situations, principals face accusations of favouritism.

DHX commented with despair: *"No official visits to our school to check if learner discipline policies and Acts are strictly followed or well implemented, we are just on our own. You find that most cases are concealed and are not recorded and wrong procedures are followed when disciplining offenders. It would seem some learners are favoured over other."*

DISCUSSION

This study was intended to respond to the question posed by research.: "What are school stakeholders' perspectives of the effectiveness of policies and government Acts on learner discipline?" The overall finding is that policies and government Acts on learner discipline put more emphasis on learners' rights

³³ Obadire and Sinthumule, "Learner Discipline in the Post-Corporal Punishment Era: What an Experience!"

³⁴ Mgonja, Michael Greyson. "Responding to workplace absenteeism in Tanzania: The case study of public and private schools in Ilala Municipality and Mkuranga District." *International Journal of Educational Leadership and Management* 5, no. 1 (2017): 85-108.

³⁵ Nhlapho, "Exploring the Implementation of Discipline Policy: A Case Study of Three Primary Schools at Isipingo Circuit."

³⁶ Hamisi Mfaume and Margareth Bilinga, "Prevalence of Teachers' Professional Malpractices in Tanzanian Public Secondary Schools: What Ought to Be Done?," *Journal of Education and Training Studies* 5, no. 2 (2017): 43-52.

than their responsibilities, making them ineffective in managing ill-discipline. To understand this finding, other supportive findings are discussed.

The study further revealed that the authority granted to learners' freedom and rights as specified in policies and government Acts on learner discipline is one of the factors that render these policies and Acts ineffective. To advance this finding, scholars attest that these policies and Acts prioritise the rights of learners over the provision of adequate and practical means to assist schools in managing ill-discipline.³⁷ This makes school stakeholders confused and challenged to implement policies on learner discipline, thus creating room for more ill-disciplined practices by learners.

This study also revealed that there has been a discernible increase in learners' unruly behaviour at schools as a result of this exaggeration of their rights rather than giving them practical and well-defined skills to help them deal with ill-behaviour. A focus on learners' freedoms and rights could be the initial root of a lack of discipline at schools.³⁸ Consequently, learners act in an unruly manner as a result of breaking school rules. This finding supports Bandura's SCLT, which explains how changing one's way of thinking could affect behaviour. Learners' behaviour can be changed, but only if they adjust the way they think, take responsibility for their activities, and accept accountability for their behaviours.³⁹

It is challenging for schools to effectively handle ill-discipline because learners are aware that their rights are overemphasised at the expense of their obligations, and thus they do as they wish. Lack of knowledge about current policies and government Acts among school stakeholders may also contribute to the ineffectiveness of existing policies and Acts on learner discipline. School stakeholders may not be aware of current policies and government Acts that are crucial to helping them manage ill-discipline. This could also be linked to the ineffectiveness of the present policies and Acts on learner discipline.

The data revealed that even though schools have policies on learner discipline and government Acts, the participants either did not know them or chose to ignore them. School stakeholders find it difficult to effectively handle ill-discipline when they do not know the policies and government Acts relevant to learner discipline or because they are ignorant of them.

There is a request for the Department of Education to intervene and provide support in this area because school stakeholders seem concerned and confused when confronted with instances of ill-discipline. Literature confirms that teachers are hesitant to reprimand learners in consideration of the human rights values set forth in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.⁴⁰

For policies and government Acts to be effective, school stakeholders should be conversant with the policies that could help them deal with ill-discipline and ensure that these policies and regulations are properly followed. If the stakeholders have the right to participate in training sessions and workshops hosted locally and by the Department of Education, then this might be feasible.

Through participation in these workshops, SCLT, which provides a framework for the study, may assist stakeholders and learners at schools in comprehending policies and practices, retaining what they have learned, and applying it to practical settings, and ultimately promoting their professional and intellectual growth.⁴¹ Consequently, for learner disciplinary policies and government Acts to be effective, stakeholder development workshops are required. It was determined that in most cases, stakeholders were not given any training on how to put learner discipline policies into practice, which might help them deal with ill-discipline in primary schools.

Training sessions previously provided lasted for a few hours. The vast majority of teachers in the system, including recently hired ones and SGBs, never received any form of training in this area. There are currently no workshops offered on discipline management, only one-day workshops on curriculum coverage and annual teaching plans (ATPs) clarifications are offered. Insufficient training in executing policies and government Acts on learner discipline fails teachers to manage ill-discipline effectively, thus causing ill-discipline cases to escalate. Insufficient in-service training of school stakeholders led to an

³⁷ Maphosa, Cosmas, and Almon Shumba. "Educators' disciplinary capabilities after the banning of corporal punishment in South African schools." *South African journal of education* 30, no. 3 (2010).

³⁸ Charles Fosu-Ayarkwah, "Counselling as a Critical Tool in Managing Ill-Discipline in Colleges of Education in Ghana," *Open Journal of Educational Research*, 2022, 197–212.

³⁹ Irma Buys, "A Restorative Approach towards School Discipline and Behavioural Conduct in South African Schools: A Case Study" (University of South Africa, 2018).

⁴⁰ Segalo and Rambuda, "South African Public School Teachers' Views on Right to Discipline Learners."

⁴¹ Bandura and Hall, "Albert Bandura and Social Learning Theory."

increase in instances of ill-discipline among learners.⁴² To give school stakeholders the knowledge they need to address ill-discipline and build law-abiding and orderly individuals, the department should organise training sessions on policies and government Acts. In the real sense, if stakeholders are not adequately trained or workshopped with regard to policies and government Acts on learner discipline, there is a likelihood for them to engage in poor managerial practices.

Ineffective learner discipline policies and government Acts may be the consequence of poor managerial practices by both government and school stakeholders. Departmental officials rarely visit schools to monitor and support the implementation of policies on learner discipline and government Acts. Consequently, schools adopt inappropriate ways of dealing with disciplinary matters. Hence, departmental officials are blamed for the inefficiency of government laws and policies pertaining to learner discipline since they do not frequently visit schools to supervise the implementation of these laws and policies.⁴³ In several cases, school personnel deal with learner disciplinary matters without receiving prior training on government Acts and learner discipline policies. This frequently results in some disciplinary concerns being hidden and not documented. School stakeholders may occasionally turn to illegal ways of disciplining learners since laws and policies restrict their power to enforce discipline.

The biggest issue that public school stakeholders deal with is that their authority is more constrained than in private schools. This makes it difficult for them to reprimand learners, particularly in accordance with the provision of human rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.⁴⁴ Despite the fact that learner discipline policies and government Acts are available, ill-discipline cases are still rife in many schools.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Development workshops:** There is a need for school stakeholders to receive the necessary training through workshops and be empowered in the implementation of policies and government acts in an efficient manner. The study recommends that, given the alarming rise in incidents of ill-discipline, the training should begin before many innocent lives are lost.
- **School stakeholders:** It is recommended that stakeholders successfully cascade the knowledge they acquire from workshops and seminars to learners to help them cultivate a sense of Ubuntu. This will enable them to resolve minor disputes amicably and prevent severe cases of indiscipline that frequently result in fatalities.
- **Department of Education:** It is suggested that the Department of Education make frequent field trips to schools for monitoring and support and to oversee the application of policies and government Acts pertaining to learner discipline.

CONCLUSION

This study sought to explore the perspectives of stakeholders on the effectiveness of policies and government Acts on learner discipline in managing ill-discipline. The study concludes that policies and government Acts are crucial in assisting stakeholders to manage ill-discipline effectively. For the policies and government Acts on learner discipline to be effective, stakeholders should be informed and training through workshops should be regularly provided. It has been established that policies and government Acts on learner discipline should be effective and that they should not only promote learners' rights but also build in learners a sense of responsibility and the ability to handle petty conflicts.

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⁴² Obadire and Sinthumule, "Learner Discipline in the Post-Corporal Punishment Era: What an Experience!"

⁴³ Nhlapho, "Exploring the Implementation of Discipline Policy: A Case Study of Three Primary Schools at Isipingo Circuit."

⁴⁴ Segalo and Rambuda, "South African Public School Teachers' Views on Right to Discipline Learners."

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