Design and Use of Classroom Rules to Manage and Modify Challenging Learner Behaviour in Schools in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District

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Abstract: This study reports on the findings of a study which evaluated the nature, design and scope for applying classroom rules in managing challenging learner's behaviours in schools. The study hoped to identify possible gaps in the design and application of classroom rules so as to establish a reliable trend leading to the effectiveness of classroom rules as a disciplinary tool. Based on the qualitative paradigm, simple random sampling was used to collected data through observation, individual in-depth interviews with 50 teachers and an analysis of 25 classrooms rules from 5 secondary school in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District in South Africa. Data collected was analysed through open coding and content analysis. Truthfulness was ensured through external and internal validity measures. The findings reveal that most classroom rules are shallow and are without consequences, therefore, they do not respond to challenging learner behaviours in classrooms. Despite, the rigid nature of the classroom rules, teachers rely heavily on them as the immediate tool to discipline learners. The same classroom rules are applicable to all learners irrespective of their uniqueness. It is argued that learners are unique and individuality must be considered in disciplining learners rather than relying on specific rules. Lack of awareness of the consequences to a misbehaviour by learners promotes the likelihood of further occurrence. As such, classroom rules must create awareness on consequences to learner behaviours. Based on this findings, it is therefore, recommended that a uniform design for classroom rules be established in schools which is more comprehensive to include consequences. While applying classroom rules on learner behaviour, teachers should consider individual situations and be flexible.

Key words: Design, scope, classroom rules, applying, disciplinary strategy, learner behaviour

INTRODUCTION

The use of classroom rules as a disciplinary strategy to manage classroom practice is an age long practice that is still widely use in schools today. With little research on its design and scope to guide its effective application, it is gradually being considered futile given the rise of modern theories on managing discipline in the classroom. Teachers in South African schools from time to time try to make sure their learners behave in a manner in which they consider disciplined (Jacobs *et al.*, 2013). Such teachers consider this approach to discipline as the proper way a classroom should be (Glasser, 2005; Andrius, 2007). In order for teachers to attain the outcome of such understanding of discipline in classrooms, they use punishment (coercion) and reward based on specific rules on their learners (Glasser, 2005, 2009). This is done with the intention of persuading the learners to behave in a manner considered appropriate to the teachers. That is to respect and act according to specified classroom rules and regulations that guide classroom behaviors (Malone, 2010). The best of this disciplinary approach so far can be attested to by its success in only managing learner misconduct when they occur (Glasser, 2010). Much is not known on how this approach can be further used to prevent the occurrence of misbehaviors from happening in class while modifying the behavior of existing misbehaving learners. Based on these gaps in current knowledge, this study bring together successful behaviour management approaches, discipline theories on classroom rules and the realities of today's classrooms in South African schools. In so doing, this study aims to add to existing literature on approaches to the successful management of challenging learner behaviour by preventing and modifying that of misbehaving learners.

Background and problem statement: In the wake of modern reasoning, the research of (Glasser, 2009) are

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sending messages of a more effective way to manage and modify challenging learner behaviour. This approach suggests that challenging learner behaviour and other disciplinary issues in the classroom can be properly managed without necessarily using rewards or punishment. But, if classroom rules are to be considered, they should not be based on following specific classroom rules (Colvin, 2009).

This assertion contributes to the psychological milestone of today's society towards improving on the historical practice of disciplining learners through classroom rules. Willaim (Glasser, 2009) in one of the ideas of Choice Theory, uphold that learners behaviour can also be managed, prevented and/or modify through the use of comprehensive classroom rules. This approach is defended by the argument that learners present unique problems and challenges or misconduct. Therefore, there is hardly any "right" way to deal with their misbehavior by following specific rules. As such, classroom rules must be structured with the reasoning that they are not an end to themselves but rather a very important instrument in the hands of a flexible teacher.

Arguments to defend the use of the later ideas emanating from Choice Theory (CT) against the use of classroom rules with specific rules are important. The idea to manage challenging learner behavior using classroom rules in Glasser's research are acknowledged in numerous literature (Charles, 2008; Ulen, 1999). In whatever depth this approach has influenced policies and learner behaviours in schools worldwide, the subject is still a challenge in South African schools.

Educators in some South African schools are not knowledgeable about the ideas of Choice Theory and it use in classroom discipline (Carey, 2002). Whereas in America, research confirms the most well behaved learners in schools belongs to classrooms of teachers with knowledge of CT (Charles, 2008). The lack of the knowledge of CT and its use in classroom discipline is a challenge to classroom discipline worldwide. Educators are said report more incidents of disruptive classroom behaviour than in the past. In South Africa, it is evident in reports suggesting that challenging learner behaviour in the classroom is on a rise. The severity of the current level is that it now possess threats to the effectiveness of classroom rules intended to counter them. Nevertheless, teachers in South African schools still consider and rely heavily on the use of classroom rules (Maraise and Meier, 2010). They still make use of specified classrooms rules as the most effective and immediate responsive disciplinary strategy to manage learner misbehaviors (Department of Education, 2012; Smit and Osborn, 2007). Classrooms

rules are pasted in almost every classroom wall in South African schools (Jacobs *et al.*, 2013). The practice and use of these rules in South African schools is not a new practice. Rather, it an aged custom as it is practiced by most teachers colloquial.

In South Africa, classroom rules are different in nature and design across province, districts and schools. There is no national policy framework that define how classroom rules must be designed and used. However, most classroom rules are informed by the general school disciplinary policy (Department of Education, 2012-2010; Joseph, 2013). With the belief the design informs the application, the disparity in the nature and design of classroom rules implies that teacher's application of these rules also differs across schools and classrooms. The difference in application may be as a result of the contextual difference of the schools and classroom or due to the training of the teachers. Difference in the approaches of applying classroom rules based on contextual difference of schools is reasonable. However, difference in approach of applying classroom rules by teachers in schools based on teachers training raise questions. The researchers believe that if all the teachers in South African classrooms are well trained on how to design and use classroom rules, their understanding and application of classroom rules based on training may be uniform. That notwithstanding, if they are all using well designed classroom rules effectively, then the campaign against challenging learner behavior might have begun.

A natural condition for every classroom is functional, productive, satisfying and harmonious. However, these conditions exist in the same space with sources of stress, burnout, dysfunction, misbehaviors and strains in each classroom (Maree, 2010). Classroom rules are the most widely used disciplinary instrument to counter these setbacks. In a context where classroom rules which were intended to manage learner behaviour in the classroom are not successfully doing so, researchers worry about the design and use of these rules. Questions surround the effectiveness of the classroom rules. Concerns are raised around how learners' behaviour can be managed and modified without relying solely on specific classroom rules. This study should perhaps add to concerns as regards the critical components to drive the campaign of managing and modifying challenging learner behaviors in schools.

Main research question: How are classroom rules design and applied in South African schools to manage and modify challenging learner behaviour?

Sub-questions:

- How are classrooms rules design to manage and modify learner behavior?
- How do teachers understand and apply classroom rules to manage and modify learner behavior?

The two sub-questions were intended to understand and mitigate on how classroom rules can be effectively design and applied in schools to manage and modify challenging learner behavior?

Purpose of the study: The main aim of the study whose findings this study sought to present was to analyze how classroom are rules design and applied in South African schools to manage and modify challenging learner behaviour. This was done with the hope of identifying possible shortfalls in the design and application of classroom rules and hopefully establish a reliable trend to the later.

Objectives to the study: In attempt to achieve the main aim, the study:

- Assess how classrooms rules are design to manage and modify learner behavior
- Analyse how teachers understand and apply classroom rules to manage and modify learner behavior
- Suggest how classroom rules can be effectively design and applied in schools to manage and modify challenging learner behavior?

Conceptual framework: Considering that learners' present unique problems which should count on how teachers should react to their classroom behaviour using classroom rule is complicated. This understanding may send different ideas to the minds of readers. It may suggest that Glasser's Choice Theory (CT) is against the use of classroom rules as a disciplinary tool. That is not true in this study. Contrary to that perception, this study is grounded the philosophy of Glasser's CT which is against the complete reliance on the use of specific rules to maintain discipline in the classroom (Glasser, 2010). This creates the impression that classroom rules must be flexible and responsive to contextual differences and learner's uniqueness (Curwin *et al.*, 2008). Just like the classroom rules, teachers must also be flexible to respond to unique classroom misbehaviors as they fluctuate across the disciplinary tools. This approach is refers to as responding to individuality in applying disciplinary

strategies (Miltenburger, 2008). This is a challenging process for teachers and even more challenging when teachers lack knowledge on how to do it. Given the circumstance, it becomes valuable for teachers to understand the arguments surrounding the design and use of classroom rules in classroom discipline. More so, is it imperative to comprehend that both teachers and learners have important roles to play in the process.

Supporting the use of classroom rules by teachers in managing learner behaviour in the classroom, Glasser (1990, 2009) explains examples of failed classrooms that have attempted to operate without rules in the mistaken belief that rules stifle initiative, responsibility and self-direction. Glasser (2010) considers classroom rules to be essential for teachers to perform their roles in maintaining discipline. Classroom rules are essential for learners who have done poorly in school. Lack of classroom rules fosters antagonism, ridicule and lack of respect for teachers and others (Glasser, 2009). As such, rules should be established by teachers and students together and should facilitate personal and group achievement. However, careful attention must be given to the design and use of the classroom rules in order for it to be effective.

Classroom rules used in managing challenging learner behaviors in South African schools focus mainly on, ability and other realities of learners (Jacobs *et al.*, 2013). By so doing, it is ensured that classroom rules must reinforce the basic idea that learners are in school to learn. Because of the uniqueness of learners in the classroom during a learning process, it is believed that classroom rules need to be checked for structural fitness in order to be effective. This is a reliably continuous process given the fact that the context and situation of classroom atmosphere and learner behaviour changes as learners progress in grades. In an attempt to address the changes over time, Glasser (2005) suggest that classroom rules should continually be reviewed to see if they are valuable. When no longer useful, they should be throwaway and changed. For as much as they are kept and recognized in a classroom, they must be applied. The later suggests that the success in applying classroom rules to managing learner behavior lies in the effectiveness of the design and use. This implies that any ineffectiveness in design and application of the much needed classroom rules is not acceptable in schools. The fact that the issue is never brought to the table in most contemporary educational debates is problematic as it indirectly necessitate the continuous increase of incidents of challenging learner behaviors in classrooms.

Classroom rules; design and scope: In order to manage and modify challenging learner behaviours (Canter and Canter, 2011) argue that it is important to establish rules, procedures, consequences and reinforcement for a classroom. In the process, it is pivotal for a teacher to develop a comprehensive classroom management and discipline system for all students in the classroom (Oliver, *et al.*, 2011). This is the foundation for any additional actions that they need to take when addressing the special challenges of working with difficult students. Because there are different types of challenging learners, educators may need to use a different approach with each type (Burden, 2010). In addition, each student has his or her own personality, academic history and circumstances to be considered. For these reasons, it is helpful to establish a plan to deal with the unique characteristics of each challenging student. Handling each incident as a separate act is not sufficient. Preplanned, sequential actions are needed to address the problem behaviour systematically. Charles (2008) suggests that one of the best way to approach the problem of challenging learner behaviour through plan rules is by designing a social contract. A social contract in this case is a basic tool for discipline planning between the teachers and learners about the rules and consequences for classroom behaviour. Curwin *et al.* (2008) identify the following important aspects of designing the contract; involve students in the process; ensure that the rules are clear; develop consequences, not punishment; develop predictable consequences; allow the contract to change with class needs have safeguards to protect the dignity of all students, increase communication among educators, students, administrators and parents and integrate discipline methodology with the teaching content.

Managing and modifying challenging learner behaviour: The key to understanding challenging learner behaviour is to view what a learner does in the context of the classroom structure. Not every infraction of a rule is necessarily misbehavior (Department of Education, 2010, 2012). Challenging learner behaviour is seen in this study as "action in context" and requires interpretation based on what the teacher knows about the likely configuration of events. These includes behaviour that interfere with the teaching, interferes with the rights of others to learn, is psychologically or physically unsafe, or destroys property (Bruveris, 2006). Behaviours of this category show in the classroom in the form of needless talk, annoying others, moving around the room, non-compliance, disruption, aggressive actions and defiance of authority (Burden, 2010; Walker *et al.*, 2004).

Managing and modifying challenging learner behaviour speaks to disciplinary approaches used to create effective teaching and learning environment. The pattern for applying these disciplinary approaches suggest that processes used must ensure that rules and standards of behaviour are applied in a fair, consistent and systematic manner (Kiggundu, 2009). The procedure recognises that each case of learner misbehavior must be treated on its merits taking into account individual circumstances. This approach to managing discipline calls on teachers to make learners feel emotionally comfortable and physically safe so that learners can develop self-discipline (intrinsic discipline) and accountability in their actions (Mokhele, 2006). In order for teachers to do this, they must ensure that decisions on how discipline problems are handled should be in a manner that minimizes current consequences and provide strategies to avoid further occurrences (Clovin, 2009). At the very best, managing challenging learner behaviour should include enforcing methods to prevent or respond to behaviour problems so they do not occur in the future. The understanding of discipline in this context focuses on the practice of respect and care for others and self and managing discipline is about safe-guarding the rights learners who are exposed to uncooperative, aggressive or blocking responses by others.

Learners nowadays prove to be knowledgeable that class time is treasurable. As such, more constructive work needs take place during that time rather than lessons to be predominantly dominated by instances of educators attempt to manage challenging learner behaviours (Jacobs *et al.*, 2013). That notwithstanding, learners also rely on the teacher to establish the rhythm and to direct the classroom activities necessary for learning in a conducive environment. As such, they feel let down when teachers fail to create and uphold a conducive environment for teaching and learning. In an attempt not to let down learners and further bridge the professional responsibility of being a leader, manager and administrator (Department of Education, 2010, 2012), teachers respond to challenging learner behaviours using varied approaches. It is believed that a teacher's approach to creating a conducive environment for learning is based on his/her personality, philosophy and teaching style. In the same way, for teachers to able to use classroom rules effectively to manage challenging learner behaviours thereby creating an effective climate for teaching, their philosophy of discipline and behaviour management needs to be apt. There are quite a number of different philosophies and theories of discipline that teachers needs to consider. A few of the very essential philosophies for teachers in this study are assertive discipline, behaviour modification and William Glasser's Choice Theory. These philosophies forms the theoretical framework to this study.

Assertive approach: Assertive approach to discipline is very essential in the use of classroom rules to manage challenging learner behaviour. This approach is based on the philosophy that the teacher knows the way and the learners need decisive guidance (Jacobs *et al.*, 2013). The assertive teacher pronounces the rules, explain the rational and holds the learners to them but never invites the learner's inputs.

Behaviour modification theory: Behavior modification is one of the many different methods and philosophies of dealing with inappropriate or undesirable behavior. It is different from other methods and philosophies in that it focuses only on observable, describable and measurable behaviors, as opposed to psychoanalytic theory which focuses on finding the underlying cause of behavior (Smith, 2002). It is concerned with analyzing and modifying human behavior. Analyzing means identifying the functional relationship between environmental events and particular behavior, to understand the reasons for behavior or determine why a learner behaved as he or she did. Modifying means developing and implementing procedures to help change an unwanted behavior (Miltenburger, 2008). This philosophy also speaks to the needs for rules to be spelled out and behaviour compliance with or against the rules are managed through rewards and punishment. In classrooms, it focus on the application of the techniques of experimental psychology to applied problems. This implies that teachers need to include the precise data collection methods of the laboratory behavior scientist in their classroom rules to deal with learners' behavior problems. In this approach, acceptable classroom behaviours are clearly spelled out. Learners get rewarded for acceptable behaviour and punish for engaging in unacceptable behaviour (Canter and Canter, 2011). Therefore, in designing classroom rules that complies with behaviour modification approach, rules must carry punishments and/or rewards to justify the behaviour.

Choice theory: Choice Theory (CT) according to Glasser (2009) involves bringing learners to an awareness of their responsibility to make their own decisions about their learning and behaviour in the classroom. This philosophy is based on Glasser's "Choice Theory" which posits that learners must have a choice to choose their curriculum and decide on the rules in the classroom. If they are privileged to help in this decision, they will then have ownership of their learning, have pride in their participation, will have higher self-esteem and will exhibit greater levels of self-confidence and higher levels of cognition. This approach to classroom management creates a safe classroom for learners to learn as it is considered as their space. The learners will have ownership of the classroom and will decide the rules. When this sense of ownership is established, learners will come to class willingly and with enthusiasm because they want to be challenged. This understanding of CT suggest in this study that classroom rules are very instrumental in shaping and modifying the behaviour of learners in the classroom. It further bring to light the importance on how to design the classroom rules in order for it to be effective. The suggested design brings both learners and teachers as partners in the process. In this way, CT supports the possibility of managing and modifying challenging learner behaviour using properly design classroom rules in the disposal of a dynamic teacher. In tackling issues of challenging learner behaviour management, Glasser takes a tackling the problem from its root approach (Carey, 2012). An approach that seeks to understand classroom incidents and individuals in the process of making the solutions.

In Choice Theory, Glasser express that learners behave based on what they want, compared to what they see and know. This necessitates the power of choice. Linked to every choice is a natural consequence which produces responsibility and accountability. This approach therefore should guide the design of classroom rules. Classroom rules should be design to include consequences and teachers must be flexible on when and how to apply the rules and other natural consequences.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The social dynamics under which educational systems operate involves a circle in which people's feelings, emotions and thoughts come into play. The emotions, feelings, views and ideas of teacher and learners in their involvement to ensure that learners behave properly in class constitute what they bring to the school as their contribution to managing learners with challenging behaviours. However, the breath of how these emotions and feelings are expressed in relation to the use of Choice Theory in managing and modifying learner behaviour in schools can best be evaluated and determined by choosing appropriate research methods. This study was undertaken from a complete qualitative research paradigm. The inquiry process was characterized by an understanding where the researchers develops a complex, holistic picture, analyses words, reports detailed views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting (Creswell *et al.*, 2010). This paradigm gave room for the researchers to study the key issues as described in the purpose of the study in detail without being constrained by pre-determined categories of analysis as would be the case of questionnaires with pre-determined questions in a quantitative study.

This study was underpinned by the qualitative research approach. The plan and framework for action that was used to create a link between the research questions and the in-depth realities of the empirical world in this piece of research work focused completely on the interpretivism paradigm. This paradigm involves taking participant's subjective experience on classroom rules seriously as the essence of what is real for them (ontology), making sense of their experience by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they tell us (epistemology) and making use of qualitative research techniques to collect and analyze information gathered. By this paradigm, the ordinary word 'understanding' usefully captures the two aspects of interpretation-understanding in the sense of identifying or empathizing with and understanding as trying to make sense of (Smith and Osborn, 2007). This approach allows for both aspects of the inquiry to likely lead to a richer analysis and do greater justice to the totality of the participants. Within this interpretivist paradigm, the research was based on subjectivism. By using subjectivism as an approach, this study is based on the belief that there is an external reality that can be studied subjectively (Vos *et al.*, 2011). The plan which moves from an underlying philosophical assumption to specifying the selection of respondents, the data gathering techniques to be used and the data analysis to be done in this study was a case study.

Population and sampling: The large group to which a researchers wants to generalise their sample results (Bickman and Rog, 2008) are teachers and learners in schools in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District (NMMD) this district is the biggest in the North-West province and has over 200 secondary schools (Department of Education, 2010) with over 1800 classrooms with classroom rules. Since all the learners and teachers using classroom rules in the general population of the study could not be part of the study, sampling was instrumental. The proportion of a population considered for actual inclusion in the study (Vos *et al.*, 2005) were 50 teachers purposefully selected from 5 secondary schools in NMMD. The 5 schools were randomly selected from across the five area offices in the district. The 10 teachers were purposively selected from each of the 5 schools. The 10 teachers were selected based on their experience which was determined prior to approaching them as participants. Purposeful sampling suited this study best as the sample sizes were not fixed prior to data collection (Maree, 2010). Participants were purposefully selected to enable the researcher to draw only information-rich participants who have reliable information and much experience on the subject under investigation.

Data collection and analysis: Since qualitative researchers tend to reject the term "collection of data" and instead use "generating" data (Halloway,1997), the different techniques we used to gather information for this study (Wilson and Fox, 2009) are individual in-depth interviews, observation and document analysis. The use of the three qualitative data collecting instruments ensures triangulation. Individual in-depth interviews was conducted with all 50 purposively selected teachers on their knowledge on the design and use of classroom rules to manage and modify learner's behaviour. In terms of document analysis, 25 classroom rules were analyzed. The 5 classroom rules per school. The selected classroom rules were for the classes of the 50 educators. The classroom rules were analyzed to generate information about their design in terms of breath and scope. Observation was done to the very 25 classrooms that provided classroom rules to inquire the level of visibility from the all the angles of the classroom. This information contributes to learner's familiarity with the rules.

Data collected through these strategies were analyzed through open coding and content analysis. Recorded data from the interviews were transcribed and analyzed using open coding while data generated from analysis of the classroom rules were analyzed using content analysis.

Ethical consideration and trustworthiness: After receiving the approved permissions from the Ethics Committee of the university, Department of Education and principals of the participating schools, the researcher approached the individual participants in the research site. The researcher explained the purpose of the research and what was expected from the participants, gave clarification on the procedures to be followed, offered an account of any probable risk and discomfort to the participants, clarified the procedures that might be advantageous to the participants and offered to answer questions concerning the procedures to be followed. After that, the researcher sought confirmation of the participants' consent to participate in the study. To show agreement to participate in the research, the participants were requested to sign the consent form.

Truthfulness was ensured through external and internal validity measures. In order to ensure internal validity in the study, the researcher used the participant validation or member checking strategy. After arriving at the findings to the study, the researcher took the findings of the preliminary analysis back to the participants to verify. The intention was to solicit feedback on the emerged findings. In so doing the researcher was able to rule out the possibilities of misinterpreting the meaning of

what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on. Another strategy used to ensure internal validation in this study was triangulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Choice Theory admits to the need for classroom rules in managing learner classroom misbehaviours and holds strongly that classroom rules are very important in modifying learner's behaviour. (Glasser, 2010). The existence of this classroom rules alone does not guarantee its effectiveness in managing learner behaviour. Rather, how the classroom rules are design and applied is of prime importance. As such, collective effort (learners and teachers) must be enforced in establishing classroom rules (Charles, 2008). In order to emphasise the importance of classroom rules in creating opportunities for managing and influencing learner behaviour, the study inquired into the existence of classroom rules and how they are design and enforced in schools in the Ngaka Modiri Molema District (NMMD).

Existence and design of classroom rules to manage learner behaviour: Research studies (Michail, 2011, Burden, 2010) have defended prudence for educators to develop classroom rules for managing learner behaviour. In doing so, it is believed that acceptable classroom behaviours needs to be emphasized when classroom rules are first discussed. During such preliminary discussions, learners must be made aware why the classroom rules exist. Burden (2010) believes that it is the responsibility of teachers during the process of discussing classroom rules to ensure that learners understand and discuss the particular behaviours that are considered to break the rules thus leading to punishment. Kohn (2006) believes that under the guidance of flexible rules systematically design and carefully implemented without rigidity, behaviours that necessitate learning is provoked in learners. In such situations, classroom rules are considered to provide opportunity for learners to reflect on the proper way to conduct themselves. In trying to indicate the need for careful consideration and flexibility in applying classroom rules in managing challenging learner behaviours in the classroom, Kohn (2006) suggest that the setting of rigid rules at the start of a school year is not a good idea. Kohn further indicated that when specific rules are design at the start of the school year and relied on, learners turn to look for loopholes. Teachers on the other hand also function as police officers and punishments all the time becomes the inevitable consequence. This notion of the design and scope of

classroom rules seems to contradict Glasser (2010)'s Choice Theory which recommends educators give room for learners to participate in making classroom rules and accept the consequences attached to each rule at the start of the schools year. Both Glasser and Kohn profess the need for rules to be establish and the importance of the process to be collective. They share a common agreement on the need not to make classroom rules rigid and adhere to specifically. The diversity in their ideas is based on how the classroom rules are to be designed which maybe contextual. This diversity makes reflection on how rules are design in schools in the NMMD pivotal. In the case of schools in NMMD, a participant had this to say;

> In order to help put my classroom in order, i task my learners at the start of the school year to discuss realistic expectations leading to the success for everyone in the classroom. This applies to myself too. From the indicated expectations, we will collaboratively, through dialogue, pick out specific rules of challenging learner behaviour that affect learning. Once these rules have been selected, we commit to the rules and the recommended consequences. Learners are expected to place copies of the rules in their notebooks. I have been doing this for 10 good years now and it has been effective and my learners feel committed to the classroom rules. (Teacher: 8)

In light of the statement above, it is perceived without doubt that schools in the NMMD practice the setting and use of specific classroom rules at the start of the school year as a disciplinary mechanism. This partly contravenes Kohn's suggestion. However, the statement also supports the need for classroom rules and its effectiveness in managing learner classroom behaviour. Through the use of classroom rules, learners learn best as they have the opportunity to reflect on the proper way to conduct themselves (Kohn, 2006; Joseph, 2013). Data from the study also reveal that there were classroom rules in one of the four walls all of the 25 classroom that were observed. Learners in some of the classroom also had personal copies of the classroom rules pasted in their books. It is believe that the lack of clarity of the classroom rules pasted on the walls from all angles of the classroom fostered the need for learners to have copies of the classroom rules. The statement further speaks to how the classroom rules are generated. This reveal evidence of collaborative participation between teachers and learners. When teachers and learners work together to identify how

they want their classroom to be and how that can be made to happen, learners help create their own learning environment (Maraise and Meier, 2010). Teachers and learners collectively agree to set rules at the start of the school year in schools in NMMD. An intriguing factor worthy of note in this study is not just the fact that classroom rules exist and are used for managing learner behaviour but how the rules are design.

In terms of the process for designing the classroom rules, teachers admitted to including their learners in the process although in varied capacities. Data reveal that educators dominate the process as learners' inputs are sometimes ignored. In the collaborative effort to design the classroom rules, educators dictate and impose on learners. Teachers impose certain rules and consequences on the classroom rules with limited or no learner inputs. This reveal a false dichotomy of collaboration which is supposed to be open for free deliberation by teachers and learners throughout the process (Carey, 2002; Curwin *et al.* 2008). In some schools and classrooms, the modification to the design and rules of some of the classroom rules list which is supposed to be done annually and changed as the needs of learners and the class changes (Curwin *et al.*, 2008) is not always the case. Classroom rules of previous academic year are reused without any adjustments. In this case, rules that where designed by previous learners in a said class according to their needs and interest are expected to be adhere to by new learners in the class. This poses a challenge as learners do not even make fresh inputs to the design and content. The classroom rules are not tailored to reflect the changing needs of the new learners in the class. When this happens, the learners don't have ownership of the rules and thus develop feelings of lack of compliance. In terms of the existence and design of classroom rules, the participants had the following to say:

> We have both classroom rules and school rules. We (learners and teachers) are not involved in designing the school rules but we get involved in designing the classroom rules (Teacher: 3)

> In case where I have to repeat the classroom rules of previous academic year, we don't spend time with learners trying to meet for the purpose of designing the rules. I just show them (learners) and that's it. But you see, these learners still go against the rules (Teacher: 38)

> We have classroom rules and we apply it almost on a daily basis. But our greatest challenge is some learners don't respect the classroom rules. In terms of how our classrooms are design, we do that at the start of each academic year and I design them with my learners. But there are certain rules and punishment that I impose because if I allow the learners to decide, they joke around it. Also when the learners fail to agree to some consequences, I impose. (Teacher: 19)

> Yeah sir! You see, these classroom rules are not design this year. These are old classroom rules that have just been refined as an administrative responsibility but nothing has really changed compared to the older one (Teacher: 42)

> We have classroom rules which we design with learner and we change or revise the classroom rules annually and not as learners' needs changes. Every start of the school year we work on the classroom rules. Learners' needs are too much and our rules cannot cover them (Teacher: 22)

Nature and scope of classroom rules: Analysis of 25 classroom rules of different classes in the 5 schools participating in the study reveal that classroom rules in schools in NMMD are by design shallow and rigid in establishing their impacts on issues of learner behaviour in the classrooms. The rules are few and do not address most of today's unprecedented learners behaviour challenges. As such, if teachers need to specifically adhere to them, a number of classroom behaviours will not be accommodated.

The content and layout of classroom rules as stated in classroom rules list are design to put an immediate stop to acts of learner misconducts. The rules just specify specific behaviours which are unacceptable. In so doing, it targets learners to stop such unacceptable behaviours. The rules do not cover challenging learners' behaviours and do not consider addressing the need to modify the behaviour. Worthy of note is the idea that the classroom rules also guides issues and inform learner behaviour patterning to teaching and learning and not only unacceptable behaviours. This implies that classroom rules can also be used to manage learners teaching and learning habits. The signature of class educator and student representative indicate collaboration in agreement in the design. An example of a reviewed classroom rule is outline thus:

Class rules (grade 10E)
- Respect your classmates and educators
- No noise making
- Follow instructions when given
- Pay attention and participate in class
- Preserve a positive learning environment
- No cell phones allowed
- No late coming
- Use polite and appropriate language
- Do your best on your school work and submit on time
- Do not cheat, plagiarise or copy
- Be at your best behaviour at all times
- No drinks or food allowed during school hours (except for water)
- No mirrors allowed in class (make up) during school hours
- Date
- Signature
- Class educator
- Student rep

No attempt are made to modify the misbehaviour of learners in the design of classroom rules. It is reasonable to assume that it is unlikely to include a detail learner behaviour modification plan in a classroom rule. That notwithstanding, it will be logical for a comprehensive classroom rules design to respond to todays unprecedented classroom scenario to indicate clauses that recommend learners who displayed challenging acts of misconduct to be enlist in a behaviour modification programme. None of the classroom rules analysed had any suggestive clause or rule to recommend that learners with challenging learner behaviour be enlisted to behaviour modification programmes. The scope of the classroom rules expresses the notion that challenging learner behaviour can be handle by a simple clause of the classroom rule. This is not certainly the case. Michail (2011) suggest that acts of challenging learner behaviours cannot be handled by a simple clause of the classroom rules. Given the shallowness of the structure and scope of the classroom rules, it is evident that severe misconducts are not anticipated during the design of classroom rules. Focus is only on the mild classroom misbehaviours. As such, when challenging learner behaviour occur, they are handled as they arise based on similar rules to the acts of misconducts or as the teacher deems fit. This leads to inconsistency in application of consequences to learner misbehaviour which may promote inequality amongst learners.

Analysis of the classroom rules also indicate lack of consequences to the rules in the classroom rules list. All of the 25 classroom rules analysed were without consequences. The design does not indicate to the exact consequences for not following a particular rule. This leaves the decision of deciding the consequences in the hands of the teachers who may not be consistent throughout. Learners become aware of the punishment for their misbehavior only when they are victims. It is believe that knowledge of the consequence of their behaviour and the intensity may force learners not to display such behaviours. Confirming the magnitude of the lack of knowledge about behaviour outcomes of learners and the need to include it in classroom rules, Baert and Silva (2010) indicate that so far it has been assumed that people know with certainty the consequences of their actions but in reality people often possess only partial information regarding the relationship between particular actions and consequences. However, interview data reveal a mismatch with document analysis as teachers indicated that classroom rules have consequences. This creates the impression that the teachers are assuming that the learners know the consequences of their action as in the rules although they are not documented.

> These learners they know the punishment for all the rules in the classroom rules. We discuss them all the time. At times I just tell them you know the consequence of that behaviour, so just do it. I don't need to write it. But we discuss them (Teacher:49).

Applicability of classroom rules to learner misbehaviour: Data reveal that teacher believe in and depend heavily on classroom rules as immediate available tool to manage learner misbehaviour. It is consider to be spot on immediate as all learners are aware of it. As such, classroom rules serves as immediate referral to all learners. However, in terms of applying classroom rules to challenging learner behaviour in the classroom, educators in schools in NMMD do not always adhere to the explicate of the classroom rules. There is inconsistency in the application of the rules in the classroom. This create situations in which the same misbehaviour by two separate learner receive different consequences. This inconsistency can be interpreted as discrimination given the learners involved. It also leads to situations in which the same misbehaviour by the same learner in different time intervals also receive different consequences. Contrary to the inconsistent practice in the use of

classroom rules, Miltenburger (2008) indicate that when the consequence to a misbehaviour is inconsistent, the effect on the misbehaviour is less effective. Therefore, the inconsistency in applying the consequence make learner behaviour modification a challenge through the use of classroom rules. Teachers attest to apply certain consequence based to the conviction at the time of the incident and not based on the classroom rules (Joseph, 2013; Maraise and Meier, 2010). Some of the extracts from the participants states thus:

> At times when a learner misbehave, especially if it's a serious offence, I just punish based on my conviction at the time and not some classroom rules. You see, some of the challenging learner behaviour are not even captured in the classroom rules, so I just punish (Teacher: 18)

> I agree there are instances where I use different punishment for different learners at different intervals for displaying the same misbehaviour. You know, it is difficult to repeat the same punishment for the same crime for different learners throughout the years. There are too many instance and I turn to forget, so I just punish as my mind tell me at the moment of the incident (Teacher: 33)

> I don't follow the specified punishment that learners expect as in the classroom all the times. The learners are used to and they will misbehave knowing exactly what to expect. They even misbehave because they want the punishment. So I change the punishment as I please (Teacher: 9)

> I don't follow the classroom rules because it's too short and does not address the kind of things these learners do. So once they misbehave and I know the offence is not in the classroom rules, I just punish the way I want (Teacher: 14)

Data further reveal that despite the inconsistency in application, there is also lack of individuality in applying the rules to learner misbehaviour recorded in the classroom rule list when that is the case. In cases where the teachers and learners agree on the consequence to each rule although to explicitly spell out in the classroom rules, the teachers apply the consequence to every learner irrespective of their uniqueness. Individual situations are not consider. The one size fits all rule is used.

> I apply the same punishment to every learner who breaks any of the rule in the classroom rule irrespective of who you are. I don't discriminate. Once you break the rule, the punishment applies. I don't want to hear any justification. You see, if you allow one student to justify, you will have to do for every learner. And there is no time for that

CONCLUSION

Classrooms rules are very essential and commonly use despite the rise of modern disciplinary and behaviour management approaches. They are is still pivotal today in the management and modification of challenging learner behaviour although their inappropriate application has attracted a lot of criticism to their effectiveness. An essential aspect to the effectiveness of classroom rules in managing challenging learner behaviour lies in the design and scope. For a teacher to ensure that he/she covers all aspects of classroom behaviour, classroom rules will lose credibility with learners if rules are made up as the teacher goes along teachers need to state behavioral expectations succinctly and positively to help learners know what they should do and should not do.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Since a social contract (classroom rule) is a basic tool for discipline planning between the teacher and learners about the rules and consequences for classroom behaviour, a number of important factors need to be considered when designing them. The following important aspects must be adhered to when designing the contract; learners must be involved in the process; teachers must ensure that the rules are clear; teachers need to ensure that there are consequences to every rule, not punishment; develop predictable consequences; allow the rules to change with class needs; have safeguards to protect the dignity of all students, increase communication among teachers, learners, administrators and parents; and integrate discipline methodology with the teaching content. Learners need to have some tangible way to know they are on the right track with their behaviour. Points accumulated on the board, stamps on the calendar or graphs are some of the ways to visually present this information. Always communicate to the learners what they are earning and why they are earning it. In addition to keeping students informed throughout the class hour, it is a good idea to summarize the total points earned at the end of each class. One of the more

common reasons class rules plan fall apart is lack of communication. The best-laid plans will fall flat if educators don't devise a way to explain the incentive programme clearly. Students need to be well advised on all of the above elements of the plan. In addition, they need frequent reminders about expectations, feedbacks on progress and recognition for their appropriate behaviour.

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