

**STRATEGIES AND ATTITUDES OF TEACHERS TOWARDS LEARNERS  
WITH BEHAVIOUR PROBLEMS IN RURAL AREAS OF THE LIMPOPO  
PROVINCE, SOUTH AFRICA**

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ASSIGNMENT PRESENTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR  
THE DEGREE OF

**MASTER OF EDUCATION  
(SPECIALISED EDUCATION)**

The crest of the University of Stellenbosch is centered on the page. It features a shield with various symbols, including a book and a scale, surrounded by a decorative border. Below the shield is a banner with the Latin motto "Pectora subirent celsus recti".

**AT THE  
UNIVERSITY FOR STELLENBOSCH**

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**DECEMBER 2002**

**Declaration**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this assignment is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

Signature:

Date:

## **ABSTRACT**

This study is aimed at exploring teacher attitudes towards learners presenting with behavior problems and the subsequent strategies they use to manage such problems. Teachers under consideration are from the Limpopo Province, South Africa. In order to better understand the impact of such attitudes and strategies, theoretical underpinnings from the literature as well as the effect of training are also considered. Data gathered from this study was analysed by means of SPSS using descriptive statistics. High levels of behavioural problems appear to be present in the respondents' classrooms, with most teachers attempting to deal with these issues in a contextual manner. Furthermore, those respondents who have received training would appear to be doing so more than those teachers who have not received training. Results of this study also highlight areas on which future research could focus. These include teacher emotions and the effect training has on these emotions.

## **OPSOMMING**

Hierdie studie het ten doel om onderwysers se houdings te ondersoek teenoor leerders met gedragsprobleme en die strategieë wat hulle gebruik om sulke probleme te hanteer. Die onderwysers is woonagtig in die Limpopo Provinsie, Suid Afrika. Deur gebruik te maak van beskrywende statistiek, is die data wat ingesamel is deur middel van die SPSS-program verwerk.

Dit blyk dat die voorkoms van gedragsprobleme hoog is en dat onderwysers dit op uiteenlopende maniere binne konteks hanteer. Die studie het verder getoon dat die respondente wat opleiding ontvang het die probleme meer effektief hanteer as daardie respondente wat nie opleiding ontvang het nie. Die studie beklemtoon die belang van die houdings van onderwysers in die hantering van gedragsprobleme in die klaskamer en maak ook aanbevelings vir verdere navorsing in hierdie verband.

For My Mother Mutshekwa Nekhumbe, My husband Muraga, My children Ndidokunda, Mufulufheli, Asiasu and Murangi.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I wish to gratefully acknowledge the following people for their invaluable contributions to this project:

- My supervisor, Prof. A.G. Smit for his ideas, encouragement and support.
- Linda Liebenberg for patiently assisting me when I needed her most.
- The teachers who participated in the survey - without them, this would not have been possible.
- Marietjie van Schalkwyk for providing me with valuable information.
- My typists M.C. Mashoele, and E. U. Matombo.
- My husband, Muraga who offered his understanding and support.
- De Jager for financial assistance
- Finally, to all my friends, words are simply not enough. I cherish every thing!

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

Many children and youth in South Africa encounter severe difficulties. These include poverty, abuse, malnutrition and single parenting. These children are predominantly from historically disadvantaged contexts, with low-income single-parent homes, where drug or alcohol abuse is rife, as well as teen-age pregnancies, and are often considered “socially maladjusted” (Smith, Pollaway, Patton & Dowdy, 1998:4).

Disadvantaged and poor communities, as well as a lack of resources compound these problems. In any community, certain values, attitudes and ways of seeing things will be accepted as normal, or as more important than other ways or seeing things. This results in certain behaviours and practices being more acceptable in one community than in another. For example in many South African communities, drinking and smoking dagga are common and socially accepted practices. Similarly, in some communities violence is more acceptable as a means of solving differences than in others (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana 1997:182). In poor communities, parents often cannot afford the costs of schooling. There is therefore, often the need and the expectation that children should take on economic and other responsibilities so that the family can cope (Donald *et al.*, 1997:150-151).

This poverty usually also manifests in schools with few classrooms, poor teaching and library resources, high learner – teacher ratios, inadequately qualified teachers – all of which have a negative influence on learners who are “at-risk”. Such circumstances may increase learners’ sense of dissatisfaction, frustration, anger and there-by the possibility of substance abuse, violence and other behaviour problems (Donald, *et al.*, 1997: 181-183).

Relevance of schooling and the effect of value systems also influence learners in precarious circumstances. Lack of educational flexibility does not take account of the varied and diverse needs of learners – this is accentuated by a general lack of support from teachers, especially those functioning in high-risk communities (Donald *et al.*, 1997: 180-181). Such inflexibility

and lack of support is demotivating for many children. These learners, who often experience great difficulty in learning and coping with daily experiences of life, usually also experience a deep sense of failure (Donald *et al.*, 1997:150).

As a result of this, learners exposed to such problems are at-risk for developing personal problems. It has been estimated that slightly over 11 percent of school-going age children, or approximately 5.3 million learners, are classified as children who are in need. Another 10 percent to 20 percent experience learning and behaviour problems such as conduct disorder, aggression and anxiety that are not significant enough to warrant them being identified as disabled. Still another group of learners who require special attention are those “at-risk” for *developing* such problems (Smith *et al.*, 1998:4).

Within this context, teacher attitudes and the strategies that are subsequently used deserve mention. Teacher attitudes and strategies are important because when teachers give love to children with emotional needs, these learners may develop more positive attitudes. Paying attention to and discussing various problems often increases children’s self-esteem. Allowing learners to express their feelings in the classroom, assists in the development of a positive attitude towards school and other social environments. Conversely, teachers who show hostility and aggression towards learners with special needs enter into a cycle of conflict in which the learner feels trapped. Such a cycle maintains the pattern of anger and low self-worth in which the child finds herself increasing, rather than decreasing or preventing, the manifestation of behavioural problems (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 1998; Smit and Liebenberg, 2001; Smit & Liebenberg, 2002).

Most children and youth are disruptive from time to time; the majority however do not display negative behaviour sufficient enough to warrant external, professional interventions. Some learners’ behaviours and emotions result in significant problems though. This may be compounded by the way in which school personnel deal with such behaviour. Although emotional and behavioural problems may result in serious issues such as depression and suicide, they have long been associated primarily with general discipline problems such as acting out, disruptive behaviours. As such, the primary problem faced by most teachers when dealing with learners with difficult behaviour is classroom discipline (Smith *et al.*, 1998).

All learners have the right to an education however, irrespective of personal difficulties. In this regard, it is the responsibility of the class teacher to ensure that every child receives the necessary support and attention. This has been supported by the government, which affirms that:

- Everyone has the right to basic education and equal access to education
- There may be no discrimination against any person on the grounds of race, gender, ethnic or social decent, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, faith, culture or language
- Every person has the right to respect and to the protection of his or her human dignity (Landberg & Burden, 1998:29).

This is supported by Dyson (1994:1-56) and the Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994), both proclaiming that:

- Every child has a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve and maintain an acceptable level of learning
- Every child has unique characteristic, interests, abilities and learning needs
- Every child must have regular access to schools, which should accommodate them within a system capable of meeting their individual needs.

Mainstream schools with an inclusive orientation are the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building and achieving an inclusive society, and achieving education for all. More over inclusion provides an affective education for the majority of learners as well as improving efficiency and ultimately the cost effectiveness of the education system as a whole (Engelbrecht, 1997:14-15).

The move towards inclusion in South Africa requires of teachers to address individual needs, respond to differences in learners, to remove all factors that prevent learning and to promote effective learning among all learners. Teachers who have a positive attitude and use appropriate strategies towards learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties, have less problems as well as better academic achievement (Christie, 1988: 8). As such, these factors are considered essential in establishing authentic education when dealing with such learners.

However, the stress teachers incur as a result of the above mentioned factors, means that many teachers decide to leave the teaching profession. According to Smith, *et al.*, (1998:162) in a survey of general education classroom teachers, the behaviour of learners was cited as a primary reason for such decisions. Teachers specifically noted that they spent too much time on learners with behavioural problems and not enough time on instruction.

## **1.2. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

One of the greatest challenges facing teachers dealing with learners with behaviour problems, is the management of instructional activities within the entire classroom (Rockwell & Guetzloe, 1996:38). It is important for educators to be aware of their attitudes towards learners, the strategies they use, and information available to them that would allow them to deal more effectively with misbehaviour.

The attitude of and strategies used by teachers play a fundamental role in the lives of learners presenting with behaviour problems (Christie, 1988:8). An individual's beliefs have been shown to be the best indicator of their decision and behaviour. It is important to identify the doubts, concern and resistance of teachers towards mainstreaming in order to design intervention that will motivate and equip teachers to make adaptations to accommodate individual differences (Christie, 1988:9). Learners with behaviour problems require a variety of strategies that modify their behaviour and attitudes. It is therefore important for teachers to be aware of and know the effect of their positive or negative attitudes toward such learners.

## **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Literature highlights the importance of teacher attitudes and the strategies informed by this when dealing with learners presenting difficult behaviour. Considering the current situation of learners in rural areas of South Africa, the need for effective teaching strategies is evident. Furthermore, lack of practical skills in dealing with discipline problems in class not only creates disruptive episodes and conflict, but also influences the attitude of teachers towards themselves, the teaching situation and learners presenting with behavioural problems in class. As such, it would seem prudent to assess current attitudes and teaching strategies used in rural areas by teachers confronted by learners with difficult behaviour.

## **1.4 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of this research is to investigate the attitudes of teachers in rural schools in the Limpopo Province towards the handling of learners with behaviour problems in the classroom as well as the subsequent strategies utilised.

## **1.5 RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **1.5.1 Literature Study**

Macmillan and Schumacher (1993:113) mention that a literature study includes many types of sources such as professional journals, reports, scholarly books and monographs, government document and dissertations.

The study of literature helps the researcher to:

- Delineate his or her research topic properly
- Obtain a broad perspective on the research topic
- Prevent uniformed repetition of completed research
- Determine which research methods, techniques and aids will be most suitable for research
- Determine the relationship between the research and existing knowledge on the topic (Booyse *et al.*, 1993:41-42).

The literature study in this research will specifically focus on:

- Factors that play an important part in the attitudes of teachers towards handling of learners with difficult behaviour
- The strategies teachers utilize as a result of said attitudes
- The consequences various strategies have on learners – especially those presenting with difficult behaviour
- Strategies that are considered affective in dealing with difficult learners in the classroom

## 1.5.2 Methodology

Booyse, Schulze, Bester, Mellet, Lammer, Roelofse and Landman (1993:23) define research design as the consideration and creation of a means of obtaining reliable, repeatable, objective, generalisable, valid and credible data, by means of which phenomenon's within education may be confirmed or rejected. Venter and Vester (1987:24) remark that educational research is reserved for activities designed to discover facts and relationships that will make the educational process more effective.

Data will be collected from teachers teaching at primary schools in Thoyandou, Limpopo Province. The data will be collected by means of a survey questionnaire. As such, a quantitative survey will be conducted in this research. According to Davies (1995:28) quantitative researchers administer interviews or questionnaires to random samples of the population; this is referred to as survey research. Questionnaires can use statements or questions to elicit information, but in all cases the subject is responding to something written (Macmillan & Schumacher, 1993:238). According to Borg (1981:84) questionnaires usually contain questions aimed at eliciting specific information on a variety of topic. The questionnaire may be presented in either closed or open formations. A central methodology issue for quantitative researchers is the reliability of the questionnaire and the representativeness of the sample. These factors are seen as important to this study as it is impossible to involve all teachers in the Limpopo Province. Accordingly, a questionnaire will be administered to participating teachers within the region for later appropriate statistical analysis.

Subsequently, questionnaires will be used in order to collect data from teachers pertaining to the attitude of teachers towards learners with behaviour problems in class, as well as the subsequent strategizing teachers use. The detail of the questionnaire will be discussed in chapter three.

In this endeavour the researcher uses the following types of questions:

- Simple closed factual questions where the respondent will give a yes or no answer
- Closed checklists where respondents are asked to indicate appropriate responses
- The opportunity to give comment after each section is provided for

### **1.5.3 Data analysis**

Analysis involves the breaking down of the whole to clarify relationships and constituent parts (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:32). This involves differentiation between facts and hypothesis, identifying hidden meanings, facts, findings themes and patterns and understanding the system of the organization.

Data will be analysed quantitatively by means of SPSS. The researcher will then interpret the results, draw conclusions and make relevant suggestions.

## **1.6 CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS OF TERMS**

### **1.6.1 Behaviour problems**

According to Kirk (1972:389), behavioural problems can be defined in terms of 'the effect of a child's behaviour on himself or other people, where there is a deviation from age-appropriate behaviour that significantly interferes with the child's own growth and development and/or the lives of others'. In this thesis it also refers to discipline problems encountered in the classroom.

### **1.6.2 Strategies**

Strategies are the process of planning of carrying out a plan formed according to it (Fowler & Fowler, 1991:1205). In the context of this research, strategies are the methods that teachers use to handle learners with difficult behaviour in the classroom.

### **1.6.3 Attitudes**

'Attitudes are a residuum of experience by which further activity is conditioned or controlled.... (as well as) acquired tendencies to act in a specific way towards objects' (Sihlangu, 1992:3). According to Van den Aardweg and Van den Aardweg (1998:26) an attitude is a mental or neural state of readiness, organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situation with which it is related.

## **1.7 STRUCTURE OF THIS STUDY**

### ***Chapter one***

This chapter covers the background to the study, the problem statement and aim, the research design and methodology as well as the conceptual terms used.

### ***Chapter two***

This chapter incorporates a literature review that describes the importance of teacher attitudes and strategies utilised when dealing with learners presenting with difficult behaviour. The causes and consequences of these facets are considered, as well as suggested strategies.

### ***Chapter three***

This chapter provides a description of the method used by the researcher to collect information from teachers regarding their attitudes towards and strategies used in the handling of learners with difficult behaviour.

### ***Chapter four***

Research findings and a discussion there-of are presented.

### ***Chapter five***

The present study, findings, recommendations and conclusions are summarised.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE STUDY**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Although at one time the preferred treatment for children with difficult behaviour and emotional difficulty was psychiatric in nature, there has been a shift in emphasis and responsibility from only psychiatric to more educational support (Du Toit 1997:121; Kirk & Gallagher, 1983:405). As such, the bulk of responsibility has shifted to mainstream educational professions as the responsible agents for support, with the auxiliary treatment of psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers and others. As schools have increased their responsibility for the education and treatment of learners with such problems, it has become necessary to modify and develop strategies for the organisation of programs and teaching procedures for the heterogeneous group of children vicariously labelled as behaviourally disordered, emotionally disturbed, socially maladjusted or maladapted (Coleman, 1986:169; Kirk, 1972:402; Singh, 1997:93).

Various strategies have been developed for use within educational settings when dealing with learners with behaviour problems in class. Central to the effectiveness and efficiency of such strategies however, is the attitude of the teacher towards the learner. It is in fact this attitude that will determine the nature of a teacher's responses to a learner (Coleman, 1986:169; Kirk, 1972:402).

According to Martin, Linfoot and Stephenson (1999:347), in order to assist teachers to better manage the behaviour of learners, it is important to ascertain the precise nature of learner–teacher relations and how teachers currently respond to learners' poor behaviour. Furthermore, Crowley (1993:132) believes that mainstream education teachers are in a unique position to teach adaptive, academic and social behaviours to mainstreamed learners with behaviour problems. Therefore, the need to conduct research regarding teacher attitudes and behaviours towards learners presenting with behavioural problems is evident.

## 2.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE TEACHER ATTITUDES

The question of teacher's attitudes towards learners with difficult behaviour has only recently become a matter of systematic inquiry. Martin *et al.*, (1999:347) propose that interpersonal relationships tend to vary in the degree to which they are either coercive or reciprocal in nature. Coercive relationships can be characterized as aggressive attempts by one of the members to withdraw from an interaction in order to get what she wants and which tend to lead to escalating aggression in the interaction. Reciprocal relationships, on the other hand, reflect a more positive and mutually acceptable exchange.

Glasser's reality model (Johns, MacNaughton & Karabinus, 1989:91) suggests that human beings have two basic needs – to love and to be loved, and to feel worthy – and that people vary in their abilities to meet these needs. Furthermore, a youngster's evaluation of himself governs his behaviour. Learners increase self-discipline when they realise that someone in the school does care and they begin to care about themselves. Learners learn responsibility through strong positive emotional involvement with a responsible person such as a parent, teacher or counsellor. As such, schools should be a place where learners experience the necessary involvement to learn how to make responsible decisions about their lives.

In the study conducted by Thomas, Siegel and Stoler (in Davies & Green, 1998:97), it was found that positive teacher attitudes significantly correlate with teachers' success with learners presenting with difficult behaviour. According to Davies (1995:22), it is widely acknowledged that teachers' positive attitudes towards mainstreaming are a prerequisite for its successful implementation. Teacher attitudes are believed to influence the extent to which learners with problems become not only physically integrated but also integral members of regular classes, benefiting academically, socially, and emotionally from the experience (Davies, 1995:23). Attitudes towards mainstreaming may be closely tied to teachers' feelings of competency and effectiveness in educating these children (Davies & Green, 1998:97). Lack of knowledge and experience of exceptional children and mainstreaming may negatively affect teachers' attitudes and recommendations about placements. Teachers more often than not recommend non-teacher-based strategies than teacher-based ones as solutions for difficult learners, suggesting that teachers want other professionals to solve learner problems, rather than have the professionals help the teachers to effect change themselves (Davies & Green, 1998:97). Furthermore, few variables can be identified to account for positive

integration attitude. Consequently, it is generally assumed that teachers who hold negative attitudes would reject children with special educational needs if mainstreaming were to take place. Teachers' general attitudes towards mainstreaming however, do not relate to teachers' specific attitudes towards actual learners.

Teachers' expectations for classroom conduct as well as their tolerance for misbehaviour may be critical factors in the success or failure of attempts to integrate learners with difficult behaviour into general education. Research findings demonstrate that teachers' perceived competence influences their attitude towards integration (Davies, 1995:22). Teachers who feel competent in helping mainstreamed intellectually handicapped learners and those who are in contact with special educators favour integration and hold positive attitudes towards mainstreaming (Davies, 1995:22). According to Davies and Green (1998:197) however, international research on teacher attitudes towards children with special educational needs suggests that teachers in ordinary classrooms generally express negative attitudes to mainstreaming efforts and few variables can be identified to account for positive interaction attitudes. Especially when dealing with these children, research findings further indicate that teacher attitudes also vary according to the degree of learner intellectual difficulties (Davies & Green, 1998:97).

Goldstein, Apter and Harootunian (1984:16) found that teachers in their study stated that their job was to teach and not to act as therapist for learners with personality or behaviour problems. If a teacher chooses a priori to define teaching in such a way as to exclude dealing with disruptions and violence in the classroom or school, the consequence of such a definition would possibly result in:

- A severely circumscribed and limited role for teachers, a role which in most modern post-industrial societies has been expanding rather than contracting.
- Such an action becoming in effect a non-decision or at least the forfeit of a decision be involved with some aspect of violence and disruption in school setting (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984:16).

Furthermore, Kaufman, Lloyd and McGee., (1989:85) found that teachers are unlikely to accept and work successfully with learners who chronically fail to conform to their standards of teachability or tolerability.

Teachers' attitudes and beliefs may in a large measure determine their willingness to use technical assistance. As such, attitudes of teachers play a crucial role in the life of learners with behaviour problems and it is important for teachers to see the issue of attitudes within the correct context. Since teachers' attitudes and expectations are revealed in their behaviour, all learners may be perceptive to this. It follows then that learners will tend to reproduce the models presented to them (Davies, 1995:23). So when teachers have low expectations of promoting stable and global change in learners with difficult behaviour, they may in turn propound children's behaviour problems. Thus, establishing the parameters affecting teachers' attitudes towards adaptive and maladaptive behaviour is necessary for the development of widely adopted strategies for integration of learners with disabilities.

### **2.3. THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHER STRATEGIES**

Romi and Freud (1999:54) differentiated between two types of teachers: the authoritarian teacher and the humanist teacher. Teachers with an authoritarian attitude, view the school as an autocratic institution with a rigid hierarchical structure. They regard learners as essentially irresponsible individuals who must be kept under control by sanctions. Humanitarian teachers, on the other hand, see the school as an educational community where learners learn through co-operative interaction. For these teachers, discipline replaces strict, teacher-generated control.

#### **2.3.1. Negative attitudes**

##### ***2.3.1.1 Contributing factors***

Often teachers in rural areas face several obstacles in educating their learners. Apart from being poorly paid, most received scant training or supervision for working with children's adjustment disturbances, which many of their learners are vulnerable to as a result of ongoing exposure to poverty and community violence. Many teachers experience the same feeling of frustration, failure and hopelessness that their learners feel (Luthar, 1999:62; Stipek, 1997).

Laslett and Smith (1984:60) feel that all teachers are aware that teaching gives rise to stress. This stress gives rise to the experience of a vast range and mixture of unpleasant emotions, including tension, anxiety, depression and a feeling of being emotionally drained. When learners continually frustrate a teacher she feels irritated and, if the frustration continue, the

irritation often leads to anger. Resultant disrespect for learners, means that teachers expect learners to be able to do everything as well as with accuracy. Teachers who always seek to discipline the learner presenting with behavioural problems, may in effect wish for learners to follow the rules strictly. In doing so, these teachers act in an unloving and uncaring manner to the class. This behaviour in turn, contributes to the negative attitudes of many learners (Crowley, 1993:140-141).

According to Jessup and Kiley (1971:26) there are times when teachers themselves are the cause of many of the discipline problems that occur in the classroom. Sometimes a teacher's own actions or a reaction to various situations openly invites further trouble. Lack of experience, as well as knowledge concerning learners with difficult behaviour and mainstreaming, also affects classroom teacher attitudes. According to Romi and Freud (1999:54) the more traditional a teacher's attitude, the less sympathetic and tolerant he will be towards a learner's particular needs, in addition to being more severe with regard to discipline problems.

Long, Fescer and Brendtro (1998:9) speak about conflict: why normal, healthy, reasonable staff can behave in ways that are significantly different from their personalities. During stressful times, a troubled youth can shape staff behaviour by recreating counter productive feelings in the adult. During these incidents, teachers who act on their feelings and do what "feels natural", inadvertently mirror their learners' behaviour thereby making the crises worse. Staff are programmed to respond like thermometers and reflect the same emotional fever of their learners. For example, an aggressive learner shouts at a teacher and the teacher becomes counter aggressive and impulsively shouts back. If this sequence continues, the learner will fulfil a prophecy of irrational belief that all adults are hostile and rejecting (Brendtro, *et al.*, 1998; Smit and Liebenberg; 2001; Smit & Liebenberg, 2002).

Dealing with aggression in the classroom is therefore one of the most difficult behaviours with which the teacher will be confronted. It requires both strength and sensitivity on the part of the teacher - two qualities that are independent of one another. Strength is determined by how well a teacher can control and regulate disruptive learners, whereas sensitivity is reflected in the teacher's adaptability to the cues signalled by these learners (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984:35).

### **2.3.1.2 Resultant strategies**

There are characteristics that represent negative attitudes or unhelpful teacher attitudes and behaviours. These include procedural rigidity, rigid academic and behaviour expectations, content selection (i.e. boring content) and content presentation (i.e. giving out the work but never teaching) (Crowley, 1993:141-142). In this regard, Cunningham and Sugawara (1989:370) highlight the tendency of especially inexperienced teachers to rely on restrictive disciplinary strategies such as verbal reprimands, denying privileges, and corporal punishment. Although restrictive strategies may be effective for short-term behaviour management they may also however, have undesirable effects on learners over extended periods of time (Cunningham & Sugawara, 1989:371). Crowley (1993:142) for example, mentions the use of punitive discipline as being both unhelpful as well as furthering negative attitudes. Punitive discipline is shown to include the overuse of discipline, school rule enforcement, teachers' negative regard and teachers' use of punishments. These facets are of great importance, as learners regard punitive discipline procedures negatively (Crowley, 1993:142)

The way in which a teacher addresses a learner is important, and is also often at the root of misbehaviour encountered in classrooms. Patronising learners, bullying learners and a negative or sarcastic tone used when addressing learners all play a vital role (Jessup & Kiley, 1971:28). Teachers should be aware that learners' perceptions, attitudes and behaviours might have an impact on their teaching practices. If a learner with behavioural problems perceives a teacher's lack of humour negatively, this may show in the learner's inattention. The learner's inattention may in turn cause a teacher to impose disciplinary procedures or even more intrusive disciplinary methods (Crowley, 1993: 132). Respecting learners – which does not mean allowing them to do as they please – prevents teachers from making mistakes which are likely to stir up hostility and resentment, which in turn, increase the probability of disruptive behaviour (Laslet & Smith, 1984:71).

## **2.3.2. Positive attitudes**

### **2.3.2.1 Contributing factors**

Teacher – learner communication plays a vital role in building positive or negative attitudes towards learners with difficult behaviour (Crowley, 1993:139). Teacher-learner interpersonal relationships, with a degree of humour, that allow for the importance of learner opinions, that are sincere and have clear, realistic academic and behavioural expectations, are all important facets of constructive teacher-learner interaction (Crowley, 1993:141). Furthermore, Crowley (1993:132) believes that the perceptions, attitudes and behaviours of learners may have an impact on general teaching practices. For example, should a learner perceive a teachers' lack of humour, this may show in the learner's inattention. This learner's inattention may in turn, cause a teacher to impose disciplinary procedures.

### **2.3.2.2 Resultant strategies**

Acceptance is one of the most important factors in building positive attitudes towards learners with difficult behaviour (Whinnery, Fuchs & Fuchs, 1991:6) According to Whinnery, *et al.*, (1991:6) acceptance has been used to refer to teachers' overall evaluation of a classroom intervention, including its fairness, intrusiveness and its appropriateness for the particular situation. Acceptability may be an important facet to the successful mainstreaming of learners who are difficult to teach or who have mild handicaps with regard to their behaviour. Mainstreaming therefore requires teacher acceptance in order to build positive attitudes. It also requires use of effective instructional strategies designed to integrated learners with divergent academic needs and abilities (Whinnery, *et al.*, 1991:7).

### **2.3.2.3 Consequences**

Crowley (1993:141) correlates flexible behavioural programming highly with learners' perceptions of helpful teachers, teachers' levels of tolerance, teachers' use of rewards and opportunities for repair. Crowley's (1993:143) findings fit well with other data, which indicates that learners prefer teachers who are warm, friendly, supportive and communicative, as well as orderly, highly motivated and in charge of classroom discipline. Learners perceive teachers positively when they exhibit flexibility in their implementation of behavioural programs. They also praise teachers who exhibit tolerance for their behaviour and who provide them with opportunities for "repair" when they do not meet the academic and behavioural program requirements.

Positive teaching philosophies advocate increasing teacher praise and approval whilst decreasing disapproval and reprimands (Wheldall, 1992:51). Praise can function as reinforcement when used in a careful and systematic way. Therefore, positive teaching encourages teachers to use at least as many praise statement as they do reprimands (Wheldall, 1992:52).

Positive teaching increases appropriate classroom behaviour focusing on encouraging learners to learn to behave more appropriately, increasing the chance of effective learning in school. It offers hope to teachers that schools can be become less alienating, aversive and unresponsive and more positive, liberating and effective (Wheldall, 1992:63-64). Positive teaching is based on praise, reward, empathy, love and good relationships. Within such relationships, each party feels that they are important to the other and that the other is important to them (Wheldall, 1992:85).

According to Johns *et al.*, (1989:94) sincere involvement of adults marks the beginning of learners becoming responsible people. The teacher must care enough about learners to accept them and to help them fulfil their needs to the real world. Teacher-involvement encourages learners to behave in socially acceptable and constructive ways. Responsible adults lead learners to identify their own destructive behaviour, judge how their behaviour fits into long-range goals, explore responsible alternatives and take positive action. Furthermore, responsible adults support learners in plans of positive action (Johns *et al.*, 1989:94-95).

It is important therefore, for teachers to think about love, warmth, involvement and respect for children, not only for the benefit of learners, but also themselves, as they will inadvertently be increasing the manageability and controllability of their class.

#### **2.3.2.4 The resultant positive cycle and outcomes**

By giving sincere love and committed involvement to learners with difficult behaviour it can assist in rectifying the inappropriate behaviour of the child. Learners become disciplined when they conclude that someone in the school does care and, therefore, that they had better be careful what they do and start caring about themselves (Johns, *et al.*, 1989:91). When learners see that teachers care for them even when they continuously disrupt the classroom

situation, they begin to experience a stable relationship. It is within this relationship that children begin to improve their behaviour.

## **2.4 THEORETICAL MODELS UNDERPINNING THE STRATEGIES TEACHERS USE TO HANDLE LEARNERS WITH DIFFICULT BEHAVIOUR IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **2.4.1 Reality Model**

The reality model deals only with the present - causes for human behaviour grounded in insights about home life, childhood, or past experiences are of little concern (Johns *et al.*, 1989:95). Learners may however need encouragement to recognize that what they are doing is non-productive in the long term (Johns *et al.*, 1989:95). The reality model encourages use of both individual and group activities in a structured setting where learners may learn to recognize responsible behaviour, judge behaviour, and problem-solving alternative behaviours and make commitments to change that are achievable.

Individual strategies include becoming involved with the learner, discussing present behaviour, identifying alternative behaviour and establishing learner commitment. Group strategies follow on the goal of individual strategies, encouraging a positive self-concept and feeling of self-worth, and involvement. This is achieved by providing opportunities for all learners to experience success, acceptance of learners' ideas and thoughts, and expanding communication skills.

### **2.4.2 The Psychodynamic Model**

This model is based on Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality development and intrapsychic organisation. Within this theory, maladaptive behaviour is viewed as symptomatic of intrapsychic conflict involving the id, the ego, and superego. The focus of treatment is therefore to address the "underlying cause" for the behaviour. Treatment focuses on the analysis of the unconscious and interpretation of symptoms in an effort to develop insight on the part of the patient. As such, the major emphasis is on treatment through psychotherapy with educational aspects being secondary. Acceptance of the child and the establishment of a positive interpersonal relationship between the learner and teacher are however considered essential (Kirk, 1972:402). Psychodynamic theorists generally agree that the educational process should be less repressive, more facilitative of emotional

expression, and more sensitive to crises experienced by learners and an educational environment should provide not only opportunities for expression and acceptance of conflicts but also active support in dealing with such conflicts as they arise (Coleman, 1986:73).

Psychodynamic strategy gives a lot of attention to the defence mechanisms that protect the individual from stress- repression, fixation, reaction formation, aggression, projection and what they reveal about the learner's perception of the environment. This is the method that builds the learner's ego by helping the learner resolve problems constructively and by teaching social and academic skills that increase the learner's self-confidence and ability to cope with stress (Kirk & Gallagher 1983:424).

The goals of psychodynamic interventions with trouble learners may be internal, behavioural or environmental. Internal goals focus on changes in the youngster's actual feelings concerning herself and others. Behavioural goals centre on efforts to help learners control negative impulses and to express feelings in social acceptable ways. Environmental goals attempt to provide learners with the emotional support needed for positive and development in this regard.

Psychodynamic theory has had a very significant influence on work with troubled learners. Some applications include: milieu therapy; play therapy; art; music and dance therapy; classrooms in psychiatric clinics; life-space interviewing and many more (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984:98). Life space interviewing represents a way in which adults can assist youngsters to understand the effects of their unconscious thoughts, feelings, and actions on others. It also serves as a model for the application of psychodynamic thinking to the situation encountered by educators (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984:99). From a psychodynamic view, all behaviour is meaningful. Consequently, the life-space interview tries to discover the meaning of specific behaviour by examining the reasoning that led up to it (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984: 89). Coleman (1986:174) differentiates between two types of life space interviews:

- Emotional first aid on the spot
- Clinical exploitation of life events

Emotional first aid on the spot is a temporary relief support in which the teacher seeks to help the learner overcome an immediate obstacle. Specific components might include drain off

frustration; support for management of panic, fury and guilt; and communication maintenance (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984:98). Components of clinical exploitation of life events include reality rub (i.e. highlighting reality), symptom estrangement (i.e. understanding behaviour), and massaging numb value areas (i.e. assisting with appropriate expression behaviour).

Goldstein *et al.* (1984:92) specifically highlight Redl's interventions of youngsters in the control of their aggressive impulses (i.e. manipulation of surface behaviours) and helping youngsters develop better understanding of their own motivation and the options available to them for more appropriate expressions of feelings (i.e. clinical exploitation of life event). It is important to point out that both kinds of interventions are based on two fundamental principles:

1. Interpersonal relationships are essential to positive psychological growth and development
2. Program planning is critical in efforts with troubled youngsters

#### **2.4.3 The behaviour modification model**

Behaviour modification is an applied method of behaviour change based on principles of operant conditioning and respondent conditioning (Coleman, 1986:90). Respondent conditioning according to Coleman (1986:84) holds that all learning takes place through classical conditioning, in which a stimulus elicits a reflex response. After numerous pairings, the stimulus alone will elicit the desired response and thus the individual is said to have learned to respond to novel stimuli or new situation. Operant behaviour is a voluntary response that operates on the environment to bring about certain desired consequences. In operant conditioning, the consequences of behaviour are emphasised (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989:420). The principles of operant of conditioning have been applied extensively to the control of the behaviour of children with behaviour disorders. This is accomplished by first making a functional analysis of behaviour, or specifying what behaviours are to be changed, and secondly by providing material that requires the learner to stay seated. Thirdly, acceptable behaviour is reinforced (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989: 421-422).

Social learning or modelling is another paradigm proposed by behaviourists (Coleman, 1986:85). In this type of learning, individuals may acquire new responses by observing and subsequently imitating the behaviour of other individuals – the models. Social learning differs

from operant and respondent conditioning in that individuals are not required to perform the behaviour themselves and not direct reinforcement is necessary for learning to occur.

Success with behaviour modification techniques has been claimed in a variety of settings with a myriad of behaviours (Coleman, 1986:90). There are many techniques that the teacher can use to change the behaviour of the learner. Goldstein *et al.*, (1984:46) for example, suggests positive reinforcers such as material, social, activity and token reinforcers. Supporters of behaviour modification believe that effective communication between teacher and learner is extremely important. All techniques or strategies are fruitfully if there are high levels of communication and trust between learner and teacher.

#### **2.4.4 The developmental model**

According to Kirk (1972:405) Hewelt is the principal advocate of the developmental model. He has established an educational program that is primarily a behaviour modification procedure, with a developmental sequence of seven educational goals. These goals are:

1. *Social*: where individuals function properly in relation with others. It is marked by mutual interaction, friendliness and generality with the aim of enjoying the society or companionship of others (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:214).
2. *Response*: accepting basic rules for order and safety, participating voluntarily, accepting personal responsibilities, seeking and deriving personal satisfaction through tasks and being involved in self-expression and personal enrichment (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:32).
3. *Order*: following direction, doing things in a particular order
4. *Exploratory*: During play the child can explore, experiment and become more creative (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:176) thereby obtaining personal growth via the ability to independently venture into the unknown and discover.
5. *Mastery*: games and activities serve to increase the child's growing physical competences and his sense of mastery over the physical environment stimulating self-esteem and belief in one's self (Siann & Ugwugbu, 1984:34).
6. *Achievement*: is usually associated with mental success but it is also possible on physical and social levels (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:8).

7. *Attention*: is a mental process that focuses on a specific portion of the total stimulation person. It is the action of giving heed, taking note of, or taking interest in an event, topic, incident, person, situation, etcetera (Van den Aardweg & Van den Aardweg, 1988:25).

In order for the teacher to effectively assist the learner to move up this hierarchy of development, Hewelt (Kirk, 1972:405) has developed what he considers to be the three essential ingredients for effective teaching:

1. Selection of a suitable task
2. Selection of a meaningful reward following accomplishment of the task
3. Maintaining a degree of structure under the control of the teacher

At each level of the sequence is:

1. The learner's problem,
2. The educative task,
3. The reinforcement, and
4. The teacher's structure,

(Kirk, 1972:406)

The teacher's role is to assign the learner to the appropriate centre, give him tasks he needs to learn, is ready to learn and of which he can be successful. The teacher then rewards the learner by the use of a check mark system. It is at this point that Hewelt departs from the strict behaviour modification strategy. Being reinforced for being "a learner" is quite different from being reinforced for progress toward some specific goal behaviour. In Hewelt's model the child continues to be reinforced even if he has a bad day and regresses somewhat. Proponents of strict behaviour modification model would contend that removing a learner from demanding task while continuing to reward his behaviour, would actually constitute rewarding an inappropriate behaviour (Du Toit, 1997:34; Kirk, 1972:406).

#### **2.4.5 The Psycho-educational model**

The Psycho-educational strategy is, in a sense, an eclectic approach: it is concerned with what the child does and why he does it. In the Psycho-educational strategy the child is viewed as possessing an innate biological potential, which, in combination with early experiences, determines the child's self-concepts, assertion and the manner in which he

cope with reality and tension. When the child then attends school, he is expected to possess certain social readiness skills that will allow him to perform in a prescribed manner acceptable to school, home and society. Failure of the child to meet these externally imposed demands will result in internal anxiety and frustration, which may lead directly to maladaptive behaviour. The crisis then provides the learner with another example of his 'inability', further lowering his self-concept, increasing his frustration, and creating a vicious cycle that will affect the learner, the teacher, the parents and his peers (Kirk, 1972:408). The goal of Psycho-educational intervention therefore, is to interrupt this cycle. Factors that would enable one to reach this goal include:

1. The nature of the demands and pressures placed on the learner
2. The ability of the learner to meet these demands
3. Peer group relations
4. Learner-teacher relations
5. The youngster's motivation for the behaviour
6. The learner's self-concept

(Kirk, 1972:409)

On the other hand, however, the learner must be taught to maintain his behaviour within acceptable limits. In this regard, Long and Newman (in Kirk, 1972: 409) describe four alternatives to behaviour that may be used by the teacher:

1. Permitting certain types of behaviour that are sanctioned by the teacher at certain times.
2. Preventative planning for a hygienic environment, which will allow the learner to bring his behaviour under control.
3. Tolerating behaviour because it is temporarily beyond the learner's ability to control but it is later explained to the child that improvement is expected.
4. The teacher may interfere or interrupt a behavioural sequence for the protection of the learner, other in the class or ongoing classroom activities (Kirk, 1972:409).

Advocates of the psycho-educational approach view acceptance of the child as well as positive interpersonal adult-child relationships as essential for effective treatment. Acceptance however, does not mean acceptance of the behaviour in question but rather of the child himself. This acceptance must correspond to the learner's personality in such a way that the teacher's responses help him to learn the necessary conformity.

Coleman (1986:74) is of the opinion that emotional difficulties can best be resolved through a supportive educational environment and positive learning experiences based on the following eight principles:

1. Cognitive and affective processes are in continuous interaction.
2. A special environment must be created so that initially each learner can function successfully at his level.
3. Teachers must be cognizant of the fact that learners with emotional difficulties have a special vulnerability to normal developmental tasks such as competition testing, learning to share, and so forth.
4. Emotionally troubled learners need to associate adult intervention with acceptance and protection, not hostility and rejection.
5. Teachers must listen to learners and focus on their feelings if academic progress and behavioural change are to occur.
6. Crises provide excellent opportunities for teachers to teach and for learners to learn.
7. Teaching social and academic skills increases the learner's ability to deal with a stressful environment.
8. An advantage of this model is that it can be organised and implemented within the scope of the school's responsibility.

An advantage of this model is that it can be organised and implemented within the scope of the school's responsibility. The teacher is not left on the sideline as an observer. She is considered an integral part of a team with much decision-making responsibility (Kirk, 1972:410).

#### **2.4.6 The ecological model**

Ecological intervention may focus on a single ecosystem or a combination of ecosystems. The more intimate the ecosystem of the child is (for example classroom, home and school), the more amenable he is to direct intervention. Interdependent relationships exist among these ecosystems, implying that interventions applied in one setting affect interactions in other settings, thus putting in motion a rippling effect. Interventions applied within this model are intended to make the environment more suitable for an individual learner rather than attempting to force the learner to fit into the environment. As such, the targets of change are

the learner's ecosystems of classroom, home, school and community, thereby accounting for individual differences (Coleman, 1986:109).

Ecological theorists believe that it is impossible to define disturbed behaviour in isolation from the context in which the behaviour occurs. Disordered behaviour is viewed as a disturbance in the equilibrium of an ecosystem (Coleman, 1986:109).

Goldstein *et al.*, (1984:217) highlights the major assumptions of the ecological model:

1. Each child is an inseparable part of a small social system.
2. Disturbance is not viewed as a disease located within the body of the child, but rather as discordance in the system.
3. Discordance may be defined as a disparity between an individual's abilities and the demands or expectations of the environment.

#### **2.4.6.1 Change in the classroom ecosystem**

Physical and psychological adaptations within the classroom may be sufficient to change disturbing interactions of some learners. Physical arrangements that have been used successfully in classrooms for behaviourally disordered learners include separate individual and group work areas, a time-out area and reinforcement centres. To preserve psychological consistency, a number of clear, concise, enforceable rules are generally selected and posted on wall charts. Furthermore, in order to encourage academic success, individualised contracts, task sheets or some clearly defined contingency may be arranged. Scheduling and routine are also important parts of the psychological environment, and as such, time limits for all daily activities are often established and followed by establishing definite limits. In this way, the teacher provides structure thereby helping learners learn to manage time efficiently. The teacher aims to create an atmosphere of acceptance and success rather than the expectation for failure that often surrounds the behaviour-disordered learner (Coleman, 1986:110).

#### **2.4.6.2 Change in the school and community ecosystems**

Mainstreaming is an ecological intervention that has been occurring in our schools and communities. Mainstreaming has had a profound impact on the entire educational system, as it represents a new philosophy of education backed by a mandate that children with special

needs are no longer the sole responsibility of special education. Special educators and regular educators are to plan and work jointly to serve these learners (Coleman, 1986:110).

De-institutionalisation is a second ecological intervention in both the school and community ecosystems. De-institutionalisation is aimed at the normalisation of handicapped individuals who have been institutionalised. De-institutionalisation within society must strive to fulfil three goals:

1. To halt continued institutionalisation
2. To return as many institutionalised people as possible to their communities.
3. To improve the care currently provided by institutions

(Coleman, 1986:111).

In this regard, respite care is a potentially effective home intervention for parents of the severely handicapped. By offering additional programs for the learners on Saturdays, during and after school hours, and/or through the summer months educators can alleviate some of the stress inherent in the continuous care of such youngsters (Coleman, 1986:110). Furthermore, educators often formally organise parent support groups and parent training programs.

#### **2.4.7 The learning disability model**

The proponents of this strategy maintain that a specific learning disability creates a discrepancy between the capacity of the individual to behave appropriately, and the requirements of the school environment. Stated differently, specific learning disabilities create discrepancies between the learner's ability in one area and what she and others expect in another (Kirk, 1972:402). This situation results in frustration, conduct disorders and personality problems as well as occasional school truancy and delinquency (Kirk, 1972:408). The learning disability strategy intervenes directly into the remediation of the specific disability, be it language, reading, writing, spelling, thinking, or perceiving. Effective remediation tends to decrease the conduct and personality problems by assisting the learner in decreasing the discrepancy between his capacity to perform and the requirements of society (Kirk, 1972:408).

According to (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989: 207-208), children with learning disabilities are a diverse group. Various approaches to meeting these learners' needs can be grouped into four broad categories: task training, in which the emphasis is on the sequencing and simplification of the task to be learned; ability or process training, in which the focus is on the remediation of a specific developmental disability; process-task training, in which the first two approaches are combined and integrated in one remedial program; and the behavioural which has five stages of learning:

1. The acquisition stage where the individual learns how to perform tasks accurately
2. The proficiency stage where the learner learns to perform tasks quickly and automatically
3. The maintenance stage where the learner remembers what has been learned after lapse of time
4. The generalization stage where the learner is able to transfer the skill or knowledge to new situations
5. The adoption stage where the skill or knowledge becomes part of the learner's standard repertoire.

#### **2.4.8 Evaluation of the use of theoretical models**

Theoretical models used by teachers when confronted by learners with difficult behavior must not only match the learner in question, but also the learner's age. A comprehensive understanding of each model is therefore essential in order to create and implement appropriate behavior modification strategies. For example, the behavioral model is believed to be one of the most well-researched, taught and subsequently used models. This model may however negate the importance of a learner's thoughts and feelings – which are now considered fundamental to the understanding and modification of difficult behavior. The incorporation of the use of the psychodynamic model as well, then becomes central to this process. Literature (Meese, 1996) tells us that strategies within the major schools of thought (i.e. psychodynamic, psycho-educational, behavioral and cognitive-behavioral models) can be seen in an interrelated manor. Similarly, it is these models that are considered as being of fundamental importance by teachers in the explanation of learner behavior and in the structuring and implementation of interventions. Intervention strategies based on these models are then also viewed as interrelated. It is the responsibility of the teacher however to plan and implement a strategy that is best suited to each individual learner. By implication

then, the practical implementation of a theoretical model is only as effective as the teacher who plans and implements it.

## **2.5 CONCLUSION**

Teachers of learners with difficult behaviour use a variety of strategies to deal with these children. Selection of a specific intervention depends on a number of factors, including the teacher's training and interaction style, the goals of the program, the needs of the learner and importantly, the teacher's attitude. The consequences of chosen strategies are very important because strategies and attitude play a major role in the development of learners and their behaviour. Normally, teachers are unlikely to accept and work successfully with learners who fail to conform to their standards of teachability or tolerability. As, such attitudes of teachers play a crucial role in the life of learners with behaviour problems and it is important for teachers to see the issue of attitude within the correct context. Some attitudes presented by teachers are conducive to negative learner attitudes and others to positive learner attitudes. The correct choice of strategies to deal with learner behaviour problems is also conducive to promoting positive behavioural development.

Therefore, it is important for teachers to consider a variety of strategies that may motivate learners to modify their behaviour. Teachers should also always to exhibit a positive attitude towards learners with behaviour problems in order to put them in a helpful situation by creating a stable relationship.

Teachers will need extra support and encouragement in order to overcome their fears and doubts. In order to achieve this however, one needs to first understand the strategies that teachers are currently using to deal with learners presenting with difficult behaviour and their attitudes towards such learners.

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

The primary aim of this study is to obtain a comprehensive overview of current teacher attitudes towards, and the subsequent strategies utilised with, learners presenting with behaviour problem in the classroom. Teachers considered are from the Limpopo Province in South Africa. Knowledge of teacher attitudes and teaching strategies used in such instances is limited within the South African context – especially with regards to rural, poverty regions (Smith *et al.*, 1988: 183). Understanding of such issues is however extremely necessary when one considers the diverse nature of our society and the high levels of learners presenting with behavioural problems.

### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

As recent research and literature is limited in the field under investigation, it is advisable to begin with a situation analysis (Katzenellenbogen, Joubert & Karim, 1997). According to Hartshorne, Carstens, Louw, Barrie, and Jordaan (1995:91), "In essence the situation analysis is stock-taking of the present situation and recent past trends to facilitate identification of problems, constraints and opportunities, the needs to be met in order of priority, the objective to be met, and to direct efforts towards appropriate strategies".

### 3.3 RESEARCH METHOD

A survey questionnaire (see addendum A) has thus been administered to participants. According to Scott and Usher (1999:67) surveys have one main advantage and this is that data can be collected from large number of respondents. Furthermore, Creswel (1994:119) highlights secondary advantages of survey designs as being the rapid pace of data collection and analysis. This is important to the researcher because a comprehensive overview of teacher attitudes and the strategies being used in this region is necessary in order to fully understand the current situation. Furthermore, such data would have to be gathered within a

short space of time and analysed expediently so as to account for extraneous factors that may contaminate results.

Booyse *et al.*, (1993:68) states that the most commonly used methods of gathering data in educational research include questionnaires, interviews and observations. Questionnaires are constructed in a number of different ways (Scott & Usher, 1999:68). In this research the researcher uses the following types of questions:

- Simple closed factual questions where the respondent will give a yes or no answer
  - Closed checklists where respondents are asked to appropriate responses
  - The opportunity to give comment after each section is provided for
- (Scott & Usher, 1999:68-69).

As this is a descriptive study, quantitative methods are utilised. According to Smith and Manning (1982:3) “quantitative methods is where the data are reported in discrete quantities, usually using statistical techniques to quantify effect and to enter the generality of the finding from sample to a population”. A survey design provides “a quantitative or numeric description of some fraction of the population – the sample - through the data collection process of asking questions of people” (Creswell, 1994:117). This method of data collection has therefore been decided upon as it enables a researcher to generalise the findings from a sample of responses to the greater population from which the sample group comes.

Most teachers within the region are bilingual, speaking both Venda and English. As such, questionnaires have been administered in English as this allows for greater translucency of results that do not have to be translated, thereby losing some of their value.

Data gathered has been analysed to provide a description of the attitude and strategies used by teachers when confronted by learners presenting with difficult behaviour. As such, data has been analysed using SPSS, creating descriptive statistics of this population group.

### **3.4 DATA COLLECTION**

Selected schools were contacted in order to explain the study to headmasters. After obtaining their consent to conduct the study in their school, dates were arranged for data collection.

Data collection sessions were then held (usually in the staff room) at a particular time (usually during break). This procedure, recommended by Forceses and Richer (1973, in Sihlangu, 1992:37) has the following advantages:

- It creates some pressure for teachers to participate
- It creates an opportunity to clarify unclear instructions
- It facilitates collection of completed questionnaires
- It facilitates follow-up in the case of incomplete or unclear answers

At the start of all data collection sessions, the aim of the study was explained to respondents, who were also encouraged to express their views, without discussing them with fellow teachers. It was stressed that their views would remain anonymous and confidential. Questionnaires were administered and collected after completion by the researcher herself.

### **3.5 THE QUESTIONNAIRE**

A structured questionnaire was designed (see appendix A) based on a study conducted at a primary school in Cape Town (Smit & Liebenberg, 2001). Of relevance to this thesis, is the needs analysis that was conducted with teachers concerning behaviour problems they encounter in class. All categories and response options are derived from the results of said teacher responses.

The format of the questionnaire is such that it includes both yes/no answers, and qualitative responses. The yes/no questions are quicker to complete and thereby encourage completion of the questionnaire. Space has also been provided for individual commentary below each section, allowing for elaboration and additional information, so as not to limit a participant's feedback. The questionnaire consists of four sections. Each section is framed by a question, namely:

1. Which of the following difficult behaviours do you encounter with learners?
2. Which of the following strategies do you use when dealing with such learners?
3. How do you view these learners?
4. Have you ever received training with regards to dealing with learners with difficult behaviour?

In the first section of the questionnaire, participants are asked to identify behaviour that they encounter in their class. This information is aimed at understanding what these teachers are confronted with daily. Behavioural types included in the list relate to tardiness, punctuality, physical behaviour, verbal behaviour, abuse and aspects affected by poverty and related factors such as malnutrition. The second section establishes how teachers deal with such behaviour, by listing various strategies available to them as options for selection. Such strategies include both positive and negative approaches to difficult behaviour. In the third section, participants are asked about their views of learners presenting with behaviour problem. Attitudes such as irritating, frustrating, needy, disadvantaged, angering and challenging were included. The fourth section of the questionnaire is concerned with teacher training regarding behaviour problems, and is structured differently to the other questions. The section begins by establishing the presence or absence of training and goes on to explore respondents' answers further. Such exploration includes where and when training took place, whether it benefited the respondent or not, and a brief elaboration on the training received. Should the respondent not have received any training, an explanation is given as to why the respondent feels this is the case. By structuring this section in such a manner, it allows the researcher not only to understand the respondents' answers in previous sections, but also to establish opportunities available to teachers within this region, as well as the effect of such opportunities.

### **3.6 THE PILOT STUDY - Questionnaire**

A pilot study was conducted with 10 volunteering teachers from the circuit to assess the clarity and validity of the questionnaire. On completion of the questionnaire, teachers were given the opportunity to comment on each question. Two questions were found to be too complicated and were subsequently altered. The same 10 teachers were then given opportunity to review the questionnaire again, where they indicated that the amended questions were clearer and simpler.

### **3.7 RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**

Being a situation analysis, the study aims to look at the attitude of primary school teachers towards learners, as well the strategies they then use in rural areas of the Limpopo Province. There are more than 40 schools in this circuit, which also covers an area of more than 40km<sup>2</sup>. As it would be difficult to consult teachers from all these schools, fifteen schools were *randomly* selected so as to allow each school an equal chance of being included in the sample (Booyse *et al.*, 1993:53). Furthermore, 179 teachers from these 15 schools volunteered to complete the questionnaires. These teachers represented all seven primary grades.

## CHAPTER 4

# DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

In this section, the most prominent results of the study will be summarised in table form. Each table will be discussed in detail. The first eight tables give a general overview of the results by summarising the frequencies and percentages of each category. As the focus is on the connection existing between teacher attitudes towards and strategies dealing with learners presenting with difficult behaviour, the correlations existing between these factors together with the impact of training is then further explored.

It is important at this point to highlight certain demographic variables that are of importance in this study. In the Limpopo Province, approximately 60 percent of the total population live in poverty. Furthermore, 41 percent are children of school attending age (Lerm, 2001). The pass rate of these children is 58 percent and the dropout rate is 20 percent (The department of Education, personal communication, 19 June, 2002).

### 4.2 CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR

Training of teachers plays a crucial role in improving learners' behaviour. Unfortunately, however, teachers are more often than not inadequately trained to deal with such behaviour problems (Martin *et al.*, 1999:347). According to Engelbrecht, Engelbrecht and Naickers (1997:5) regular educators are not trained to work with special needs, and it is believed that education for special educational needs is only for highly qualified specialists, of whom there are too few.

Views of teachers also play a crucial role because teachers themselves see their ability to handle discipline problems in the classroom as crucial. It is teachers' beliefs that positive assessment of their own work depends foremost upon their learners' school achievement and next on the success of the control they exert over this classroom (Romi & Freud, 1999:54). Different strategies have been developed regarding the educational treatment of learners with

behavioural problems, as the school has increased its responsibility in this area (Kirk 1972:402; Montague, Bergeron & Lago Delello, 1997). To better understand the strategies that are required however, one needs a comprehensive review of the behaviour confronting teachers within a certain context, as well as an appreciation for the possible underlying causes of such behavioural problems. As such, Table 4.1 explores the behaviours encountered by teachers in the Limpopo Province.

**Table 4.1 Difficult behaviour encountered by teachers in classrooms**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Laziness	166	93
Not doing home work	162	91
No parent involvement	162	91
Playful	160	89
Fighting	160	89
Loud talking and shouting	147	82
Not doing class work	146	82
Stubborn	145	81
Peer pressure	141	79
Concentration	140	78
Participation problems	135	75
Distracting/disruptive behaviours	134	75
Bullying	126	70
Laughing at one another	125	70
Disrespect	122	68
Absent without reasons	114	64
Domestic problems	113	63
Short tempered	90	50
Negative attitudes	86	48
Coming late	84	47
Aggression	84	47
Greediness	76	43
Introvert behaviour	75	42
Back chatting	73	41
Acting out	66	37
Calling names	66	40
Falling asleep in class	29	16
Swearing	26	15
Loosing hand-outs	23	13
Inappropriate use of body language	21	12
Physical abuse	19	11
Emotional abuse	18	10
Not accepting responsibility	14	8
Cultural differences	9	5
Sexual abuse	9	5
Other	2	1

N=179

Table 4.1 summarises the responses to question one in the questionnaire about the difficult behaviour teacher's encounter with learners in their classrooms. Laziness scores the highest percentage (93 percent). It is important for teachers to understand the cause of such behaviour as many sources can be attributed to it. Examples of such causes include inappropriate curriculum or teaching strategies, learner disability (for example emotional/behaviour disorders), physical arrangement of the classroom, boredom or frustration, transitional periods, teacher lack of awareness of what is going on in every area of the classroom. In this geographical region in particular, a learner's inability to understand the concepts being taught may be a central cause. All subjects are taught in the learners' second or even third language (that is English), so it is difficult for learners to understand many aspects of lessons. The use of English as the medium of instruction also adds additional pressure to teachers: they are forced to teach in their second or third language although they are using their mother tongue in every other teaching situation. Similarly, when a child fails to meet the needs of the school, she can easily develop a negative attitude towards schooling (48 percent). Learners develop negative attitudes towards school for various reasons, for example, curriculum, teacher strategies and attitudes, peer pressure, age, and academic failure (Crowley, 1994; Jessup & Kiley, 1971). Some misbehaviour may arise as a result of the teacher's inability to meet the diverse needs of learners (Long *et al.*, 1998; Martin *et al.*, 1999). When children have difficulty understanding what is happening in the learning situation they become bored or playful, they may fail to do their class work, or lose concentration. Teachers therefore need to use a variety of strategies in their interactions with learners, such as reinforcement and cooperative learning (Kirk & Gallagher, 1989). Acceptance by teachers also plays a crucial role. If learners observe a lack of acceptance in teachers it may contribute to the development of a negative attitude (Crowley, 1993; Goldstein *et al.*, 1984; Wheldall, 1992). Consequently, supportive, encouraging behaviour from teachers is essential. This may correlate with Daniels' (1998:26) assertion that some misbehaviour may arise as a result of teacher's inability to meet the diverse needs of learners thereby resulting in laziness and playfulness. The prevalence of playfulness (89 percent) supports this: some children are too playful whilst simultaneously lacking in responsibility, thereby requiring additional supervision to do their work. They need to be taught to have responsibility and to take their education seriously. So, teacher-attitude and curriculum need to be flexible in order to suit the needs of all learners (Brendtro *et al.*, 1998; Long *et al.*, 1998;

Smit & Liebenberg, 2002). Teachers, who are already stressed and overworked, will understandably have difficulty meeting such needs.

Lack of adequate supervision and attention often extends to the learners' homes. Not doing homework (91 percent), lack of parental involvement (91 percent), stubbornness (81 percent), disrespect (68 percent), unexplained absences (64 percent), coming late (47 percent), falling asleep in class (16 percent) and not accepting responsibility (eight percent), may all be due to the rural and impoverished nature of the region. In the Limpopo Province, many parents work long hours and great distances from their homes. As such, comprehensive attention to their school going children as concerns issues such as homework and school visits is limited. Most parents fail to realise that they need to be partners in their children's education (Smit & Liebenberg, forthcoming). A further attributer to homework that is not completed is the lack of access to electricity experienced by most children. Many are then forced to use candles and paraffin lamps as substitutes for electrical lights, but often due to conditions of extreme poverty, this option is also unavailable. Such conditions compound learners' already low levels of motivation to attend school. Many learners are not motivated to attend school daily (absent without reasons) because their parents work very far from home, leaving while their children are still sleeping, and are not educated, so these children do not see the importance of education. Such school avoidance is a reflection of the lack of responsibility found in many learners in this region. Responsibility is something learned from early childhood. If parents are negligent and do everything for them, they may develop irresponsible behaviour. Learners coming from families of parents who work far from home, families who abuse alcohol, and families who always fight have no time to teach their children responsibility. Learners coming from such families often fail to do their homework or class work, complete tasks, they are often playful and absent from school or come late. They need to be taught to regulate themselves by teaching them to use the skills of self-management for example self-instruction, self-recording, self-reinforcement, self-evaluation and self-punishment (Daniels, 1998:28). Home environments that are characterised by high levels of poverty and domestic problems (for example, parent drug abuse) increase children's levels of disrespect. Mothers who experience high stress in their personal relationships tend to demonstrate more intrusiveness and insensitivity with their children (Luthar, 1999:46). It is important for parents to provide a responsive, supportive and structural home environment during their early childhood years. It is important for children to be taught to self-respect and respect for others.

People in poor communities often experience high levels of frustration, despair and anger (Donald, Lazarus & Lolwana, 1997:182). Consequently, some families abuse substances and regard violence as an acceptable means of solving differences. These problems have negative affects on children's lives (Donald *et al.*, 1997:182). Low-income parents are vulnerable to a range of stressful life experiences that exacerbate their mental health. For example, mothers living in poverty are victims of physical and sexual violence with alarming frequency (Luthar, 1999:45). In such homes, abuse and neglect of children is rife, and parents often fight in front of children. Learners who experience such domestic problems (63 percent) fail to meet the demands of school life. Many children in this region come from families where they are accustomed to fighting and where they regard fighting as a means of resolving differences. Accordingly, many learners use fighting (89 percent) as well as loud talking or shouting (82 percent) at school when confronted by conflict.

Not doing class work (82 percent) is also often the result of a poverty context. Learners come to school ill equipped and therefore also often become subject to peer manipulation. Peer pressure (79 percent) occurs at all stages of a child's development, but particularly during adolescence. This powerful influence on behaviour can be negative, positive or as in most cases, mixed, where individuals seek alternative sources of identity, status, acceptance and support in the peer group (Donald *et al.*, 1997:183). Influences on behaviour depend very much on the values held by the peer group and the sort of identity and acceptance needs of the individual. Peer pressure often extends into bullying (70 percent) and laughing at one another (70 percent). Teenagers and adolescence exhibit this behaviour, discouraging others to participate in the classroom. Learners need to be taught pro-social skills by using positive reinforcement to prevent such behaviour.

Most children exhibit disruptive behaviour (75 percent) from time to time. These learners are unsettled, fail to attend to tasks set for the class, to stay in their seats, to respond appropriately to the teacher, and to participate in appropriate classroom behaviour (Snyman & Engelbrecht, 1999:190). These learners require more structure than other learners. Teachers need to display classroom rules, discuss consequences of behaviour and use self-monitoring strategies (Bender & Mathes, 1995:228).

Learners presenting with aggression (47 percent) and acting out (37 percent) behaviours are both extremely troublesome and often appear to be resistant to change through usual disciplinary measures. Some of these learners are considered hyperactive or have suffered brain injuries as a result of their poverty context. Aggressive, acting out children typically cannot stand the people they have to live and be with, because such children are frequently screamed at, criticized and punished (Govender, 1989:38). Teaching aggressive learners is no simple matter; it needs helpful techniques to be applied to modify the behaviour. One of the most useful techniques for dealing with these learners may be the Life Space Crisis Intervention (LSCI) (Brendtro *et al.*, 1998; Long *et al.*, 1998; Smit & Liebenberg, 2002). Helping the learner rehearse or role play non-aggressive behaviour, providing reinforcement for non-aggressive behaviour, preventing a learner from obtaining positive consequences for aggression and punishing aggression in ways that involve as little counter aggression as possible may prove to be extremely useful when dealing with troubled youth (Govender, 1989:39).

Some of the behavioural problems facing teachers in the Limpopo Province can be ascribed to culture. Bearing in mind that the questionnaire administered to teachers in this study, was piloted in Cape Town where cultural diversity is rife, it stands to reason that teachers there would experience cultural differences. In the central areas of the Limpopo Province however, there are little problems of cultural differences (five percent) because the population is mainly made up of Shangaan and Sotho people, who tend to remain very separate from each other.

The issue of any form of abuse in any context is always serious, and despite the low incidence reported in this study, it certainly warrants discussion. Although sexual abuse (five percent) amongst learners is reportedly very low, it is important to bear in mind that in many black cultures, including the Sotho and Shangaan cultures, it is forbidden to talk about sexual activities. Furthermore, in the Limpopo Province to report sexual abuse, is in essence to isolate yourself from others, so many women and girls prefer to keep quiet about their abuse. As such, despite the low percentage presented here, it is important to bear in mind that this is most probably a very inaccurate picture of the prevalence of sexual abuse amongst learners in this region. A similar rationale applies to emotional abuse (10 percent). Here however, it depends upon the views of respondents. Some people, especially amongst the cultural groupings in the Limpopo Province, view emotional abuse as a means of disciplining children

or making learners behave appropriately. So again, the reported incidence of emotional abuse may be significantly different from the actual incidence of such abuse. Finally, the observed incidence of physical abuse is only 11 percent. Taking traditional, authoritarian cultural norms into account however, one can assume that this figure may actually be much higher. Once again, however due to these cultural norms, most cases of physical abuse within a learner's home will most probably go unreported. Overcrowded classes, in addition to work overloads, make it less likely that teachers will notice the subtle signs of such abuse.

### 4.3 TEACHER STRATEGIES

Having reviewed the behaviour teachers in this region believe they are confronted with, the following table explores the strategies teachers use to deal with this behaviour.

**Table 4.2 Strategies used by teachers when confronted with difficult behaviour**

Strategy	Frequency	Percent
Talk to the learner ("try and find the reason why they are behaving this way")	154	86
Send letter to parents	152	85
Change / rearrange seating	146	82
Lower voice ("talking quietly and gently")	138	77
Give the learner cleaning duty	137	77
Focus on the problem as opposed to the child	133	74
Phone parents of the learner	132	74
Remove the learner from the situation	131	73
Play problem solving games with all learners involved	127	71
Keep the learner in during break or after school	124	69
Send the learner out of the class	120	67
Send the learner to the principle	120	67
Ignore the learner	115	64
Use red card system (like in soccer)	107	60
Peer assessment of the learner	91	51
Send the learner to the school psychologist or social worker	70	31
Emotional abuse ("make an example of naught learners")	59	33
Involve the governing body	53	30
Give the learner extra home work	43	24
Stare at the learner	35	20
Shouting	29	16
Physical / corporal punishment	20	11
Send the learner to detention	17	10
Talking to the learner in a negative manner ("insulting / degrading")	13	7

N=179

One of the greatest challenges facing teachers of learners with emotional or behavioural disorders is the management of instructional activities within an entire classroom of learners, many of whom are uncooperative or disruptive (Rockwell & Guetzloe, 1996:38; see also Table 4.1, p.34). Educators therefore need to develop the use of different strategies in the educational treatment of the variety of learners presenting with behavioural problems in the classroom.

It would seem that many respondents understand how to deal with difficult learners by incorporating creative and potentially effective strategies in their classrooms in order to deal with the variety of needs and behaviours that confront them. These results show that, most teachers in the Limpopo province try talking to learners (86 percent) about their difficult behaviour. This is an essential strategy as learners have varied psychological needs (for example, low self-respect and trust, a sense of belonging) (Rockwell & Guetzloe, 1996:38-42) and each learner needs to be approached individually (Long *et al.*, 1998:1). Many teachers also change/rearrange seating (82 percent) in their efforts to alter behaviour problems. Changing the composition of the group may reduce the incidence of aggressive and violent episodes. This may be done on at least three levels:

- Total regrouping in which a particular youngster must be placed in a different setting because of the failure to match him or her to an appropriate group in the first setting.
- Partial regrouping that involves a shift in the composition of a group within the setting.
- Distributional changes that simply alter the responsibilities and interactions within a group without necessitating a change in membership (Goldstein *et al.*, 1984:94).

Many educators remove the learner from the situation (73 percent) possibly believing that it cools down the learner. When carried out in a reasonable yet firm manner, this strategy may prevent the learner's behaviour from escalating.

A further constructive and much used approach is lowering one's voice (77 percent) in an attempt to modify behaviour problems. Teachers need to avoid shouting at learners as well as using threatening words when confronted by learners with behaviour problems (Crowley, 1993; Davies, 1995). As opposed to the high percentage of teachers who adopt this positive strategy, only 16 percent of teachers report shouting at learners. This, by contrast, has a negative effect on learners, often degrading and confusing them. A strategy that helps many children who have behaviour problems is problem-solving games (71 percent). By playing

constructive games with learners presenting with behaviour problems, teachers may help these learners to recognise the destructive nature of their behaviour, the need to change that behaviour and to explore possible options for alternate behaviour (Brendtro *et al.*, 1998; Long *et al.*, 1998). In all these instances, the strategies allow for educators to focus on the problem as opposed to the learner (74 percent). This is important in that the learner needs to be reassured that she is not the problem and that the situation can be remedied. By not experiencing rejection and blame, the learner may be motivated not to repeat the behaviour (Crowley, 1993; Wheldall, 1992; Whinnery *et al.*, 1991).

Teachers use several other strategies that could be considered in both a negative and a positive light. Fundamental to the success of these strategies are the philosophies that motivate teachers to use them and the resultant way in which teachers implement them. Ignoring a learner (64 percent) is one such strategy. Some learners continuously seek attention by implementing difficult behaviour. In instances such as this, the teacher needs to ignore the behaviour of the learner and continue to teach. Goldstein *et al.* (1998:93) describe seventeen behaviours can be antiseptically manipulated by means of planned ignoring: this helps to decrease the intensity or frequency of such behaviour by not attending it. Using a red card system (60 percent) is another such strategy. This is just like a game in the classroom: learners like it and are motivated by it to change their behaviour. Both of the strategies can be implemented in a negative manner however and perceived as such by the learner. It is therefore of fundamental importance that teachers ensure that learners see their approach in a positive light. The same can be said of giving learners cleaning duty (77 percent), keeping learners in during break or after school (69 percent), and sending learners to detention (10 percent) as behaviour modification strategies. While it would appear that many educators are in favour of such behaviour modification strategies, there are many inherent dangers that need to be accounted for. If implemented incorrectly, such strategies can easily miss the true issue confronting the learner in question, and in effect contribute to a conflict cycle, compounding the learner's problems and negative emotions (Brendtro *et al.*, 1998; Smit & Liebenberg, 2002). Furthermore, keeping learners after school can have a negative impact on their ability to return home as concerns finance, personal safety and transport.

There are also many strategies that teachers can use for behaviour modification, that incorporate people other than the educator and the learner. Again these strategies may prove

effective if implemented in a caring, loving and stable manner, but can easily result in a compounded, negative experience for the learner if implemented in an aggressive authoritarian manner. Peer assessment of the learner (51 percent) is one such strategy. As the peer group can have a powerful influence on behaviour, support from peers can contribute to positive outcomes among children (Luthar, 1999:63). The individual seeks alternative sources of identity, status, acceptance and support in the peer group and as such teachers can use peers to modify the behaviour that is not allowed in the classroom (Donald *et al.*, 1997:183). According to Donald *et al.*, (1997:183) however, this depends very much on the values held by the peer group and sort of identity and acceptance needs of the individual.

It is important for teachers to realise that parents are partners in the education of their children and as such, should be empowered to become partners in the decision-making as well as the supervision and support of their children's learning (Smit & Liebenberg, forthcoming). Although governments should make this possible through policy and legislation (Burden, 1996:10), it is only at institutional level that this can become a reality. According to Joubert & Prinsloo (1999:89) the responsibilities of parents with respect to the code of conduct, parents are expected to:

- Support the school, and require learners to observe all school rules and regulations and accept responsibilities for misbehaviour on their part, and take an active interest in their children to complete homework assignments.
- Classroom ecological inventories can be useful for collecting information about a wide range of events, variables and conditions that can influence and effect a learner's behaviour.
- Parents should attend meetings that the governing body convenes for them.

The fact that so many teachers report to be sending letters to parents (85 percent) as well as phoning parents (74 percent) is promising. A central issue to bear in mind however is the level of adult literacy in the region. As many adults in the Limpopo Province are illiterate, one must question the effectiveness of such a strategy in this context. Furthermore, many parents refuse to take responsibility with regard to co-operative discipline. They believe that educators are paid to be responsible for their children, regarding educators as their final answer. Parents in this community need to be empowered to become partners in education of their children.

Two methods used by teachers when confronted by learners with difficult behaviour, which may prove very authoritarian, include sending the learner to the principal (67 percent) and involving the governing body (30 percent). Such strategies can leave learners feeling isolated and rejected. Being confronted by authority figures of this magnitude may also be extremely daunting and stressful for learners – especially learners who are already acting from a position of fear and anger. As there are few school psychologists for the Limpopo Province teachers only have the option of sending learners to a social worker (31 percent). Many parents are opposed to such measures as they feel that they are degrading their children. Furthermore, although many learners in the community may benefit immensely from professional assistance of this kind, already overworked social workers are not always in a position to provide such children with the attention they truly need. The low response rate however does imply that many teachers are attempting to deal with learners' behavioural problems on their own, as opposed to relying on professionals (Kirk, 1972; Kirk & Gallagher, 1979).

Finally, physical abuse (11 percent) is forbidden by law and is a criminal offence (Joubert & Priso, 1999:7; South African School Act 84 of 1996). One can only assume that it is due to this law that this result is so low. In the post apartheid era, especially in black schools, physical abuse is often practised without review. In South Africa, there is no research study that assesses the nature of disciplinary methods and the extent to which corporal punishment is used in South African schools. It is expected that the use of corporal punishment is likely to be high in black primary schools, where there is still a lack of properly qualified teachers and where teaching facilities are still scarce (Sihlangu 1992:8).

#### 4.4 TEACHER ATTITUDES

**Table 4.3 Teacher attitudes towards learners**

<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Challenging	151	84
Needy	148	83
Irritating	127	71
Frustrating	123	69
Angering	119	67
Disadvantaged	111	62

N=179

Most teachers view learners with difficult behaviour as challenging (84 percent). According to the researcher's opinion teachers view these learners as challenging because they must be thoroughly prepared with regard to the strategies required to handle the situation. This means that teachers require knowledge, skills, techniques and have a positive attitude towards learners with difficult behaviour. They may also consider these learners to be in need of love, acceptance and support as well as physiological needs such as nutrition, clothing and a sense of safety and trust. These factors in turn, all impact on a learner's need for belonging and socialisation, need for self respect and respect for others (Rockwell & Guetzloe, 1996:38-41). This finding is supported by the strategies that teachers report utilising with learners presenting with behaviour problems. Table 4.2 (p.39) clearly illustrates that many teachers are at least attempting to make use of positive and constructive strategies.

Some teachers also view learners presenting with behaviour problems as disadvantaged (62 percent) because they come from an impoverished background where homelessness, single parenting, significant loss, and abuse are rife (Smith *et al.*, 1998:337-345). This implies that these teachers have a consideration for the context and subsequent needs of such learners. Such an attitude may very much contribute to the use of effective behaviour management strategies, as well as one's understanding of the results seen in Table 4.2 (p.39).

Most educators also see these learners as needy (83 percent). Some children misbehave as a means of achieving or satisfying unmet needs. When a child's home environment is impoverished in some way (financially, emotionally etcetera) the chances of their looking for responses at school are increased. In the Limpopo Province, as stated before, many of these learners come from broken families, extreme poverty and from families where substance abuse and violence is rife. These factors in turn, all impact on a learner's need for belonging and socialisation, their need for self-respect and to respect others (Rockwell & Gautzloe, 1996:38-41). When teachers realise that misbehaviour stems from needs they are often more willing to deal with the behaviour effectively. Again, these results serve to explain and support results found in Table 4.2 (p.39).

Regarding learners as needy however, may be experienced in a negative light, and may in turn contribute to the experience of such learners as irritating (71 percent), frustrating (69

percent) and angering (67 percent). The needs of these learners may place demands on many educators that they are not equipped to deal with. The reality confronting many learners may make some educators uncomfortable. Learners who challenge the authority of educators and their disciplinary measures can be frustrating to educators who do not know how to deal with learners who continuously disrupt his lesson. Instances such as these may result in teachers losing control of their emotions, becoming angered by learners thereby permitting a crisis to develop instead of preventing it.

Sometimes educators need to ask themselves questions about the learners who exhibit the disruptive behaviour in the classrooms. Questions asked should include the following: Could this misbehaviour be a result of inappropriate curriculum or teaching strategies, an inability to understand the concepts being taught, learner's disability, other factors (for example, physical arrangement of the classroom, boredom and frustration); or an inability to effectively control and manage misbehaviour (Daniels, 1998:26-29)? Questions such as these imply that teachers require knowledge, skills, varied techniques and a positive attitude towards learners with behaviour problems in the classroom.

#### 4.5 TEACHER TRAINING

Tables 4.4 to 4.8 explore whether or not teachers in this study have received training as well as other issues related to this, such as when training was received, the kind of training, and reasons as to why training may not have been received.

**Table 4.4 Have you ever received training regarding the handling of learners with difficult behaviour?**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	108	60
No	71	40

N=179

The results show that 40 percent of respondents have never received training to deal with learners with difficult behaviour. This highlights that teachers who are under great stress, experiencing anger and frustration are not equipped to assist many learners. This implies that teachers require training in this regard, especially in the Limpopo Province where many learners come from a background of alcoholism, poverty, homelessness, single parenting,

emotional abuse, etcetera. These learners need teachers who are professionally qualified to deal with different situations in order to help them.

**Table 4.5 Places of teacher training (with regards to Table 4.4)**

Institution	Frequency	Percentage
Teacher Training College	25	36%
Rand Afrikaans University	17	24%
University of South Africa	10	15%
CESA	8	12%
Tshisimani College of education	4	6%
Makhado College of Education	2	3%
Potchefstroom University	1	1%
South African College of Education	1	1%
University of Cape Town	1	1%
University of Venda	1	1%

N=70

As can be seen from Table 4.5, most of the respondents (75 percent) indicate that they received their training with regards to learners with difficult behavior at teacher training college (36 percent), Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) (24 percent) and University of South Africa (UNISA) (15 percent). Information such as this is important as it illustrates where most teachers in the region are trained. Accordingly, it is these institutions that should be targeted for skills training regarding dealing with youth in this specific context.

**Table 4.6 When training occurred (with regards to Table 4.4)**

Date	Frequency	Percent
1970-1974	2	3%
1975-1979	0	0%
1980-1984	7	10%
1985-1989	11	16%
1990-1994	10	15%
1995-1999	36	52%
2000-2001	3	4%

N=69

Results from Table 4.6 show that although most teachers received training in dealing with learner difficult behavior between 1995 and 1999 (52 percent), almost half the respondents received training before this period (44 percent). The implications of this are complex, as one needs to consider the impact of a tertiary training system in the Apartheid context (a highly authoritarian context), as well as many out-dated behavior management strategies that now remain in use. These results highlight the need for interventions that can assist teachers in

broadening their knowledge of behavior management strategies, child psychology and consequent approaches to learner needs as well as effective understanding of current methods of instruction.

**Table 4.7 Training received (with regards to Table 4.4; See appendix B)**

Type of training	Frequency	Percentage
Remedial	16	24%
General education (includes University Education Degree)	14	21%
Problems	13	19%
Different learners	9	13%
Difficult learners	8	12%
Education for all	5	8%
Special needs learners	2	3%

N=67

Sixty percent of respondents report having received training in how to deal with youth with behavior problems (see Table 4.4, p.45). Of these 108 respondents, 67 elaborated on the training received. Nineteen percent of respondents say that they received special training with regards to dealing with learners with difficult behavior whilst receiving their general education training. Bearing in mind that such tertiary courses cover an immense amount of material, one can assume that such a course would not have been covered in much detail. This factor may be further compounded when considering the date that such training was received. As previously pointed out, almost half of the respondents say that their training occurred prior to 1995 (see Table 4.6, p.46). It stands to reason that that such training would not only be very limited but also irrelevant to today's context.

At least 58 percent of respondents indicate that they have had training that can be considered as more focused and applicable to dealing with learners with difficult behavior. Such training includes remedial (24 percent), problems (19 percent), difficult learners (12 percent) and special needs learners (three percent). Considering the nature of inclusive education, training with regards to education for all (8 percent) could also be considered beneficial in this regard. Although it is promising that more than half of the respondents appear to be equipped to deal with learners presenting with difficult behavior, bearing the results presented in Table 4.6 (p.46) in mind, one must question the effectiveness of these teachers' skills. Results presented in Table 4.2 (p.39) however, would seem to suggest that the respondents' use of strategies is in line with what would currently be considered effective behavior management.

The remainder of the respondents (34 percent) to this question have received training regarding general education (21 percent) and different learners (13 percent), training that is not aimed at dealing with youth with special behavioral needs but that could at the same time prove to be beneficial in some way. Training in general education covers a variety of issues, but in a superficial manner. Depending on the structure of the curriculum at the tertiary institution where such training was received, it is possible that a component of the course dealt with learner needs and behavior management. Training for dealing with different learners equips teachers to deal with learners who are different in some way (for example gifted, underachievers, special needs). It stands to reason that these respondents are at the very least aware of the context of learners and how each learner has a unique set of needs. This in itself may be beneficial to teachers working within this context.

**Table 4.8 Reasons as to why training was not received (See appendix C)**

<b>Reason</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
No training	28	36%
Education	27	35%
Availability	9	12%
Departmental	7	9%
Location	4	5%
Unnecessary	1	1%
Financial	1	1%
Time	1	1%

N=78

Forty percent of teachers in this study say they have never received training in how to deal with difficult behavior. The 71 respondents gave 78 reasons to explain this. Many of these teachers simply state that they have never received training in this regard (36 percent), offering no further reasons for this. Twenty-seven respondents believe that no provision has been made for this kind of training in the initial teacher training courses that they attended, and no further attempt at training has been made. A possible explanation for these teachers not having received further training is that nine of the respondents (12 percent) believe that such courses are not generally available, and can therefore not be attended. Similarly, nine percent of the respondents do not believe that the Department of Education offers such courses, further substantiating the lack of further training. Four of the respondents indicated that such training is not offered in the Limpopo Province and as such is not viable to attend, tying in with the respondents who had no time to attend such courses (one percent) or had no

money to attend (one percent). One respondent felt that such training was unimportant. These results therefore indicate that teachers may be willing and receptive of training in this regard, but that such courses need not only to be made available to them, but that they need to be accessible and well advertised in the teaching community of this province.

#### 4.6 THE POSSIBLE IMPACT TRAINING ON TEACHERS

Tables 4.9 to 4.11 explore the relationship between the presence of training in skills for dealing effectively with difficult behavior, and the actual impact this may have had on respondents in this study. Table 4.9 highlights the correlation between skills training for dealing with behavior problems and teachers' experience of learners presenting with difficult behavior.

**Table 4.9 The correlation between skills training and teacher attitudes towards learners**

Do you regard learners presenting with difficult behavior as:		Have you received training?	
		Yes	No
Irritating	Yes	60 (85%)	67 (62%)
	No	11 (16%)	41 (38%)
Frustrating	Yes	57 (80%)	66 (61%)
	No	14 (20%)	42 (39%)
Needy	Yes	65 (91%)	83 (77%)
	No	6 (9%)	25 (23%)
Disadvantaged	Yes	55 (77%)	56 (52%)
	No	16 (23%)	52 (48%)
Angering	Yes	57 (80%)	62 (57%)
	No	14 (20%)	46 (43%)
Challenging	Yes	67 (94%)	84 (78%)
	No	4 (6%)	24 (22%)

N=179

Results indicate that responses from teachers who have not received training are more evenly distributed than responses from teachers who have received training. 'Untrained' teachers do however seem to have a degree of understanding of learners, as seen in their responses to learners as needy (77 percent) and challenging (78 percent). These two categories are also the highest 'yes' scores for these teachers.

By contrast, most teachers who have received training regarding difficult behavior, regard learners presenting with such problems as irritating (85 percent), frustrating (80 percent),

needy (91 percent), disadvantaged (77 percent), angering (80 percent) and challenging (94 percent). The highest scores are however with needy (91 percent) and challenging (94 percent), indicating their understanding of these learners. The high incidence of the other emotions may be the result of personal frustrations at being unable to deal effectively with these youths.

Table 4.10 (p. 51) explores such a hypothesis further. By looking at the strategies used by teachers who have received training in skills to deal with learners presenting with difficult behavior, one may be better able to understand if teachers' emotions of anger and frustration filter through into their treatment of these learners. In the discussion of Table 4.2 (p.39), various skills aimed dealing with difficult behaviour were discussed. More specifically, these skills were grouped into categories in which they were considered to be either constructive, destructive or potentially either, depending on the way in which they were implemented. Table 4.10 reassess the use of these skills with regard to teachers who have received training in dealing with youth presenting with difficult behaviour.

This table shows that respondents who have received behaviour management training do make extensive use of strategies believed to be of a constructive nature, that is changing/rearranging seating (89 percent), talking to the learner (93 percent), removing the learner from the situation (83 percent), focusing on the problem as opposed to the learner (80 percent), playing problem solving games (83 percent), lowering voice (87 percent), and involving parents be either sending the letters (78 percent) or phoning them (93 percent). Similarly, these respondents use all behavioural management strategies highlighted as being destructive or unbeneficial minimally. Emotional abuse (34 percent), talking to the learner in a negative manner (six percent), shouting (16 percent), staring at the learner (23 percent), using physical/corporal punishment (18 percent), and involving the governing body (27 percent) all receive low scores. The fact that these teachers do make use of such strategies however, may be reflective of their immense stress levels as well as their need for additional support in dealing with overcrowded classes and children with high need levels.

**Table 4.10 Strategies used by trained teachers**

Strategy		Frequency	Percentage
Emotional abuse	Yes	24	34%
	No	47	66%
Talking to the learner in a negative manner	Yes	4	6%
	No	67	94%
Shouting	Yes	11	16%
	No	60	84%
Changing/rearrange seating	Yes	63	89%
	No	8	11%
Talk to the learner	Yes	66	93%
	No	5	7%
Remove the learner from the situation	Yes	59	83%
	No	12	17%
Send the learner out of class	Yes	57	80%
	No	14	20%
Focus on the problem as opposed to the child	Yes	57	80%
	No	14	20%
Play problem solving games with all the learners involved	Yes	59	83%
	No	12	17%
Lower voice	Yes	62	87%
	No	9	13%
Ignore the learner	Yes	54	76%
	No	17	24%
Send the learner to detention	Yes	7	10%
	No	64	90%
Keep the learner in during break or after school	Yes	59	83%
	No	12	17%
Give the learner cleaning duty	Yes	58	82%
	No	13	18%
Give the learner extra home work	Yes	11	16%
	No	60	84%
Use a red card system (as in soccer)	Yes	54	76%
	No	17	24%
Stare at the learner	Yes	16	23%
	No	55	76%
Physical/corporal punishment	Yes	13	18%
	No	58	82%
Phone parents of the learner	Yes	55	78%
	No	16	22%
Send letter to parents	Yes	66	93%
	No	5	7%
Send the learner to the principle	Yes	51	72%
	No	20	28%
Send the learner to the school psychologist or social worker	Yes	24	34%
	No	47	66%
Peer assessment of the learner	Yes	37	52%
	No	34	48%
Involve the governing body	Yes	19	27%
	No	52	73%

N=71

Finally, strategies that can be considered either negative or positive with regard to constructively dealing with youth with difficult behaviour are reported to varying degrees by those respondents, and may therefore warrant further discussion here. Strategies that are not commonly used by respondents include sending the learner to detention (10 percent), giving the learner extra homework (16 percent) and involving a school psychologist or social worker (34 percent). As previously stated (see p.43), culturally, involving a school psychologist or social worker is perceived negatively in communities in the Limpopo Province. It would make sense then that teachers refrain from doing this, as it may very well only serve to increase a learner's sense of discomfort and embarrassment. Conversely however, low scores to this question may also be reflective of the trend towards not relying entirely on mental health professionals in instances of children with behavioural problems, but rather bringing them in only when truly necessary. As such, this may explain the fact that this strategy, although low, is certainly occurring. The low scores for giving extra home work and sending learners to detention are perhaps reflective of a desire on the part of these teachers not to add to the pressures of their learners during after-school hours. Many of these teachers may be very aware of the realities confronting many of the children in their classes concerning their home environments and commitments there, and may realise that making use of these strategies will only compound the learner's anger and desperation. The scores of these two strategies perhaps help understand the high scores seen for keeping the learner in during break or after school (83 percent) and giving the learner cleaning duty (82 percent). Seeing as these teachers appear loath to invade on learners' after-school time, one can easily assume that both these strategies are used more during school hours. Furthermore, by considering the broader use of strategies, one can also deduce that when teachers do make use of these strategies, they do so in a gentle manner, proceeding with an explanation and discussion of why they have chosen to discipline the learner in this way. Again, although sending the learner out of the class (80 percent), or to the principle (72 percent), as well as ignoring the learner (76 percent) are all used extensively, one can deduce – based on the other scores – that these strategies are used in a constructive and creative manner, possibly aimed at removing the learner from the situation so as to 'cool' the learner down.

Most respondents view difficult learners presenting with difficult behaviour as challenging (84 percent) and needy (83 percent) (see Table 4.3, p.43, and Table 4.9 p.49). The final table explores the correlation between respondents' positive attitudes towards learners (that is

teachers who consider learners with behavioural problems as needy and challenging) and the strategies they use when dealing with such learners, when respondents *have* received training in this regard.

**Table 4.11 Frequency of strategies used by teachers who view learners as needy and challenging**

Strategy		Needy		Challenging	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Emotional abuse	Yes	54	36%	54	36%
	No	94	64%	97	64%
Talking to the learner in a negative manner	Yes	10	7%	11	7%
	No	138	93%	140	93%
Shouting	Yes	27	18%	28	19%
	No	121	82%	123	81%
Changing/rearrange seating	Yes	126	85%	131	87%
	No	22	15%	20	13%
Talk to the learner	Yes	131	89%	136	90%
	No	17	11%	15	10%
Remove the learner from the situation	Yes	117	79%	123	82%
	No	31	21%	28	18%
Send the learner out of class	Yes	108	73%	116	77%
	No	40	27%	35	23%
Focus on the problem as opposed to the child	Yes	119	80%	124	82%
	No	29	20%	27	18%
Play problem solving games with all the learners involved	Yes	114	77%	119	79%
	No	34	23%	32	21%
Lower voice	Yes	120	81%	127	84%
	No	28	19%	24	16%
Ignore the learner	Yes	103	70%	111	74%
	No	45	30%	40	26%
Send the learner to detention	Yes	13	9%	15	10%
	No	135	91%	136	90%
Keep the learner in during break or after school	Yes	112	76%	122	81%
	No	26	34%	29	19%
Give the learner cleaning duty	Yes	120	81%	125	83%
	No	28	19%	26	17%
Give the learner extra home work	Yes	37	25%	37	25%
	No	111	75%	114	75%
Use a red card system (as in soccer)	Yes	97	66%	104	69%
	No	51	34%	47	31%
Stare at the learner	Yes	31	21%	31	21%
	No	117	79%	120	79%
Physical/corporal punishment	Yes	16	11%	18	12%
	No	132	89%	133	88%
Phone parents of the learner	Yes	119	80%	124	82%
	No	29	20%	27	18%
Send letter to parents	Yes	131	89%	135	89%

	No	17	11%	16	11%
Send the learner to the principle	Yes	108	73%	110	73%
	No	40	27%	41	27%
Send the learner to the school psychologist or social worker	Yes	64	43%	65	43%
	No	84	57%	86	57%
Peer assessment of the learner	Yes	84	57%	87	58%
	No	64	43%	64	42%
Involve the governing body	Yes	44	30%	44	29%
	No	104	70%	107	71%
N=148			N=151		

Most teachers who view learners as needy or challenging prefer not to use the strategies highlighted in Table 4.2 (p.39) as being less beneficial to learners (that is emotional abuse, talking to the learner in a negative manner, shouting, sending learner to detention, giving extra homework, corporal punishment and involving the governing body). This supports the findings in Table 4.2 (p.39) that most teachers consider these strategies as unhelpful, confusing learners, lowering self-esteem and compounding the crisis many learners already find themselves in.

Most respondents indicate their use of the more constructive strategies as discussed in Table 4.2 (p.39) (that is rearranging seating, talking to the learner, removing the learner from the situation, focusing on the problem, playing problem solving games, lowering voice, ignoring the learner, phoning parents and sending a letter to parents). This again supports the findings in Table 4.2 (p.39) where it would appear that teachers are mostly making use of more constructive strategies in dealing with learners with behaviour problems.

With regards to children who are perceived as needy, there are some strategies used by teachers that deserve special mention. Talking to a learner (89 percent) is crucial in attempting to understand the dynamics of a needy learner allowing both the teacher and the learner to clarify issues. This in turn helps the teacher to focus on the problem (80 percent) as opposed to the learner. This strategy is especially beneficial in that it does not compound the learner's sense of loss/lacking, but rather aids the learner in realising that her problems are external to her and therefore controllable. By playing problem-solving games with learners (77 percent) one is able to effectively teach pro-social skills to needy learners. This also allows a learner to explore ways in which to practically begin to deal with his problems. Many teachers also report involving the parents of children that they perceive as needy by either

phoning them (80 percent) or sending them a letter (89 percent). This strategy may be constructive if parents are involved in a positive manner where channels of communication between parents and child are opened and teachers help parents to meet learner's needs (Smit & Liebenberg, forthcoming).

These results again present the idea that training received thus far by teachers may be having a positive effect on their own classroom behaviour. There is however also a prevalence of teachers who report making use of strategies that are not necessarily beneficial to the learner, and may in fact have a negative impact on already troubled learners (these include sending the learner to principal, sending the learner out of the class, keeping the in learner during break or after school with cleaning duty). The high prevalence of such strategies does point to the need for further in-service teacher training.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The primary goal of this study has been to explore the attitude of teachers in the Limpopo Province, of South Africa, towards learners presenting with behavior problems in the classroom as well as the subsequent strategies they utilize. This goal was achieved through conducting a quantitative survey amongst primary school teachers in this region. A survey questionnaire (see appendix A) was administered to teachers which, once returned, was analyzed for difficult learner behavior encountered by the respondents, their attitudes towards learners presenting with behavior problems, strategies they use, and training received regarding the handling of such learners. In doing so, a description of the attitudes and strategies used by teachers towards the handling of learners with behavior problems in the classroom was established.

#### **5.2 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

Data gathered from this study was analyzed by means of SPSS using descriptive statistics. Through this, an attempt was made to assess the prevalent attitudes towards and strategies used with learners presenting with behavior problems as well as the impact of teacher training in this regard. It is reasonably safe to say that despite the high levels of behavioral problems present in the respondents' classrooms, most teachers attempt to deal with these issues in a contextual manner. Furthermore, those respondents who have received training would appear to be doing so more than those teachers who have not received training. It is important to note however, that teachers who have received training also report higher incidences of personal frustration, irritation and anger when dealing with these youths.

According to the literature, most teachers receive scant training or supervision for working with learners' adjustment disturbances (Luthar, 1999:62). The available literature has highlighted the important role of attitudes and strategies used by teachers when handling learners with behavior problems, as well as those that prove most beneficial to the learning

environment. Research findings in this study however show a very strong indication of negative attitudes exhibited by respondents. This is illustrated through teachers' own actions or reactions to various situations that openly invite further trouble. Lack of knowledge, and experience with learners presenting with behavior problems, as well as mainstreaming, also affects teacher attitudes. In addition, traditionally teachers have negative attitudes towards learners with difficult behavior. They often try to enforce obedience related to each and every personal or school regulation and soon discover that such efforts may alienate some learners (Jessup & Killey, 1971:48). It is therefore important for teachers to build sound positive attitudes towards learners with behavior problems. Teachers should be open and flexible in their responses to dealing with disruption in the classroom, and employ different strategies in the teaching situation so as to cover the variety of learners' needs dynamics in the classroom. Teacher's attitudes, motivation and feelings of responsibility towards their task of helping learners to reach their educational potential, whether they be teaching learners with special needs or not, form the crux of the matter (Davies, 1995:72). Good teachers, even though restricted by few resources and too many demands, find ways to provide more instruction and to provide it in adaptive ways (Davies, 1995:73).

The current study found that a wide range of difficult behaviors confront teachers, which due to conceptualized, underlying causes, require a high degree of understanding, and aptly suited responses. Respondents to the study indicate that they are making use of a wide variety of both positive and negative strategies to deal with behavior – the bulk of which would appear to be positive. Many teachers who have received training in how to deal with various learners and their behavior do seem to be making use of strategies suggested by the literature. It would also appear that many teachers are aware of the underlying dynamics of both children's development and their behavior.

This study has however, highlighted several important factors that need to be further explored and perhaps better understood. Although the study highlighted the shortcomings in the use of strategies by teachers who had not received training with regards to learners presenting with difficult behavior, it is in fact teachers who have received training that are experiencing higher levels of frustration, irritation and anger. The researcher hypothesizes that such levels of emotion are perhaps due to their understanding of learner needs, and their inability to effectively address these needs. It is suggested that this phenomenon be further explored.

### 5.3. SHORTCOMINGS OF THE STUDY

In addition to the finding of this study its own shortcomings must be highlighted. To begin with the response rate with regard to explanations as to why training was not received, is very low. Forty percent of respondents (see Table 4.8, p.48) give no further explanation at all. Further studies should explore this issue in order to better inform the provision of in-service training workshops. Face to face interviews may also alleviate some of the problems experienced with the response rate and the quality of responses.

The descriptive nature of this study is also problematic. It is difficult without any comparative data, to assess other regions in the Limpopo Province. It is hoped that this kind of study will be conducted on other regions so that such comparisons can be drawn in the future.

### 5.4. TOPICS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Despite its limitations, it is believed that this study begun to explore the current status of teacher attitudes and the related strategies when dealing with learners presenting with difficult behavior, as well as how these attitudes relate to recommended strategies in the literature. As such, the study may be seen as a starting point for teachers to identify and alter possible causes and consequences of negative attitudes and strategies, as well as a means for teachers to develop various teaching-learning methods that could benefit all learners in ordinary classrooms. It is not sufficient to deduce from the literature what the needs of learners and teachers are as well as what the possible strategies for dealing with learners presenting with difficult behavior may be. We know that educational problems are shaped by the specific contexts in which they develop. In this regard then, it is imperative to understand the specific context of in which teachers and learners find themselves in order to best provide for their needs. Certain encouraging and worrying trends are highlighted and the necessity of further and more focused research in this area has become even more apparent.

In addition to issues recommended above, future studies in this particular region of South Africa should further explore topics such as:

- The *perceptions* of teachers towards learners with behavior problems,
- The role and current status of parental support to difficult learners,

- The importance of peers to learners who exhibit behavior problems,
- The role the community in the life of such learners, and
- The attitude of teachers towards learners with behavior problems following in-service training.

## **5.5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

In agreement with existing literature (Davies, 1995), the following recommendations can be made:

It is important for teachers to be fully trained in order to deal effectively with learners presenting with difficult behavior. Teachers must therefore receive necessary training so as to love, help and accept such learners. Colleges of education and universities have a responsibility to produce knowledgeable teachers who possess positive attitudes and the required strategies, in order to have good attitudes of learners with behavior problems in the classroom situation.

Teachers may also need to update their qualifications by furthering their studies when applicable. In-service training is important for teachers in order to update their strategies and their attitudes towards learners with behavior problems. Workshops by education authorities should be conducted for teachers in the field so as to assist them to work out alternative and affective strategies – strategies that may need to be updated from time to time to suit their teaching conditions. Teachers should also attend workshops specifically designed for the purpose of becoming aware of prejudices or negative feelings towards learners with various special educational needs, where an opportunity could be provided for them to express and work through their feelings. The current study also highlights the crucial importance of making in service training available to teachers in rural regions such as the Limpopo Province Region Three. It is important to note however that such training should be made accessible by accounting for location, financial and time constraints.

Involving parents in the modification of behavior of the child is crucial. Parental support needs to be promoted by principals and teachers and parent-teacher-learner associations need to be encouraged. In a similar vein, it is also important to consider all the stakeholders in a

child's education. Attention should also be given to the attitudes of the other parties involved in mainstreaming, such as learners, parents and support service and professionals. The community and relevant NGO's should therefore also be incorporated when dealing with learners presenting with difficult behavior.

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**APPENDIX A:  
QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Participant number:**

--

<b>Question One: Which of the following difficult behaviors do you encounter with learners?</b>	
Stubborn	
Inappropriate use of body language	
Short-tempered	
Acting out	
Loud talking / shouting	
Aggression	
Domestic problems	
Concentration	
Not doing home work	
Not doing class work	
No parent involvement	
Back-chatting	
Fighting	
Swearing	
Coming late	
Loosing hand-outs	
Absent without reasons	
Disrespect (i.e. challenging authority; leaving the class unnecessarily; racism)	
Bullying	
Participation problems (i.e. Communication; listening skills; language; reading/writing; eye sight)	
Falling asleep in class	
Cultural differences	
Physical abuse	
Emotional abuse	
Sexual abuse	
Distracting / disruptive behavior in class	
Introvert behavior	
Playful	
Negative attitudes	
Calling names	
Not accepting responsibility	
Laughing at one another	
Greediness	
Peer pressure	
Laziness	
<b>Other:</b>	



**Do you have any comments regarding the above?**

<b>Question Four:</b> Have you ever received training with regards to dealing with learners with difficult behavior?	Yes	No
<b>If you answered yes to the above:</b> Where did the training take place? ..... When did the training occur? ..... Do you feel the training has benefited you? ..... Please elaborate on the training you received: ..... ..... ..... .....		
<b>If you answered no to the above:</b> Please elaborate as to why you believe you have never received training: ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... ..... .....		

**APPENDIX B:  
CODES OF RESULTS PRESENTED IN  
TABLE 7: TRAINING RECEIVED**

**Remedial:** teachers have had training in remedial education and one can therefore deduce this to be the basis of their approach to learners presenting with difficult behaviour

**Difficult:** teachers have had training specifically pertaining to learners presenting with difficult behaviour

**Different:** teachers have had training in how to deal with a variety of learners, include learners of different level for example gifted, underachiever & special need.

**Education for all:** implies that all learners are entitled to education and that nobody should be excluded on the ground of certain characteristics. Even if learners differ in some way or another from what we regarded as the “norm” they nevertheless have the same right to ordinary education as any other learners (Du Toit, 1997:3).

**Problems:** teachers are trained to deal with problem learners or learners with problems

**General:** teachers received some sort of general training whilst at college or university completing their teaching degree or diploma. It is important to note here however that many of the teachers who received such training highlight the fact that such training was very superficial, having little depth.

**Special needs:** Teachers have received training with regards to learners presenting with special needs – many of them point out that such training was very beneficial.

**UED:** University Education Diploma, covers the training of variety of learners.

**APPENDIX C:  
CODES OF RESULTS PRESENTED IN  
TABLE 8: WHY TRAINING WAS NOT RECEIVED**

- Unnecessary:** teachers do not view such training as being necessary or warranted.
- Location:** no training of this nature is offered at a geographical location near to these teachers
- Department:** the department of education does not offer such training (that these teachers are aware of).
- No training:** these teachers simply state that they have never received such training, and do not offer any reasons for this.
- Education:** no provision was made for this kind of training in initial teacher training courses that these teachers attended.
- Availability:** such courses are generally not available
- Financial:** this teacher has no money to attend such courses
- Time:** this teacher has no time to attend such courses