



## Educators' Management of the Learning Environment for Enhanced Teaching and Learning in Selected Primary Schools in the East London Education District, South Africa

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**ABSTRACT** The management of varying aspects of learning environments has been a source of concern for educators and other stakeholders, in the educational sector, recently. This paper aimed to investigate educators' management of learning environments for enhanced teaching and learning in selected primary schools. Using a triangulation methodology, a quantitative survey was administered to seventy-six participants, whilst qualitative interviews were conducted with five participants. Results indicate that educators giving instructions to learners in the classroom, is critical in ensuring discipline and productivity. Furthermore, learners' involvement in decision making concerning the procedures and approaches used in classrooms, is imperative for ensuring efficiency and productivity, in the learning environment. The paper concludes that including learners in both the techniques and methods utilized by educators in classrooms, is essential for improved educational outcomes. The paper recommends that educators should therefore adopt varied approaches in the management of the learning environment.

### INTRODUCTION

In South African schools, learners' ill-discipline is contributing to classroom management problems. Maphosa (2013) noted that understanding learners' defiance and the administrative concerns emanating from such, are grave matters, if schools are to be made a haven where conducive learning and teaching takes place. Further, teaching activities cannot be implemented in environments of fear, uncertainty and disruption (Maphosa 2013). Discipline in schools is therefore a crucial aspect of classroom management in any educational setting. A good study environment must therefore be adequately managed and devoid of distractions. Inadequate management of classrooms are said to lead to discipline issues amongst learners, low educational achievements, and unsatisfied educators and students (Jacob et al. 2004 cited in Padayachie 2013). However, educators' belief in managing the classroom is crucial to classroom management styles. In essence, educators should be able to empower their learners, as doing so will further enhance their own capacity as educators. Classroom management is an increasing

problem for teachers in primary schools (Temli-Durmus 2016). Maphosa and Mammen (2011) discovered that the problem of student defiance in schools has been a source of concern for stakeholders in education at both global and national levels. Teachers therefore need to understand why their learners behave the way they do. Effective management of teaching and learning in schools cannot take place in a vacuum, but rather in an environment structured to facilitate teaching and learning in the classroom (Okeke 2013).

For these reasons, teachers should create effective learning environments for teaching and learning. In this context, the concepts 'learning environment' and 'classroom management' are applied synonymously, to denote the educational setting. Despite the importance of classrooms in enhancing learning, most classrooms, particularly those in sub-Saharan African countries are poorly arranged, and situated in noisy and crowded environments. In addition to this, most teachers lack the basic skills to manage classrooms. A poorly coordinated classroom will lead to poor educational outcomes and impedes the establishment of positive learning environments (Egeberg et al. 2016; George et al. 2017). Educators who cannot handle the burning issues of indiscipline in the classroom are usually ineffective in classroom (Adeyemo 2012), this view is

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supported by Temli-Durmus (2016: 1950) who notes "learners cannot learn in chaotic and badly managed classrooms". Effective classroom managers should put in place the following: planned rules and procedures, efficient teaching of these rules to their learners, organization of teaching instructions to reduce learners' off-task behaviours, and effective communication of directions and expectations to learners in classrooms (Egeberg et al. 2016; Ersozlu and Cayci 2016; Sieberer-Nagler 2016).

Literature on learning environments has shown that low levels of communication between the teacher and the learner contribute to different undesirable behaviours in the classroom (Adeyemo 2012; Ersozlu and Cayci 2016). According to (Çetinkaya 2011 mentioned by Ersozlu and Cayci 2016: 149), "teachers' communication skills are vital characteristics in terms of the effectiveness of education and student success". From these offerings one can surmise that studies have shifted focus from the control of learner's behavior in the classroom, to the educator's ability to control the classroom (Adeyemo 2012; Egeberg et al. 2016; Sieberer-Nagler 2016). Of this process, Adeyemo (2012: 367) further states that "classroom teaching is a complex task, in a complex environment". This shows the need to be clear about how teachers manage the learning environment at a classroom level. The teacher, as a manager of the class, guides learners in learning and behavior. The teacher therefore controls the learning environment and leads learners to become successful individually, and as a group (Marashi and Nassab-Azizi 2018). This notion was mandated in the Norms and Standards for Educators 2000 (Government Gazette No. 20844) cited in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (2005). The policy describes the roles of educators, in a South African context, as follows

*Educators will mediate learning in a manner which is sensitive to the diverse needs of learners, including those with barriers to learning; construct learning environments that are appropriately contextualized and inspirational; and communicate effectively showing recognition of and respect for the differences of others. Educators must demonstrate sound knowledge of subject content and various principles, strategies and resources appropriate to teaching in a South African context*

To this effect, there is a need to examine how educators manage classroom activities. This study investigates educators' management of the learning setting for enhanced training and learning, in selected primary schools in the East London Education District, Eastern Cape Education Province, South Africa. The overarching goal of this paper is to provide knowledge that helps improve educators' management of the learning environment in South African schools.

### Objectives of the Study

While the broad objective of this study is to examine educators' management of learning environments for enhanced teaching and learning in primary schools, the specific objectives are:

1. Examine what educators consider important issues to manage, in a learning environment, in schools.
2. To know how educators manage the learning environment for enhanced teaching and learning in primary schools.

### Statement of the Problem

The Human Sciences Research Council 2005 cited in Modisaotsile (2012) discovered that in South African schools, close to 20 percent of educators abscond from schools twice a week. This increases further to 10 days by the end of the month. Furthermore, statistics show that educators in black dominated schools tutor for an average of three to five hours per day, in contrast with five to six hours per day, as observed in white schools (Modisaotsile 2012). This implies that teachers' readiness contributes to the poor management of classroom learning environments.

Studies based in the Eastern Cape Province reveal that the issue of overcrowding is a major problem, with similar findings being reported in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal (Marishane 2014; Modisaotsile 2012; National Policy for Equitable Provision of an enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment 2010). According to these statistics, between 40 percent and 75 percent of teachers' instructional time in classrooms is spent on other activities outside of teaching, while only 17 percent of learners' time in the classroom is devoted to academic

activities. This indicates that a normal intermediate class spends an average of 38 minutes of every three hours on instructional time (National Policy for Equitable Provision of an enabling School Physical Teaching and Learning Environment 2010). The research study by (Akin et al. 2016 wrote in Adewumi and Adu, 2019: 157) also found that larger classes are noisier and more prone to pushing, crowding and hitting, all of which can negatively affect classroom management. This shows that classroom management problems remain a key issue in the schooling system. Such issues affect learners' rights to learn. For George et al. (2017) poor learning environments have posed serious problems in enhancing the teaching process and learners' performance in schools. A study conducted by Egeberg et al. (2016: 1) reported that "classroom management, which includes both instructional and behavioural management, is a major issue for teachers, school leaders, system administrators and the public". Moreover, (Lewis et al. 2008 cited in Postholm 2013) discovered that social behavioural issues in education environment embody some of the major indicators of teachers feeling uncomfortable in their work. Most importantly, classroom behavioural management problems, such as lack of attentiveness in classroom, and not following teachers' instructions, remain as serious management issues in a schooling environment. This contributes to inconducive learning environments, teacher readiness, misbehaviour in class, unnecessary disruptions by learners who have social problems such as parenting, inattentiveness and 'notice me' behavior (Modisaotsile 2012). The present paper therefore attempts to describe educators' management of learning environments for enhanced teaching and learning in selected primary schools in the East London Education District, Eastern Cape Province, South Africa.

### Research Questions

1. What do educators consider important issues to manage in a learning environment, in schools?
2. What informs educators on how they manage learning environments for enhanced teaching and learning?

### Literature Review

In recent years, several scholars have shared their views on what informs teachers in managing good classroom environments, in both the field of education and other areas of research. Egeberg et al. (2016) note that establishing expectations and teaching social skills by identifying and defining a small number of positively stated rules or agreements, ensuring that these are well taught, modeled, reviewed and supervised by the teacher, are some strategies for managing classroom behaviour. In addition, understanding young people and the standard of knowing their needs and underlying motivations for their behaviours, helps teachers adopt successful disciplinary and attitudinal approaches to classroom administration.

Similarly, (Bulger et al. 2002 cited in Sieberer-Nagler 2016: 165) maintain that, "teachers can begin to establish a positive learning environment by showing their passion for the subject matter, using learner names, reinforcing learner participation during class, and being active in moving among the students". Teachers are therefore expected to have adequate knowledge of the subjects to be taught in class. Nevertheless, the educator's understanding of subject content is not enough to ensure/establish that they will be effective, and that students will comprehend what has been taught in the classroom. Therefore, teachers must have an understanding of their learners' interests and styles of learning. Sieberer-Nagler (2016) further note that teachers must be able to deal with unexpected events and have the ability to control learner behaviour, using effective classroom management strategies, as effective classroom management and positive classroom climate construction are essential goals for all teachers. Akin et al. (2016) additional state that teachers should choose activities based on various difficulty levels for students. Also, the use of learner-centered activities, encouraged cooperation, support, and team spirit, establish a sincere and autonomous learning environment, respect for student ideas, builds relationships with them based on love and trust, and makes them active in the decision making processes about the class (Akin et al. 2016). All the aforementioned approaches will assist teachers to have a better classroom

learning environment. It is essential then that teachers make sure that all learners are engaged during lessons. This may assist teachers to be successful in the management of classrooms and students, as such an approach is crucial for the achievement of any and all stated objectives.

Postholm (2013) when presenting the issue of classroom administration, notes that the objective is divided into two. The first objective aims at establishing a conducive learning environment where learners can take part in meaningful learning. The other objective is that classroom administration adds to the students' social and moral upbringing. The major responsibilities of instructors at school is to establish learning chances for students, not to control learners (Postholm 2013). Moreover, Kayikci 2009; Osher et al. 2010 cited in Postholm (2013) explain that an educator's major responsibilities is to promote and ensure students' support in class actions; and that this is what organizes and creates life in the classroom. In this light, classroom management is geared towards creating conditions that involve the pupils in teaching activities. Thus, teacher attention should focus on the class as a group, and the direction and energy of the various activities that organise and guide collective action in the classroom.

Unal and Unal (2012) found that assigning responsibilities to students or giving them a choice to select their responsibilities also considers learners level of readiness and needs, in order to make modifications to the curriculum. Similarly, Barge (2014: 1) state that "teachers who establish classrooms that are caring, supportive, safe, challenging, and academically robust help to define positive learning environments". Kayikci (2009) contends that teachers should first understand learners' needs and the behavioural relationships related to these needs. Following this, teachers should provide good classroom management in order to manage the personal needs of students in the classroom (Celep 2002 stated in Kayikci 2009). Mupa and Chinoeka (2015) further suggest that educators should take it upon themselves to provide a school climate and culture that is consistent and fair, in the application of rules and regulations among their learners, as well as create warm and inviting classrooms.

## METHODOLOGY

Having reviewed the pertinent literature surrounding the topic of educator's management of classroom environments, the research methodology, methods and ethical considerations will now be presented.

### Research Design

The study adopted triangulation as the primary methodology, as the study adopted a mixed methods approach to describe intermediate phase educators' management of learning environments for enhanced teaching and learning in selected primary schools in the East London Education District, Eastern Cape Education Province, South Africa.

### Population/Sample/Sampling Technique

The sample for this study comprised of seventy-six intermediate phase educators selected from public and private primary schools within the East London Education District. The study participants were selected through stratified random sampling. The sampling techniques for the quantitative sample included probability sampling. Non-probability sampling was utilised to determine the qualitative sample (Teddlie and Tashakkori 2009). In order to establish the sample size, the Department of Basic Education, East London District was consulted. A number of 768 was confirmed as the total number of intermediate phase educators in the East London Education District for the year 2017. From this sample, 10 percent of the population were included in this study. It was further determined that there are (64) operational public ordinary primary schools, (9) ordinary combined schools, and (6) private schools in the East London Education District.

### Research Instruments

The following instruments were used for data collection: (i) quantitative structured questionnaires; (ii) qualitative semi structured interviews. This study utilised a self-made survey questionnaire entitled 'Educator Management of Learning Environments Structured Questionnaire (EMLESQ)' to collect data from (76) educators.

The questionnaire which comprises of two sections (A and B) were administered to the study participants. The research instrument included a 5-point rating scale from Strongly Agree (SA) to Disagree (D), representing a Likert type scale response anchor (Vagias 2006).

### Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness of Research Instruments

A draft copy of the research instruments was submitted to empirical research experts in the field of education management, prior to being administered to the study participants, in order to have stable results and to avoid making changes to the instruments. The validator effected necessary corrections on the draft copy before accepting it as suitable for further procedures. To ensure consistency of the research instruments, the Cronbach alpha, based on the seven inter-items was used to test the reliability of the instrument. This test yielded 0.5 reliability. A statistical method was further used to calculate the Cronbach alpha coefficient to assess the internal consistency of the various question items encompassed in the questionnaire (Mitchell and Jolley 2004). The trustworthiness of the qualitative data was maintained by ascertaining the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the data collected.

### Data Administration and Analysis

The quantitative questionnaires were distributed to 76 intermediate phase teachers in both

public and private primary schools. Tape-recorded interviews were conducted with 5 heads of intermediate phase educators (selected within the study population). For the quantitative data analysis, the Scientific Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 2.4, was used to analyse both descriptive and inferential statistics. For the qualitative data analysis, the interviews were transcribed, and a thematic analysis was used to analyse narratives of the participants.

## RESULTS

This study described educators' management of the learning environment for enhanced teaching and learning in selected public and private primary schools in the East London Education District, Eastern Cape Education Province, South Africa. Seventy-six intermediate phase educators were included in the study sample. A structured questionnaire and semi-structured interview were used as the research instruments.

### Data Presentation and Analysis

#### *a) What do educators consider as important issues to manage in a learning environment in schools?*

Educators' perceptions regarding the importance of giving instructions to learners is shown in Table 1. From this information it is clear that almost all participants 96 percent considered giving instructions to students/pupils on what needs to/should be done in the classroom, as

**Table 1: Educators' perceptions of the importance of giving instructions to learners**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Not important</i>	<i>Slightly important</i>	<i>Somewhat important</i>	<i>Moderately important</i>	<i>Extremely important</i>
Giving instructions to the students/pupils on what need/should to be done in the classroom.	2 (2.6)	1 (1.3)	0 (0)	7 (9.2)	66 (86.8)
Giving information to the students/pupils about the disciplinary rules and regulations of the classrooms.	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (2.6)	6 (7.9)	68 (89.5)
Giving directives to the students/pupils on what should be discussed in the classrooms so that they will not make a noise.	2 (2.7)	2 (2.7)	4 (5.3)	28 (37.3)	39 (52.0)
Warning students/pupils on when to start writing or copying notes during the lesson periods so \ that they will not lose focus.	1 (1.3)	3 (3.9)	6 (7.9)	26 (34.2)	40 (52.6)
Giving instructions on how to submit assignments quietly and peacefully without disturbing the classroom and other students.	1 (1.3)	0 (0)	5 (6.7)	19 (25.3)	50 (66.7)

important. Similarly, almost all educators 97.4 percent agreed that giving information to students/pupils about the corrective code of conduct, utilised to guide behavior, is important for classroom management. Moreover, 89.3 percent of participants also agreed that giving directives to students/pupils on what should be discussed in the classroom, so that they will not make a noise, is essential. In the same vein, a higher percentage of participants 86.8 percent agreed that warning students/pupils on when to start writing or copying notes during the lesson/periods so that they will not lose focus, is important. Moreover, almost all participants 92 percent agreed that giving instructions on how to submit assignments quietly and peacefully without disturbing the classroom and other students, can impact classroom behaviour.

The findings revealed that the majority of participants agreed that giving instructions to students/pupils is fundamental in classroom management. This is understandable in that one of the roles of an educator is to give instructions to his/her students/pupils in class in order to ensure effective learning. This finding from the quantitative data agreed with findings from the qualitative data. For instance, participant CP expressed:

*Routines, boundaries and discipline are important; all these must be in place in the classroom. At the beginning of the term, when learners are entering the classroom, we set the classroom rules together. Learners coming to your class, they know the rules, boundaries and routines, then, I do not have a problem. So, I make sure that my learners' lineup [sic] and I read the classroom rules and routines to them before they come into classroom, that is, very important. If I do not start it from out of the classroom, learner bad behavior will channel into the classroom.*

In addition, participant GC corroborated the above position, as seen below:

*In the beginning of the morning, I established authority straight away, but I greet my learners and hug them as well (those that wish to hug to do so) ... So I think creating an environment with clear instructions and expectations before learning starts is important. I set clear boundaries on what will be allowed in*

*class. In that way I give time limits to tasks in order to use time productively.*

In summary, findings from both quantitative and qualitative data revealed that giving instructions to students/pupils by educators in the classroom is critical in ensuring discipline and productivity in the classroom. In order to avoid rowdiness in the classroom, educators must set classroom rules and ensure that the learners follow these rules strictly. Failure to set rules and ensure that learners follow classroom rules might be counter-productive to the learning process.

***b) What informs educators' on how they manage the learning environment for enhanced teaching and learning?***

Educators' perceptions of approaches to learning environment management for enhanced teaching and learning in schools are presented in Table 2. From the table, it is clear that almost all participants 93.3 percent agreed that using different engagement methods and providing numerous engagement chances during lessons are important for enhanced teaching and learning. Almost all participants 92 percent further agreed that adopting different student-focus instructional methods is central for enhanced teaching and learning, in schools.

The overwhelming majority of participants 86.5 percent agreed that using several systems to recognize expected behaviour (such as teacher's reactions, group eventualities, behaviour contracts, or token systems) is important for enhanced teaching and learning in schools. The majority of participants 85.4 percent further agreed that learning how to pronounce the names of students/pupils correctly is important for enhanced teaching and learning. The majority of participants 70 percent agreed that using clear-cut activities to learn about pupils and their cultural upbringings is important for enhanced teaching and learning.

Moreover, 78.6 percent of participants agreed that communication with learners/families before school starts, and continued frequent contact is important for enhanced teaching and learning in schools. The majority of participants 89.3 percent agreed that treating and speaking to students/pupils with self-worth and respect when providing corrections is important for enhanced

**Table 2: Educators' perceptions of approaches to learning environment management for enhanced teaching and learning in schools**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Strongly agreed</i>	<i>Agreed</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Disagreed</i>	<i>Strongly disagreed</i>
Using varied engagement techniques and providing multiple engagement opportunities during lesson period is important for enhanced teaching and learning	40 (53.3)	30 (40.0)	1 (1.3)	0 (0)	4 (5.3)
Adopting a variety of student centered instructional strategies (such as cooperative learning, critical thinking skills, culturally responsive teaching, and differentiated instruction) is important for enhanced teaching and learning	42 (56.0)	27 (36.0)	2 (2.7)	0 (0)	4 (5.3)
Positive interactions with every student/pupil for at least 2-3 times per hour on average is important for enhanced teaching and learning	14 (19.4)	33 (45.8)	18 (25.0)	4 (5.6)	3 (4.2)
Using multiple systems to acknowledge expected behaviour (such as teacher's reactions, group contingencies, behaviour contracts, or token systems) is important for enhanced teaching and learning	26 (35.1)	38 (51.4)	6 (8.1)	2 (2.7)	2 (2.7)
Learning how to pronounce the names of students/pupils correctly is important for enhanced teaching and learning	35 (46.7)	29 (38.7)	4 (5.3)	5 (6.7)	2 (2.7)
Using explicit activities to learn about students/pupils and their cultural backgrounds is important for enhanced teaching and learning	21 (28.0)	36 (48.0)	9 (12.0)	8 (10.7)	1 (1.3)
Communication with students/pupils/families before school starts and continue frequent contact is important for enhanced teaching and learning	25 (33.3)	34 (45.3)	10 (13.3)	4 (5.3)	2 (2.7)
Treating and speaking to students/pupils with dignity and respect—even when providing correction is important for enhanced teaching and learning	51 (68.0)	16 (21.3)	2 (2.7)	3 (4.0)	3 (4.0)
Providing students/pupils with self-control and self-monitoring strategies is important for enhanced teaching and learning	36 (48.6)	29 (39.2)	4 (5.4)	1 (1.4)	4 (5.4)
Providing specific activities for students/pupils to get to know one another and solve problems collaboratively is important for enhanced teaching and learning	23 (30.7)	34 (45.3)	11 (14.7)	5 (6.7)	2 (2.7)

teaching and learning. In addition, the majority of the participants 87.8 percent agreed that providing students/pupils with self-control and self-monitoring strategies is important for enhanced teaching and learning. Further, 76 percent of the participants agreed that giving specific events for learners to knowing one another and solving classroom issues collaboratively is important for enhanced teaching and learning. 65.2 percent of the participants agreed that positive interactions with each student/pupil, at least 2-3 times per hour, on average, is important for enhanced

teaching and learning, while 25 percent of participants were uncertain.

The below findings relate to the qualitative data obtained during the interviews. For instance, participant (GC) stressed that classroom strategies should be adopted every year because of the varying needs of learners every year. Each year, schools admit new students with different needs from those already enrolled. Thus, approaches to learning environments need to be reviewed and adjusted each year. However, as the participant noted, these approaches must be aligned with the code of conduct of the school.

*For example, in my class I teach Language. Also, in language class, I get the opportunity for pair work (dialogue). So, it all depends on the subject I am teaching, as this determines how I will have a lay out of my classroom. The factors that influence my class are size, age, and social background of the learners. Thus, I have to put desks and ensure free movement in between. So, I end up focusing on the individual work as there, may not be enough time to focus on group work because there are so many learners in my class. All these inhibit my approach to classroom management. If I found out the behavior problem is so problematic, my approach is a bit different from other lessons. To prevent the problem, I have a worksheet ready for when I will be going out to make copies.*

In the same vein, participant (SC) expressed that the same approaches or strategies should not be utilised all the time as learners might get bored. The participant emphasized that educators should learn how to change their approaches and strategies to classroom management so that they would not become monotonous to the learners. The participant stated that:

*I have to change my teaching methods on a constant basis; I have to change my reward system and change how I discipline them because they are growing. Sticker chat might be fun at the beginning of the term but they might get bored at the end of the term because of the age group they are now in.*

From the quantitative data it was established that involving learners in decision-making revolving around the procedures, approaches and strategies to classroom management are fundamental for ensuring efficient and productive classrooms. For instance, creating a peaceful working atmosphere with the learners, by meaningfully engaging them in the classroom is considered by the interviewees to be efficient. The qualitative data further revealed that teachers should adopt varied approaches in the management of the classroom, as an approach that works for one teacher/learner may not work for another teacher/learner. In addition, teachers should ensure that their approaches or strategies to classrooms are constantly reviewed and aligned with the school's code of conduct.

## DISCUSSION

This paper found that giving instructions to students/pupils by educators in the classroom is critical in ensuring discipline and productivity. The analysis revealed it is the responsibility of the teacher to manage and facilitate instructions. This coincides with the work of Akin et al. (2016), who maintain that teachers that consider the physical setting of the classroom, include planning for the first days, motivation, rules and routines, as well as coping with learner misbehaviors, and establishing teacher-parent cooperation, are all essential in enhancing teaching and learning in classroom. The authors argue that teachers should respond to the needs of learners with special needs, such needs include transferred or inclusive learners. Their paper concludes that "classroom management is not perceived as a way of strictly controlling the learners; rather teachers attribute quite positive meanings to it" (Akin et al. 2016). This study is also in line with the findings of Egeberg et al. (2016) who note that understanding students in a classroom is key in addressing their peculiar behaviours and ensuring efficient management of the classroom environment. Similarly, Teyfur and Celikten (2008) cited in Kayikci (2009) observed that in a "classroom environment where there are no rules, teachers fail to control the class and to manage time, and as a result of mismanagement unproductive learning environments emerge". Moreover, Bulger et al. 2002 quoted in Sieberer-Nagler (2016) stated that "teachers can begin to establish a positive learning environment by showing their passion for the subject matter, using learner names, reinforcing learner participation during class, and being active in moving among the students". Austin and Omomia (2014) revealed that good classroom management does not guarantee effective instruction; it only establishes the environmental context that makes good instructions possible.

This paper established that inspecting classrooms is essential to ensuring that learners actively participate in classroom activities. The results revealed that educators should be in total control of the classroom, this is achievable through conscious inspection of classroom activities. In addition, the narratives of the above



participants indicated that a well-inspected class would be more productive in terms of the achievements of both the learners and the teachers. This is in line with the argument of Djigic and Stojiljkovic (2011) that highlighted three broad dimensions that teachers should consider important. These dimensions include instructional management, people management, and behaviour management.

It can be inferred that inspecting students involves three dimensions, these include people, material and environment. Based on the position of Djigic and Stojiljkovic (2011), inspection entails activities such as establishing daily procedures, monitoring seatwork, monitoring students' independent work, and allocating materials. In the same vein, George et al. (2017) opined that teachers should consider moving around the classroom, to ensure that learners are actively participating in learning activities as they are very important in the management of classrooms.

This paper found that appointing learners to clean the board, as timekeepers, to write down the names of noise makers, and latecomers, were all not considered by participants as important interpersonal techniques in classroom management. The participants perhaps thought that these activities were not directly related to learning in the classroom, even though they are also classroom activities. The majority of participants considered the following as important interpersonal activities in the classroom: the provision of academic support for struggling learners, the provision of emotional support for learners who are in need of emotional support, or disturbed learners, as well as understanding the personality and mental capacity of each of the learners in the classroom.

Such findings correlate with those of Bru et al. (2002) as noted by Djigic and Stojiljkovic (2011), who found that teachers must consider the following when managing the learning environment of the classroom: providing academic support, providing emotional support and conflict-management in the classroom (see also Barge 2014; Ersozlu and Cayci 2016; Sieberer-Nagler 2016). Assertions such as these, are consonant with Glasser's (1998) Choice Theory, which was incorporated in this study. The theory suggests that the emotional and academic

requirements of learners must be attained in order to avoid disruptive behaviour. Emotional and academic needs of the students could be addressed by giving them the space to make reasonable decisions and choices about themselves.

## CONCLUSION

This paper concludes that involving learners in decision-making regarding the procedures, approaches and strategies to classroom management, are fundamental for ensuring efficient and productive classrooms. It is important for educators to always include learners along in any approach or procedure to be adopted in the learning environment, as an approach that works for one teacher/learner may not work for another teacher/learner. Hence, to achieve a better educational outcome in the learning environment, both teachers and learners must be involved in decision making. Another critical conclusion from the paper is that teachers should adopt less punitive approaches rather than adopting corporal punishment or more punitive discipline approaches in the classroom.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

This paper recommends that educators should focus on the provision of multiple engagement opportunities during lesson periods and the adoption of several student-centered instructional methods which include collaborative learning, critical thinking skills, traditionally responsive education and differentiated teaching. Teachers should also adopt positive interactions with every student/pupil, at least 2-3 times per hour, for enhanced teaching and learning. In addition, educators should use of different methods and strategies to command expected behaviour (such as educator's reactions, or group possibilities) for enhanced teaching and learning. Lastly, teachers should treat and talk to learners with respect and dignity when trying to correct them.

## LIMITATIONS

Though this study looks at educators' management of learning environment at but it only

focuses on intermediate phase educators. Given this fact, the intermediate phase could not be used as a yardstick for measuring educators' management of learning environment. Therefore, there is the need for future study to focus on other phases such as foundation phase and senior phase in determining how educators manage learning environment for effective teaching and learning at the classrooms.

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