

Maintaining Discipline: How Do Learners View the Way Teachers Operate in South African Schools?

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ABSTRACT The study is part of a larger study on the management of learner indiscipline in schools. The study sought to establish learners' views on the most frequent disciplinary measures instituted against them for minor and major forms of indiscipline committed in South African schools. The study followed a descriptive survey design and made use of a combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. The study used 280 learners selected from 15 independent schools in Mthatha district in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. Data were collected from selected students through a semi-structured questionnaire and interviews. The SPSS statistical package version 17 was used to analyze the quantitative data. Qualitative data were analysed through content analysis as emerging key issues led to themes that guided analysis. The study found that from the learners' point of view, teachers mostly employed punitive disciplinary measures when dealing with student indiscipline in schools and measures such as verbal reprimands, talking to students, kneeling on the floor, corporal punishment and sending learners out of class for minor forms of indiscipline whereas talking to learners, guidance and counseling, suspension and detention were frequently used to deal with major forms of indiscipline. The study also found that teachers still viewed disciplining learners as synonymous to punishing them. The study recommends the establishment of staff development workshops to equip teachers with skills to embrace supportive, proactive and cooperative disciplinary measures when dealing with learner indiscipline.