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SCHOOL AND THE COMMUNITY: MANAGING DISRUPTIVE LEARNER BEHAVIOUR IN RURAL LEARNING ECOLOGIES

ABSTRACT

Managing disruptive learner behaviour has for many years been a matter of concern to school administrators, teachers and parents. In Zimbabwe, teaching and learning processes have been affected by serious interference that has adversely affected the learners and the teachers. The research question addressed in this study relates to the strategies that can be utilised by communities and schools with a view of managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural learning ecologies. To answer the research question, we used a participatory action research design. This community-based qualitative study was underpinned by the critical consciousness concept that can be described as central to the application of critical thinking. Data were generated utilising focus-group discussions and reflective narratives with teachers and parents and analysed following Fairclough's (1992) critical discourse analysis. The findings suggest that disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools could potentially be managed through parental involvement, the use of problem-solving approaches, learner participation in all school programmes and the antecedent-behaviour-consequence approach. The study concluded that disruptive learner behaviour should be properly managed within and out of school to achieve meaningful teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Disruptive learner behaviour; rural school; critical consciousness; community; participatory action research.*

1. INTRODUCTORY BACKGROUND

The management of learner behaviour that disrupts school activities and causes unsettlement in teaching and learning processes has for many years been a cause for concern to school administrators, teachers and parents (Anuradha & Pushkala, 2020). Marais and Meier (2010) explain that the roots of such factors lie in social systems in which learners are directly influenced by the acts of significant others such as the school, the family, the media, their peers and the community at large. This is in line with Bandura's triadic reciprocal determinism in terms of which the individual, the environment and behaviour all influence one another (Santrock, 2010).

Disruptive learner behaviour is a multifaceted, multidimensional challenge that results from several factors (Belle, 2017; Gutuza & Mapolisa, 2015). Disruptive behaviour such as fighting, disrespect, bullying, theft, the use of foul language, the disturbance of classroom activities and vandalism may be a barrier to effective teaching and learning and such behaviour have increasingly been observed in some schools in Southern African countries following the abolition of corporal punishment as a strategy with which to manage the disruptive behaviour of learners (Banda & Mweemba, 2016; Marais & Meier, 2010; Sun & Shek, 2012). As a result, one of the challenges faced by educational institutions is the inability of most teachers to deal effectively with learners who have behavioural problems. Poor behaviour exhibited by learners induces stress and requires teachers to spend much of their time and energy trying to manage the classes they teach (Sun & Shek, 2012). Researchers argue that initial teacher education does not prepare the many prospective rural teachers to deal with disruptive learner behaviour (Anuradha & Pushkala, 2020). In rural learning ecologies, we observed (informally) that teachers and other learners spend a disproportionate amount of teaching time addressing disturbing behaviour, thereby losing time for teaching and learning. Informal discussions with teachers in different Zimbabwean rural learning ecologies have revealed that similar learner behavioural challenges are experienced that negatively affect the teaching and learning processes. The following section focuses on a deeper exploration of disruptive learner behaviour.

2. DISRUPTIVE LEARNER BEHAVIOUR

Disruptive learner behaviour is defined as disorders in the environment that departs or deviates from normal or expected behaviour and brings about disharmony (Sibanda & Mpofu, 2017; McKevitt *et al.,* 2012) and does not permit learning to proceed smoothly and productively (Kerr & Nelson, 2010; Bulotsky-Shearer *et al.,* 2011). In this regard, disruptive learner behaviour can be said to be a state or condition (not limited to the classroom) that prevents the teacher and the learners from freely engaging in teaching and learning. Mafa *et al.* (2013) construe that it (disruptive behaviour) is conduct in teaching spaces and outside the classroom; hence, it causes teaching and learning to become ineffective. On the other hand, Etonge (2014) fittingly enlightened that disruptive learner behaviour helps teachers to identify approaches to deal with such behaviour in the classroom. Therefore, we argue that, disruptive learner behaviour is also a catalyst for appropriate methods to promote sustainable learning for all learners.

Considering the above, severe disciplinary problems have been observed in African countries. South African schools, for example observed disruptive learner behaviour since the abolition of corporal punishment (Marais & Meier, 2010). Banda and Mweemba (2016) found that in Zambia considerable time meant for teaching and learning was largely wasted because disruptive behaviour had to be addressed. In the Zimbabwean context, high levels of disruptive learner behaviour were reported in secondary schools in the Gweru District (Gudyanga, Matamba & Gudyanga, 2014), such include bullying, physical fights, lying and truancy. The incidence of behavioural challenges among adolescent learners is difficult to establish since many of the incidents are not reported, especially in rural schools (Gudyanga, Nyamande & Wadesango, 2013). Furthermore, there is a paucity of evidence as to what measures have been adopted to address such behaviour, and the means adopted to empower learners with a view to improving the teaching and learning outcomes.

In Zimbabwe, Director's Circular P35 (2018) issued by the Ministry of Education emphasises the use of expulsion, suspension and exclusion as the chosen strategy for managing disruptive learner behaviour in schools. However, expulsion, suspension or exclusion of learners from school and the use of other forms of punishment are not viewed as lasting solutions to curbing disruptive behaviour. They can rather perpetuate incidents and practices of social injustice. The circular further explains that learners who misbehave in school should not be subjected to corporal punishment but should be expelled from school. However, as Welch and Payne (2011) observe, learners who are expelled remain a danger to others in society. Expelling learners from schools based on their unrestrained behaviour is an act that perpetuates exclusion, oppression and constitutes a violation of the right to education for all. This is confirmed in Save the Children (2017), in which it is noted that most countries emphasise that children's rights are human rights. This has led to the abolition of corporal punishment in schools.

The school community comprising teachers, classroom managers, other learners, the administration, the School Development Committee (SDC), the disciplinary committee and the non-teaching staff has a significant role to play in the causes or manifestation of learners' behaviour (Belle, 2017). Belle (2017) as well as Gutuza and Mapolisa (2015) identify disruptive learner behaviour as resulting from the following: (i) the physical environment of the classroom, that is, the type of furniture, how it is arranged and the size of the classroom itself; (ii) problems relating to teachers and teaching methods, for example, when the teacher does not effectively communicate his/her expectations for appropriate behaviour and fails to execute his/her duties appropriately; (iii) the existence of health issues, such as problems of an auditory or visual nature and other physical barriers to learning; (iv) the psychological environment in the classroom, which ranges from cultural diversity to learners' levels of maturity and learners who enjoy diverting the teacher's attention as well as emotional issues such as superiority, hostility and laziness.

Gutuza and Mapolisa (2015) maintain that one of the causes of disruptive learner behaviour may be attributable to neglect by parents or caregivers. When parents fail to spend time with their children, this neglect results in moral laxity. Such children do not recognise authority at home and display the same attitude at school where they tend to be disruptive in the classroom and in the community (Santrock, 2010). Allowing children too much leeway to make their own decisions or neglecting them can inculcate lawlessness and antisocial behaviour (Garcia & Santiago, 2017).

In this context, antisocial behaviour refers to actions that harm others or that lack consideration for the wellbeing of others (Gudyanga *et al*., 2014), and which thus violates the rights of others. Temitayo, Nayaya and Lukman (2013) advance the view that antisocial behaviour falls into three main categories, each depending on who is affected by it. These categories include personal antisocial behaviour when an individual targets a specific person or people; nuisance antisocial behaviour entails causing trouble or great suffering or annoyance to the entire school or neighbourhood community and environmental antisocial behaviour where a learner's actions affect the environment at large as in public spaces and buildings. Magwa and Ngara (2014) cite domestic violence, the use of weapons and drugs at home, divorce and remarriage as being additional to the major causes of disruptive behaviour among learners.

Secondary school learners are adolescents, a stage of life that is often stressful (Santrock, 2010). This compounds the necessity for people to work together in managing the behaviour of secondary school learners. Against this background, the next section focuses on approaches to manage disruptive learner behaviour.

3.   APPROACHES TO MANAGING DISRUPTIVE LEARNER BEHAVIOUR

Parent-family-community involvement is needed (Mathegka, 2016), which is crucial to address unruly behaviour among primary and secondary school learners. Parent-family-community involvement includes the following approaches to managing disruptive learner behaviour namely the antecedent-behaviour-consequence model, the problem-solving approach and learner participation. The antecedent-behaviour-consequence sequence is known as the three-term contingency or ABC model (Simovska, 2008). It is a tool that can help people to examine the behaviour they want to change, the triggers behind such behaviour and the impact these have on the maladaptive patterns. This means that the ABC model generates the information required by observing the events that occur within a learner's local environment. This involves tracing what happened before the behaviour occurred (Mathews, Holt & Arrambide, 2014), then observing the behaviour itself and its results.

Mathews *et al*. (2014) described the problem-solving approach (PSA) as a non-prescriptive strategy that helps the individual to understand and manage his/her own behaviour. A series of specific questions are posed to foster understanding of the nature, causes and consequences of the behaviour (Hart, 2013). In the current study, a combination of ABC and PSA was employed to empower all the participants to enable them to manage disruptive learner behaviour in rural learning ecologies.

Silo (2011) and Simovska (2008) duly noted that learner participation is one of the methods that can be useful in managing disruptive learner behaviour. Coupled with genuine participation, this is an active process that positively influences learning outcomes (Hart, 2013). This means that genuine participation allows learners to initiate and participate in decision making with adults such as teachers and parents, which encourages collaboration between learners, parents, teachers and other stakeholders in learning ecologies. Real participation enables learners to become more aware of their responsibilities through engagement in collaborative activities with people, including teachers and parents (Simovska, 2008). In this study, genuine participation among learners, parents and other stakeholders was promoted by identifying approaches relevant to the study and to the chosen methods of data generation.

Participating in teaching and learning practices creates awareness among learners of the causes of a particular problem (Hart, 2013) and of whom, how and what are affected by it. In this case, the research team carefully analysed sociocultural factors around learner participation to find solutions to the problem of learners with disruptive behaviour in a rural school context to enhance effective teaching and learning.

4.   CONCEPTUAL FRAMING OF THE STUDY

This study is underpinned by the concept of critical consciousness (CC), which we regard as a tradition of critical thinking. CC refers to the process by means of which individuals apply critical thinking skills to examine their current situations, develop a deeper understanding of their concrete reality, and to devise, implement and evaluate solutions to their problems (Fuchs & Mosco, 2012; Luter, Mitchell & Taylor, 2017). According to Dheram (2017), CC has

three levels of consciousness, namely intransitive, semi-transitive and critically transitive. Furthermore, Mthiyane (2015) maintain that the sole task of CC is to uncover certain interests that work within particular circumstances and then to cross-examine the acceptability and extent to which these interests are authentic in the service of equal opportunity and democracy. In view of this, we considered CC to be the best concept for exposing the emancipatory and empowering capabilities that teachers, parents and learners have at their disposal to devise varied strategies to benefit rural communities in their endeavours to manage disruptive behaviour in rural learning ecologies.

The lowest level of CC is the *intransitive* level. Here people agree to take their lives as they are, and the adjustments that may possibly occur in their lives give the impression of having resulted from magic or miracles (Luter *et al*., 2017). It appears as if communities in rural ecologies, including the learners displaying disruptive behaviour, often make no effort either to transform their situation or to find effective ways of dealing with disruptive learner behaviour. At this level, stakeholders tend to accept things as they are and do not address issues that directly or indirectly affect their communities. This study used CC to stimulate awareness of possible ways in which communities could collaboratively engage to enhance sustainable education.

According to Fuchs and Mosco (2012), *semi-transitive*, as the second level of consciousness, is regarded to be more innovative than the intransitive level. At the semi-transitive level, all stakeholders have power to change their circumstances rather than simply ignore them. We engaged all stakeholders interested in the education of learners to agree to identifying ways that could possibly assist in the positive management of disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools.

Critical transitive is the third level of consciousness. Individuals at this level of consciousness are considered to have capabilities to be aware of and to own their problems, and to view them as structural challenges (Luter *et al*., 2017). They can make meaningful connections between their problems and the social context. Notably, the people with this level of consciousness accept responsibility and reject the passive position. This, in its turn, leads to the good practice of engaging in dialogue rather than in polemics (Fuchs & Mosco, 2012). Critical consciousness does not however occur automatically (Freire, 1973). It requires collaborative action and plays an important role in creating a safe and conducive platform for conversations in which a school should be seen as part of the community and the community should be seen as having a voice in what happens in their families and in schools regarding disruptive learner behaviour.

5. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

In this study, we adopted participatory action research (PAR) as a design. Its relevance to the study is because PAR focuses on collective research and facilitates the full and equal participation of participants (Chidakwa; 2020), in the production and diffusion of new knowledge through open communication (Mencke, 2013). Moreso, Wood and Zuber-Skerritt (2013) testify that PAR may challenge inequality, lead to social change to the promotion of democracy. With the understanding of this, the cycles of PAR will be discussed under data generation methods and procedures.

This community-based research (CBR) qualitative study was underpropped by the critical emancipatory research (CER) paradigm. This was of great importance as it allowed us to

initiate action towards disruptive learner behaviour. Myende (2014) and Mthiyane (2015) affirm that CER aims to facilitate social transformation by empowering and emancipating members of society. The combination of PAR and CER made it easy to create good relationships with the participants, hence, we valued their views throughout the research process.

We acknowledge that CBR is context specific and it allows the research team to examine, in depth, the holistic nature of the contemporary phenomenon with the goals of educating and bringing about social change. Since the emphasis in CBR is that it provides educational outcomes that change the perceptions of people through a critical reflection on the research process, we engaged the community in this study (Noel, 2016; Wood, 2020; Wood & Zuber-Skerritt, 2013). The foundational principles of PAR and CBR ensured collaboration between community members and researchers. In our understanding of the aforementioned views, we acknowledge that this community-based project proposes freedom and transformation of the society in question through an interactive link between the research team members.

6. CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in one rural secondary school in the Bulilima District of Matabeleland, in the South Province of Zimbabwe. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012) suggest that researchers may use their own judgement when choosing people to participate in a qualitative study, therefore, nine participants were purposively selected. Two meetings of thirty minutes each were devoted to completing the selection process. The selection criteria included participants who either have been knowledgeable about or had to have experienced the phenomenon under scrutiny. The participants included two class teachers, one senior teacher and six parents (three being the parents of some of the learners who had exhibited disruptive behaviour and three were volunteers). In Table 1 below, the biographical details of the research team are presented.

Table 1:   Biographical details of the research team

Pseudonyms	Gender	Age group	Ethnic group	Designation	Level of education
Tom	M	35–45	Shona	Researcher	PhD
Sophie	F	45+	Zulu	Supervisor	PhD
Jenny	F	45+	Afrikaans	Supervisor	PhD
Participants					
Mafa	M	25–35	Shona	Class teacher	BEd student
Sango	M	45+	Kalanga	Class teacher	Diploma in Education
Matsu	F	25-35	Ndebele	Senior teacher	MEd student
Siwe	M	35-45	Ndebele	Parent	O-level
Wayo	F	45+	Ndebele	Parent	Form 2
Ndlela	F	35-45	Kalanga	Parent	O-level
Mathe	F	35-45	Kalanga	Parent	Grade 7
Gozo	M	45+	Shona	Parent	Diploma in Education
Mave	M	25-35	Ndebele	Parent	O-level

The next section details the data generation techniques employed in the study.

7. DATA GATHERING TECHNIQUES

The data generation methods used for this study were focus-group discussions (FGDs) and reflective narratives.

7.1 Focus-group discussions

A focus-group discussion (FGD) is a rapid-assessment, semi-structured data generation technique in which a purposively selected team of participants gather to discuss issues and reach consensus based on a list of key themes drawn up by the researcher (Goodall & Barnards, 2015). Mosavel and Oakar (2012) state that FGDs provide rich descriptions of processes, people's opinions and attitudes, and when combined with other data they offer a holistic picture of a particular phenomenon. Six different FGDs were conducted with parents and teachers (in separate groups) to promote free discussion and eliminate the influence of existing power relations (Escalada & Heong, 2014). The times of discussions, the venues for the meetings and permissions for audio-recording of the said meetings were confirmed in advance. Parents were comfortable to converse in isiNdebele during the discussions and the data were later transcribed and translated into English. Tom conducted all the discussions.

The focus-group process evolved in two cycles that followed the four steps of PAR, namely problem identification, investigation, action and making meaning (Chevalier & Buckles, 2013). The first cycle comprised four sessions and the second cycle had two sessions. The duration of all the sessions was between thirty and forty-five minutes each. This was to make sure that participants' attention span was not stretched, since Mthiyane (2015) indicates that for the FGDs to be meaningful, they should not be too long.

Cycle 1

This cycle involved problem identification and the investigation steps. In the first meeting, we commenced with the assumption that disruptive behaviour was a challenge that needed to be dealt with in schools in general. In the problem-identification phase, all participants identified the challenges they wanted to resolve and also the consequences of the identified problems (Goodall & Barnard, 2015).

During the second step, the research participants were divided into two groups (one consisting of teachers and the other of parents) to enable them to delve deeper into the identified problems while also providing them the flexibility to talk about their own problems in confidence. This step enabled participants to understand the needs of all stakeholders and the methods that could be used to discover more about the identified problems and to address the risks related to them.

Cycle 2

This cycle combined steps 3 and 4. All the participants came together to analyse data so that they could devise collaborative solutions and plan a way forward for dealing with the phenomenon.

Step three was very important since action was taken. Goodall and Barnard (2015) state that, in this phase, the participants identify appropriate action to address the problem and reflect carefully on the whole process.

The fourth step involves making meaning. This refers to the process whereby the research participants capture, interpret and understand the group's experiences (Creswell, 2012).

7.2 Narratives

According to Ferrah (2012), a reflective narrative facilitates critical and analytical thinking. In this study, reflective narratives were used to enable the participants to reflect critically on the issue of managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural ecologies, to analyse the progress made during the FGDs and to establish how the participants felt about the views expressed during those meetings.

All the participants kept prepared booklets where they wrote reflective narratives throughout the research process to assist in validating the data from the FGDs. Mthiyane (2015: 158) maintains that "keeping a reflective narrative is useful in searching out evidence, reflecting on it while trying to find out meanings". This was achieved by drawing conclusions based on the evidence.

Keeping a record of one's experiences can also facilitate personal development (Ferrah, 2012). He further states that one does not know what one knows until one has written it down. Therefore, an opportunity to record textually the reflections of what the participants learned promoted a deeper understanding of the views raised in the meetings and the discussions and provided an opportunity for introspection.

8. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal approved the study. Permission for ethical clearance was also obtained from the Zimbabwean Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) and written consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary and participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity and adherence to non-maleficence principles (Gunawan, 2015). Issues of trustworthiness were ensured through credibility through the triangulation of data generation methods. Aspects of dependability, confirmability and transferability were also addressed. As researchers, we were aware that there was a potential for bias on our part that could have affected the outcome of the study. We thus ensured that we were objective and broad-minded in our thoughts and actions, and that we were sensitive to difficulties that we would encounter during the study.

9. DATA ANALYSIS

As already mentioned, data were generated by conducting FGDs with a group of teachers and with a group of parents, respectively. Each group also generated reflective narratives. Our discursive practice followed from PAR steps and mainly focused on the strategies that could be used to manage disruptive learner behaviour in rural learning ecologies. Notably, all the participants were involved in the practical analysis of the data. Thereafter, the main author and supervisors followed the three levels of critical discourse analysis (CDA) as identified by Fairclough (1992), namely (a) actual text, (b) discursive practice and (c) social context to analyse data from reflective narratives and that from transcribed and translated FGDs. In the analysis of actual spoken and written texts, we considered various aspects of textual analysis, for example, syntactical analysis and the use of metaphor and rhetorical devices (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Mthiyane (2015) maintains that discursive practice involves the interpretation of and the connection between the interaction and the text. In this study, textual analysis was applied to the reflective narratives and the transcripts of the FGDs. We applied the discursive practice to analyse texts from reflective narratives. Myende (2014: 92) states that, "…it is concerned with how text is produced and interpreted by participants, to interpret

the configuration of discourse practice". At the social-context level, the analyst is concerned with intertextual and interdiscursive elements and considers the broad societal currents within the specific setting of this study. During this stage, social issues (such as gender, power, culture, religion and politics) were discussed, described and explained including the influences regarding disruptive behaviour that people perceived as knowledge (Myende, 2014). We further deliberated on how these issues affected the constructions of and shifts in attitudes, and the manifestations of new knowledge. All these were helpful in terms of comprehending the norms, rules and beliefs followed in managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural school contexts.

In the focus-group discussions (FGDs) and reflective narratives, we discussed the possible ways that could be used to manage disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools. These are detailed in Table 2 below.

Table 2:   Emerging themes

THEME	THEME DISCRIPTION
1	Parental involvement is useful in managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural learning ecologies.
2	Utilising the problem-solving approach to manage disruptive learner behaviour
3	Employing learner participation to manage disruptive learner behaviour in schools
4	Utilising the antecedent-behaviour-consequence model may be beneficial in rural learning ecologies.

10. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Theme 1:   *Parental involvement is useful in managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools*

Most of the participants mentioned parental involvement as the basis for sound disruptive-learner behaviour-management in rural schools. According to Mathegka (2016), full participation of parents in school activities is important because it enables them to understand how their children behave and participate in teaching and learning processes. Teachers suggested some ways to be utilised to encourage parental involvement. Matsu stressed that

> … the first port of call is to make sure that the parents are involved in all the school activities so that they are aware of the challenges that the school is facing.

The teachers supported this view held by the parents:

> Parents have a great influence on the management of disruptive learner behaviour. Parental involvement is very critical in initiating good learner behaviour … So I think if parents can be fully involved in the learning of the learners, then it can be easy to monitor the way in which learners behave at school and out of school (Mafa).

While acknowledging some parents' participation, Sango felt it was not enough and said:

> Some parents, yes, are involved as they participate by assisting their children to do homework. However, I feel there is [a] need for them to take part in addressing the way their children behave.

Additionally, one parent (Mathe) uttered these sentiments:

> …kumele kubelendlela yokuthi abazali bafinyelele lokuphatheka emisebenzini yesikolweni kuqala, njengesibonelo kungasetshenziswa imidlalo … [… there must be ways that encourage parents to be reached and be involved in the school activities first, for example use of drama …]

Both teachers and parents acknowledged that managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools would be possible through parental involvement. The parents' responses demonstrate how committed they are to managing the behaviour of learners, which may lead to proper and effective teaching and learning in rural schools.

One of the parents wrote the following in the reflective journal:

> …umphathisikolo kumele asebenzisane labaphathi bezigaba ukuze kukuthazwe abazali ukuba bahlanganele ekuhlolisiseni indlela abafundi abaziphatha ngayo esikolweni lasemakhaya… [… the school Head should work closely with the village heads so that parents can be encouraged to be involved in monitoring the way learners behave at school and at home …]

The participants proposed that the parents be involved and work as a single entity in monitoring the learners' behaviour within and outside of school. In this way engaging parents, teachers, learners and other stakeholders in the community was perceived as a strategy that would change the way in which all perceive disruptive learner behaviour only if empowered to do so. This is confirmed in the CC concept that suggests that people gain an in-depth understanding of education when they are ensured autonomy from oppression (Fuchs & Mosco, 2012) and become part of the school community. Findings from the parents endorsed the importance of parental involvement in settings where the community is regarded as part of the particular school ecology and therefore given access in terms of managing and monitoring disruptive learner behaviour. This resonates with the principles of CBR and is key to the enhancement of sustainable learning. The same view is supported by Mathegka (2016) who argues that parents need to participate constructively in the school activities, which might lead to enhanced parent-family-community involvement. Importantly, the school should play a leading role in making parents understand the need for cooperation with the teachers and the school administration to manage the disruptive learner behaviour. This is in line with the PAR approach that emphasises collective research, in which the production of new knowledge is made possible by accessible communication (Mencke, 2013). In this way, the management of disruptive learner behaviour has the potential to improve relationships if it is initiated in rural learning ecologies.

Theme 2:   Utilising a problem-solving approach to manage disruptive learner behaviour

In their reflective journals the teacher participants highlighted the need to utilise a problem-solving approach in managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools. The following are some of their suggestions and ideas:

> I believe [the] problem-solving method is … practical oriented … Problem solving follow up the learner in the after learning … and works to solve existing problems (Mafa).

> … problem solving enhances critical thinking because by solving one problem the ability to solve a problem of a different nature is sustained (Sango).

> … problem solving is very significant to learners because it makes them to be able to self-direct themselves to learning …without any push from teacher neither from parent (Matsu).

The teachers suggested problem solving as a viable approach, viewing it as a practice-based approach that equips the learners with that knowledge and those skills that are useful in their lifetime. Additionally, the phrases: *"… follow up the learner in the after learning …"*, *"… enhances critical thinking … the ability to solve a problem of a different nature …"* are in support of Matsu who indicates that *"… [this] encourages learners to think independently"*. All these phrases serve to emphasise how important the problem-solving method is in managing disruptive learner behaviour. Therefore, we regarded problem solving to be one of the empowerment strategies that could be utilised in the rural schools because it was seen as leading learners to become independent critical thinkers. This is congruent with the conceptual framework used in this study (Luter *et al*., 2017).

Participants also considered the use of the problem-solving approach to be important because it gives learners autonomy and lessens micromanaging by the teachers and parents. Literature confirms that most teachers spend more time engaged in the demanding task of talking to learners at the expense of watching learners solve their own challenges (Hart, 2013; Lentfer & Franks, 2015). It is therefore believed that if a problem-solving approach is implemented effectively, it is sure to assist the monitoring and management of disruptive learner behaviour and will lead to a reduced "dependency syndrome", which will serve to help learners become independent. This view is consistent with the PAR design and with CC, which recommend that individuals in marginalised communities should be empowered so that they can free themselves of oppressive practices. This will result in self-development and sovereignty, and ultimately, ensure transformation and emancipation (Mthiyane, 2015).

We therefore regard PSA to be the bridge between the consciousness levels as deliberated in CC (Dheram, 2017: Luter *et al*., 2017) and moreover crucial for the management of disruptive learner behaviour in rural school contexts.

Theme 3:   *Employing learner participation to manage disruptive learner behaviour in schools*

During the focus-group discussions, most participants expressed the opinion that learners should be allowed to participate in the decision-making activities in the school as a way of managing their disruptive behaviour. Participants further explained that learner participation in decision-making activities may be useful in the following ways:

> … if learners can participate in planning … they can respect the rules…; … learners can be involved … and refrain from misbehaving; [and] … their participation might … ease the monitoring …

We understood these participants' suggestions to mean that learners should not be isolated during the formulation of strategies. Decisions should not be taken *"for"* them or *"about"* them, but all endeavours aimed at managing disruptive behaviour should be planned *"with"* them. The teachers' reflective journals highlighted the following:

> … disruptive learner behaviour can be dealt with in schools and at their homes, however adults ought to guide the learners' decisions … (Matsu)

In contrast, Mafa added:

> The issue of discipline is guided by certain policies from the government … I suggest
> learners should be involved in decision making at [the] national level.

The reflections from teachers indicate that they are aware of policies that guide teachers when effecting rules and regulations at school. Thus, their suggestion to allow learners to participate in decision making constitutes one of the ways to empower learners regarding these policies. We find this an innovative way to allow learners to become involved in drafting the policies regarding how disruptive learner behaviour may be addressed in schools and then in rural schools in particular.

This resonates with Silo (2011) and Simovska's (2008) observation that genuine participation has proved to be helpful in maintaining good learner behaviour observed in secondary schools in Botswana. This endorsement of the importance of learner participation proved to be among the effective ways that can be employed in the management of disruptive learner behaviour in rural ecologies. According to Hart (2013), teachers and parents should monitor and guide the learners' decisions when the learners participate. We also felt that while implementing learner participation as a means of managing disruptive learner behaviour, clear guidelines should be considered and discussed openly.

Theme 4:   The utilisation of the antecedent–behaviour–consequence model may prove beneficial in rural schools.

In their responses, participants identified the utilisation of the antecedent-behaviour-consequence (ABC) model as one of the effective methods with which to manage disruptive learner behaviour. One teacher had the following to say:

> … to understand what causes learners to violate the school rules, they should be aware
> of the effects … [so] that they can work positively to manage their disruptive behaviour
> … (Matsu)

We understood the expression to mean that in order to manage disruptive learner behaviour, some investigations should be made so that the causes of the behaviour are revealed. Once the causes of such behaviour have been revealed, the learners should be made aware of the consequences of the disruptive behaviour. Teachers believed this to be one of the positive ways to manage behaviour. Gozo expressed this view:

> … utsho kahle sibili nxa sifuna ukusuphuna isifo lesi kasibulaleni impande yakhona
> kuqala. […you are very right, if we want to uproot this disease, let's kill the roots first.]

The above views from parents were corroborated by the teachers. Their responses, *"… kill the roots first"*; and *"… show the learners the consequences …"* reflect the importance of knowing the causes of disruptive learner behaviour. The emphasis falls on raising learners' awareness of the consequences of their behaviour.

Drawing from the presented data, we deduce that it is fundamental to use the ABC model in managing disruptive learner behaviour in rural schools. These findings confirm what Simovska (2008) state about the usefulness of the ABC approach because of its focus on the recognition of the environment while assisting people to understand learners' behaviour and generating the required information concerning how certain behaviour occurs within learners' local environment. In this regard, participants emphasised that all stakeholders in rural

learning ecologies should identify the causes in these diverse contexts to provide learners with a thorough knowledge of the consequences of disruptive behaviour (Mathews *et al.,* 2014).

11. EMERGED LESSONS

Through this community-based study, we learnt the applicability in research and in learning of the African proverb, "it takes a village to raise a child". This is because the participatory collaboration between teachers and parents in the management of disruptive learner behaviour in rural learning ecologies seems to have yielded good results because it points to the different practical strategies that can be utilised to manage disruptive learner behaviour.

The study moreover proved to be of value to all involved. It alerted us to the danger of viewing disruptive behaviour as being only distractive when indeed it also has positive elements in education. This is so because having had to deal with the problem of disruptive behaviour, we were motivated to find proper strategies in collaboration with participants to be used in schools, strategies that do not harm teachers, parents, learners or the community at large and that can prove to be sustainable.

12. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This having been a qualitative study and its selection size having been small, findings cannot be generalised to a larger population. Although the data were generated from a community where participants were directly involved, we acknowledge that the devised strategies need to be evaluated by a larger and probably different population. Although the findings of the study may seem to be very useful in managing disruptive learner behaviour in schools, there is a need to practically utilise the strategies to be able to test their effectiveness.

13. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study emphasise the use of four methods in attempting to manage disruptive learner behaviour, particularly in rural schools. These methods are parental involvement, a problem-solving approach, learner participation and the antecedent-behaviour-consequence (ABC) model. These strategies may assist in curbing incidences of disruptive behaviour among learners to enhance meaningful teaching and learning particularly in rural school settings. Further suggested as one of the strategies to manage disruptive learner behaviour were collaborations in rural communities that are based on mutual respect. However, also flagged as one important factor to consider at the outset, is the creation or development of good relationships between the community members in implementing the identified strategies for managing disruptive learner behaviour. The study concludes that disruptive learner behaviour should be properly managed and ways to do so should be encouraged and learned. The other conclusion we made in this study is that the use of PAR in community-based research is crucial in bringing about "emancipation" from both sides (the community and the school). This is because PAR and CBR prompted participants to be hands on in the current study thus getting empowered and recognised as individuals who matter. Furthermore, the study concludes that equal participation leads to improved relationships between the school and parents resulting in improved academic performance from learners while sustainable education is enhanced and valued in rural communities.

Based on the findings and conclusions above we recommend that all stakeholders should be given an opportunity to think critically about challenging issues, sharing knowledge and to be listened to while their opinions are valued. This means that communities are empowered to collaboratively develop initiatives for what they love and protect (school community) in solving their own problems – respect for each other prevail and disruptive incidences cease to happen at school and at home. We further recommend a monitoring and evaluation study to be carried out to determine the applicability and feasibility of the strategies highlighted in this study to enhance effective teaching and learning.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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