Responsible Classroom Discipline

in Early Schooling

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ABSTRACT

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Responsible Classroom Discipline in Early Schooling

The study aims to find the causes of discipline problems and effective strategies that the teachers use in order to deal with these problems and to establish responsible classroom discipline in early schooling. The author employed a qualitative methodological approach consisting of participant observation in one classroom in a state primary school. The chosen classroom consisted of the teacher, the Learning Support Assistant and ten pupils, aged between six to seven years. While stating that the causes of discipline problems are diverse and many, the study identified several distinct reasons for misbehaviour to occur in class, being: adverse home circumstances, attention-seeking, avoidance of work, boredom and emotional problems. With regards to effective strategies, the study discusses several strategies which the teachers use not only to respond to behaviour and discipline problems but also to prevent these problems from occurring. Some of the strategies are: creating positive and supporting learning environments, planning interesting and motivating lessons, promoting positive behaviour by praising and giving rewards, using reprimands effectively, reasoning with pupils, teaching pupils self-discipline and self-control, being severe and consistent. The study suggests some modifications that could be made to the Code of Behaviour and Discipline in state primary schools. The author also gives some tips for teachers to prevent behaviour and discipline problems. A list of positively-phrased classroom rules for teachers to discuss with the young pupils and display in class is also provided.

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Keywords:

DISCIPLINE               CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT       EARLY SCHOOLING
TEACHER                  MISBEHAVIOUR             STRATEGIES
Author’s Declaration

I hereby declare that the presented dissertation is authentic. The whole study presented has been fully carried out by me. References made to the work of other authors have been duly acknowledged.

__________________________
Annalise Briffa
Dedication

To my parents

Mary Rose and Peter

towards whom I have much to be grateful for helping me and
guiding me on the right paths of discipline
Acknowledgements

Special thanks go to my Supervisor, Prof. Kenneth Wain, for the patient guidance, interest and encouragement throughout the course of this study. His advice guided me through the organization of the matter.

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Chapter One

Introduction
1.1 Subjects under Study

This dissertation deals with the topic of *Responsible Classroom Discipline in Early Schooling*. Specifically, this study attempts to find answers for the following research questions:

- What is classroom discipline?
- How can teachers establish responsible classroom discipline with young pupils?
- Why are self-discipline and self-control important?
- How is classroom discipline related to classroom management?
- Which are the main responsibilities of the classroom teacher?
- What are the causes of behaviour and discipline problems?
- How can teachers prevent behaviour and discipline problems?
- How do teachers tackle behaviour and discipline problems?
- What is the situation in Malta?
- What can be done to improve the discipline situation?

1.2 Reasons for Selecting this Topic

The theme of *Responsible Classroom Discipline* was selected because it is of a fundamental importance to any form of schooling, especially to early schooling. The basic concepts tackled by this dissertation are: Responsible Classroom Discipline, Classroom Management, Behaviour and Discipline Problems and Coping Strategies. Responsible Classroom Discipline refers to the understanding of the needs and goals expressed by both the teacher and the learners and thus, to the creation of a philosophy of teaching that responds to these needs. This dissertation recognises the fact that responsible classroom discipline involves the application of teaching strategies that facilitate optimal learning and
personal growth. The author tries to find the causes of behaviour and discipline problems in early schooling and how these can be controlled by the educators.

1.3 Methodology

The research for this study has been conducted through a qualitative methodology approach. The research involves direct participant observation of a year two classroom conducted in a state primary school.

The classroom observed consisted of the classroom teacher, ten pupils (aged between 6 – 7 years) and the Learning Support Assistant. The author thought that it would be more relevant to study one classroom in detail and get a clear picture of how discipline is established in this particular classroom. Furthermore, the author decided to study the chosen age group (year 2) because it is crucial that discipline starts from the early years. From a very young age, pupils need to learn the right way to do things in a classroom setting.

1.4 Contribution to the Existing Knowledge

The topic of classroom discipline has always received considerable attention since it is a crucial aspect of schooling. In recent years, teachers have become increasingly concerned about the issue of control within the classroom. The aim of this dissertation is to provide a critical contribution to the existing studies, analyse and come up with effective strategies for responsible classroom discipline. This work is mainly aimed to be used as a guide for teachers. It is aimed to assist teachers to understand the issues involved in responsible classroom discipline and to provide them with strategies for solving discipline problems but above all, for preventing discipline problems before they occur. In addition, this dissertation can also be of interest and utility to educators and student-teachers who need to develop positive classroom discipline.
1.5 Division of Chapters

Following the introduction, Chapter Two discusses the literature review about the importance of responsible classroom discipline, self-discipline and self-control, classroom control, classroom management, the causes of behaviour and discipline problems, how to tackle behaviour and discipline problems and the situation in Malta.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology used to carry out this research. This chapter provides an account of the qualitative methodological method used as well as the different stages the author went through in order to carry out the study.

In Chapter Four, the results of the research are presented and analysed. Following the results of the study, Chapter Five discusses the results of the study along with the literature review. Chapter Six draws the conclusions of the study and gives some recommendations.
Chapter Two

Literature Review
2.1 Introduction

When young children start going to school, they expect adults, in this case their teachers, to be there to lead and guide them. To obtain leadership, teachers have to feel confident in what they do when they lead their pupils. These are some of the important aspects which teachers need to take into consideration in order to lead their pupils effectively: the kind of language they use to calm and settle the class; the planning of routines; the establishment of clear and fair rules; classroom organisation; the control of classroom situations and events; the kind of discipline they utilise; the balance between necessary correction and consequences and necessary encouragement and above all, the ability to engage in the teaching and learning process. (McPherson and Rogers, 2008)

Whether it is chatting while the teacher is talking or whether it is more serious misbehaviour such as dangerous play or out of control tantrums, in order to be effective, teachers need to plan for corrective language within their overall behaviour leadership. (McPherson and Rogers, 2008) Many teachers plan a variety of interesting and purposeful activities for their children, which according to Morris (1978) is the first prerequisite of good classroom control. The problem is that some teachers do not plan for how they will encourage children to behave appropriately and how they will address disruptive behaviour in the classroom. This planning is crucial, especially for children who have serious behaviour problems, since they will require an individual behaviour plan. (McPherson and Rogers, 2008)

Teaching has never just been about the transmission of knowledge and never will be. Establishing good relationships with pupils, encouraging them to learn and to behave well have always been essential parts of a teacher’s work. This cannot be achieved by talking at children, but by working with them. (DES, 1989, p69)

Classroom discipline has always been and will probably remain one of the major problems in education.

Pupils resist control because it restricts personal choice. Love of individual freedom is a valuable part of democracy and should be cultivated rather than condemned. Yet teachers must maintain some sort
of classroom control to achieve their goals set forth by society. (Avila and Purkey, 1971, p325)

In the past, teachers used to implement negative methods of discipline such as physical punishment and fear. Fortunately, nowadays, to maintain classroom discipline, teachers are adopting more modern methods which are generally positive such as behaviour modification techniques, which promote appropriate behaviour and eliminate unwanted behaviour, and rewards. (Avila and Purkey, 1971)

Classroom discipline is not only one of the common problems faced by teachers but it is also one of the major concerns for student teachers. After a particular student teaching seminar organised by Bossone (1964) the student teachers’ response, when asked why classroom discipline is their major concern, was that everyone tells them it is important but no one tells them what it is or how to maintain it. Literature published on this subject shows that there are various definitions for the term ‘discipline’, this being the reason why many student teachers and teachers are still confused. (Bossone, 1964)

2.2 Defining the term ‘Discipline’

2.2.1 Discipline as Self-Control

“Discipline is primarily concerned with enabling children to be aware of and own their behaviour.” (McPherson and Rogers, 2008, p4) From a very young age, children need to be aware that certain behaviours are not only unhelpful but they are also wrong. According to McPherson and Rogers (2008) discipline should never be an end in itself. They emphasise that “the means and ends of discipline are to enable children’s awareness about their behaviour and responsibility to others.” (McPherson and Rogers, 2008, p4) After working with young children for fifteen years, Abrell (1976) argues that discipline, especially self-discipline, in the classroom is vital for effective learning to take place. He states that “it is the responsibility of the teacher to explain the importance of discipline, assist the student in achieving self-discipline, and point out low levels of performance and unacceptable behaviour.” (Abrell, 1979, p171)
McPherson and Rogers (2008) point out that good discipline includes several functions. They state that good discipline:

1. **Provides a safe, relational context** – an effective teacher explains and discusses with the pupils about appropriate behaviours. It is also important that responsible behaviour is “taught, acknowledged, affirmed and encouraged.” (McPherson and Rogers, 2008, p5)

2. **Teaches behaviour** – children become aware of what is reasonable and fair and what is right or wrong. Children also learn about the importance of fair rules and responsibilities.

3. **Is preventive** – the establishment of fair rules and routines, the use of positive corrective language and the setting up of fair consequences prevent misbehaviour problems.

4. **Protects** – when a teacher disciplines students who are misbehaving, s/he is protecting the rights of those pupils whose learning is being disrupted.

5. **Enables a sense of justice** – when a teacher uses fair and appropriate correction and consequences to deal with misbehaviour problems, this shows that the teacher is creating a just learning environment.

When analysing children’s behaviour in order to promote self-control, teachers have to keep in mind two major principles: all behaviour is meaningful to the child, even though it may be seen as negative by the adult, and all behaviour is reinforced by the environment. Self-control refers to “the ability to resist the inappropriate and act responsibly.” (Botnarescue and Machado, 1997, p145) This includes respecting the rights of others, being honest, being kind and being able to deal effectively with anger and strong emotions.

There are several suggestions, made by various theorists, as to how teachers can promote self-control. According to Erikson’s (1993) theory of psychosocial development, self-control relates to the question of autonomy. In Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, self-control is related to the resolution of deficiency needs and the beginnings of self-actualization. White’s (1975) theory points out that self-control develops when a child passes from Phase V (eight to fourteen
months) to Phase VI (14 to 24 months) in a healthy, safe and positive environment with the care and love of parents. When a child gains mastery over the environment, s/he is gaining self-control.

When teachers ‘empower’ their pupils and provide them with a sense of belonging, they are teaching them self-control. In the classroom, teachers can allow children control by giving them guided choices, giving them the opportunity to decide, and helping them feel they belong to the classroom. Teachers should provide an environment in which the children feel safe, grow positively, and are provided with opportunities which lead them to become autonomous. It is the responsibility of the teachers to recognise their children’s developmental level in terms of self-control. “Self-control, or self-discipline, is learned only through the initial imposition of controls from the significant adults in the child’s life and the opportunity to practice the child’s own controls secondarily.” (Botnarescue and Machado, 1997, p148)

2.2.2 Discipline and Control

According to Wilson (1971) there is a difference between the terms ‘discipline’ and ‘control’. He states that even though both are forms of order, the order in each case is of a different kind. Wilson (1971) defines ‘control’ as “a way of ordering things which is considered necessary for getting something done.” (Wilson, 1971, p77) On the contrary, he refers to ‘discipline’ as “the form of logical and evaluative order which must be learned if one is to understand what is involved in doing something.” (Wilson, 1971, p77) Although both can involve compulsion, the compulsion is of a different kind. In ‘control’, the compulsion has to do with the physical and psychological force which supports orders and instructions in the sense of commands. By contrast, in ‘discipline’, instructions are there to teach rather than to give orders. Wilson (1971) gives a clear example of this definition in a classroom context. When a teacher commands the class, for example, to stop talking, to sit down, to pay attention and so on, children, especially young ones, will have no idea what the point of obeying these orders could be. If the teacher is just trying to control the class, the teacher will almost certainly fail to bring the class to order. Children have to be
disciplined, not just controlled, which means that they have to understand the reasons why they have to behave in a certain manner. Therefore, discipline is “educative order”. It refers to “the kind of order involved in trying to reach appropriate standards or follow appropriate rules for engaging in a valued activity.” (Wilson, 1971, p79)

Similarly, Burden (2006) points out that for students to be successful, a learning community needs to have order. He argues that there is order in the classroom when pupils follow the necessary actions for an activity to be successful, when pupils focus on the instructional tasks and when they behave appropriately. When there is misbehaviour, there is no classroom order. Therefore, Burden (2006) emphasises the importance of discipline, which according to him is “the act of responding to misbehaving students in an effort to restore order.” (Burden, 2006, p4)

2.2.3 Discipline and Classroom Management

Bossone (1964) defines classroom discipline as “training in self-control and in orderly social conduct brought about by desirable, effective classroom management.” (Bossone, 1964, p218) He argues that if such a definition is to assist teachers in achieving discipline in the classroom, then it must be made clear how they can manage their classroom effectively and develop a positive classroom atmosphere. “The central problem of disruption could be significantly reduced by helping teachers to become more effective classroom managers.” (DES, 1989, p12)

“A teacher’s general competence has a strong influence on his or her pupils’ behaviour.” (DES, 1989, p67) The Elton Report (1989) highlights the significance of the requirements needed in order to be an effective teacher. A teacher should have good knowledge of the subjects s/he is teaching and should be able to plan and deliver interesting and motivating lessons in order for children to pay more attention. An effective teacher should also be equipped with a range of ‘group management skills’. This means that the teacher should be able to relate to young children, to encourage them in learning and in positive behaviour and to deal effectively with unwanted behaviour.
Several teachers and student teachers associate the words ‘classroom management’ with ‘discipline’. Botnarescue and Machado (1997) argue that classroom management goes far beyond discipline. They point out that classroom management involves five important areas which are: the physical arrangement of the classroom, curriculum choices, time management, managing classroom routines and the guidance function. They divide the guidance function in two: managing routine behaviour problems and managing serious behaviour problems.

Similarly, Marshall (2005) states that although the terms ‘classroom management’ and ‘discipline’ are related, they are two different topics. He argues that classroom management “deals with how things are done” and that “it entails structure, procedures, and routines, to the point of becoming rituals.” (Marshall, 2005, p51) When children learn and practice these routines and procedures, effective instruction takes place. The author emphasises that classroom management is one of the major responsibilities of teachers. In contrast to this, he defines discipline as “the responsibility of the student.” (Marshall, 2005, p51) Although it is the responsibility of the teacher to create a positive learning environment, children must be responsible for their own behaviour. The author argues that when teachers discipline young children, they are not helping them to become responsible for their actions.

According to Burden (2006) “Classroom Management involves teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.” (Burden, 2006, p4) Burden (2006) states that there are several areas of responsibility in discipline and classroom management. He emphasises the importance of seven areas of responsibility for the classroom manager. These are:

1. Select a Philosophical Model of Classroom Management and Discipline.

Finding a model or models of discipline may permit the teacher to stop waffling, creating an orderliness to her behaviour that students can understand. Thus she becomes predictable, no longer ‘scary’ to the students, and more effective in the use of classroom discipline. (Wolfgang, 2001, p4)
Discipline models provide teachers with practical skills and techniques needed to handle various discipline situations in the classroom and, to a limited extent, classroom management procedures which teachers will face. (Wolfgang, 2001) “A model of discipline is a set of cohesive approaches to deal with establishing, maintaining, and restoring order in the classroom that represent a certain philosophical perspective on a continuum of low to high teacher control.” (Burden, 2006, p17)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Relationship/Listening</th>
<th>Confronting/Contracting</th>
<th>Rules/Consequences</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TBC</td>
<td>Looking</td>
<td>Questioning</td>
<td>Commanding Acting or Modelling</td>
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<td>Process</td>
<td>Therapeutic</td>
<td>Educational and Counselling</td>
<td>Controlling, Rewards, and Punishment</td>
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<td>Model</td>
<td>• T.E.T. Teacher Effectiveness Training (Gordon)</td>
<td>• Discipline without Tears (Dreikurs)</td>
<td>• Behavioral Analysis (Alberto &amp; Troutman)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Conscious Discipline (Bailey)</td>
<td>• Cooperative Discipline (Albert)</td>
<td>• Skillstreaming (Goldstein et al.)</td>
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<td>• Peer Mediation (Schrumpf/Crawford)</td>
<td>• Positive Discipline in the Classroom (Nelson, Lott, &amp; Glenn)</td>
<td>• Assertive Discipline (Canter and Canter &amp; Alberti)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Inner Discipline (Coloroso)</td>
<td>• Reality Therapy, Control Theory, &amp; Quality Schools (Glasser)</td>
<td>• Positive Discipline Model (Jones)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Beyond Discipline (Kohn)</td>
<td>• Judicious Discipline (Gathercoal)</td>
<td>• Leadership/Punishment Model (Dobson)</td>
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<td>• Discipline with Dignity (Curwin &amp; Mendler)</td>
<td>• Crisis Prevention Model</td>
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The above table represents the Continuum of Discipline Philosophies, Teacher Behaviours (TBC), and Models according to Wolfgang (2001). Wolfgang (2001) identifies three philosophies of discipline which may be placed on a continuum from minimum to maximum use of control and power. These three philosophies are: Relationship-Listening philosophy which requires the use of minimum power, that of looking and naming; the Confronting-Contracting method that
involves questioning and the Rules and Consequences philosophy which entails the use of commanding, acting, or modelling. These philosophies of discipline include various models with different techniques which teachers can implement when dealing with a discipline incident.

One of the high teacher control approaches is ‘Positive Discipline’. Fredric Jones developed the ‘Positive Discipline’ model in order to help teachers improve their behaviour management and instruction. For positive discipline to take place in the classroom, he recommends that teachers implement five strategies. These strategies are: structure in the classroom; control by using appropriate instructional strategies; control with limit-setting techniques, patterns of cooperation, and appropriate backup systems in the event of misbehaviour. (Burden, 2006) Wolfgang (2001) argues that one of the advantages of this model is that “all of its component parts combine to form a holistic view of how to achieve good classroom discipline and management.” (Wolfgang, 2001, p81) This model deals with various dimensions rather than focusing only on how to deal with a misbehaving student. Some criticise Jones’s model for not including teacher actions and for failing to deal with the role of parents as a part of the discipline process. In contrast, there are various models such as ‘Assertive Discipline’ developed by Lee and Marlene Canter, which maintain that teachers have the right and responsibility to ask for assistance from parents when support is needed to handle discipline problems. (Burden, 2006)

Another philosophy in the continuum of discipline philosophies is the ‘Relationship-Listening’ philosophy which according to Burden (2006) includes low teacher control approaches where students have the responsibility for controlling their own behaviour and for taking decisions. ‘Beyond Discipline’ is one of the models, which are part of this philosophy, developed by Alfie Kohn. This model focuses on developing caring and supportive classrooms where students participate actively in problem solving, even with behaviour problems. This model does not include the importance of rules in the classroom but strengthens the need for teachers and students to work together in order to create their classroom environment as they want it to be. In his model, Kohn emphasises the importance of meetings between teachers and students which
include four main points: sharing, deciding, planning and reflecting. (Burden, 2006)

2. Organise the physical environment.

“Research has shown that the physical arrangement of classrooms contributes to the amount of learning that takes place in them.” (Edwards, 1997, p390) Likewise, Burden (2006) argues that the way teachers arrange the classroom affects instruction and might influence the way children behave. He emphasises on the importance of: arranging the floor space, by placement of desks, tables, cabinets and learning centres; deciding where to store classroom materials such as books, textbooks and equipment; and deciding how to use the wall space.

According to Emmer, Evertson and Worsham (2006) there are five keys to good room arrangement:

i. A classroom arrangement consistent with the teacher’s instructional goals and activities;
ii. Efficient traffic patterns;
iii. Students are easily seen by the teacher;
iv. Frequently used teaching materials and students supplies readily accessible;
v. Instructional presentations and displays easily seen by the students.

The classroom environment has a direct impact on the children. Therefore, it should be exciting and comfortable and it should produce feelings of security and warmth. Unpleasant and unattractive classroom environments produce more feelings of fatigue and discontent. (Edwards, 1997)

3. Manage student behaviour.

Docking (1990) asks the question “Managing Behaviour – What does it mean?” (Docking, 1990, p11) He argues that the term ‘managing pupil behaviour’ “reflects a growing desire amongst teachers to re-examine traditional policies and practices, as reflected in such notions as ‘controlling pupils’, and to develop more positive approaches.” (Docking, 1990, p12) Burden (2006) emphasises the importance of the establishment of rules in the classroom for behaviour
management to take place. He argues that rules and procedures “support teaching and learning and provide students with clear expectations and well-defined norms.” (Burden, 2006, p6) Classroom rules “give a set of criteria for acceptable behaviour to which teachers can easily refer in reminding children of what is expected of them.” (Docking, 2002, p21) Docking (2002) points out that effective classroom rules should be few in number, discussed with the pupils, explicit, positively phrased, community orientated and realistic.

Burden (2006) also states that to manage student behaviour effectively, teachers should avoid certain practices such as harsh and humiliating reprimands, threats, sarcastic remarks, writing tasks as punishments and corporal punishments.

4. Create a respectful, supportive learning environment.

Relationships that teachers establish with their students have an influence on the development of students’ self-concept which affects discipline in the classroom. Students with a poor self-concept fail to perform well in school and are more likely to behave inappropriately. (Edwards, 1993, as cited in Felix, 2011) In the classroom, each and every child has the right to feel valued and comfortable. Therefore, teachers should develop positive relationships with their students, promote their students’ self-esteem and build group cohesiveness in order to create a respectful, supportive learning environment. (Burden, 2006)

Good relationships lay the groundwork for students’ learning and they are the keystone of good discipline. (Edwards, 1997) By developing positive relationships with their students, teachers prevent many discipline problems and produce more positive responses by their students and higher academic achievement. For positive relationships between teacher and students to take place in the classroom, good communication is needed. Good communication creates a warmer and a friendlier atmosphere in the classroom. Therefore, teachers need to employ effective communication skills. “Unless a teacher employs good communication skills, all other attempts at creating a well-
managed, positive learning environment will be severely limited and usually short-lived.” (Jones and Jones, 1981, p101)

5. Manage and facilitate instruction.

“Preparing daily lesson plans is a vital task for effective classroom management and discipline because effective, engaging lessons can keep students on task and can minimize misbehaviour.” (Burden, 2006, p189) When planning and preparing lessons, teachers need to keep in mind certain factors which are necessary for maintaining order in the classroom such as the structure of the lesson, the grouping for instructional activities, the pace of the lesson, smooth transitions, students’ accountability, the enthusiasm and motivation. (Burden, 2006) Jones and Jones (1981) state that “providing students with interesting, well-organised, individualised instruction is the teacher’s primary role as well as a cornerstone of responsible discipline.” (Jones and Jones, 1981, p12)

6. Promote classroom safety and wellness.

“Students need to feel physically and emotionally safe before they can give their full attention to the instructional tasks. Strategies used to manage student behaviour, create a supportive classroom, and manage and facilitate instruction all contribute to classroom safety and wellness.” (Burden, 2006, p7) In addition, Burden (2006) argues that it is necessary for teachers to have a set of tools, such as anger management, to help them deal with problems and conflicts that threaten classroom order. Teachers also have to be prepared to deal with challenging pupils, who sometimes may threaten the sense of safety and wellness in the classroom. (Burden, 2006)

7. Interact with colleagues, parents and others to achieve classroom management objectives.

“The most effective schools seem to be those that have created a positive atmosphere based on a sense of community and shared values.” (DES, 1989, p13) The standards of school behaviour improve when all members of the school community feel positively involved.
The most effective schools tend to be those with the best relationships with parents.” (DES, 1989, p14) Burden (2006) argues that the involvement of parents is one of the important elements which help teachers maintain order in the classroom. Docking (1990) agrees with the importance of parental involvement and he discusses various ways how teachers can work constructively with parents. He argues that teachers should get to know parents early in the child’s school career, involve parents in the curriculum and classroom activities, send positive letters home, help parents to monitor children’s behaviour, and run discussions with parents to explore certain issues. “When parents feel good about their child’s teacher and school, the child is more likely to receive encouragement and reinforcement for desirable school behaviour.” (Jones and Jones, 1981, p289) McPherson and Rogers (2008) stress the need for parental awareness of discipline. Teachers need to clarify with parents what they mean when they discipline their children. They should communicate that “discipline is how [they] lead, guide, encourage their children to control their own behaviour in a way that respects others.” (McPherson and Rogers, 2008, p140)

2.3 Causes of Discipline Problems

Edwards (1997) argues that teachers face several discipline problems which are not always easy to deal with. Although some of these problems may have their origin in the family or in society at large, there are several discipline problems which are caused by school policies and procedures as well as by the teachers themselves. “If teachers are to respond effectively to unproductive student behaviour, they must understand the causes of this behaviour and develop solutions that are congruent with their personal styles and professional goals.” (Jones and Jones, 1981, p9)

After discussing with several teachers about the reasons why children misbehave, Robertson (1981) came up with three categories of reasons.
2.3.1 Causes of Unwanted Behaviour

Here, the author is referring to the children’s experiences which might influence their behaviour, such as family problems. Burden (2006) argues that conditions in the child’s home such as lack of adequate clothing, parental supervision and types of discipline, home routines and events such as divorce, may be associated with the child’s behaviour problems. Therefore, it is crucial for teachers to be aware of the children’s background and to be there to help by giving them as much time and personal attention as possible. As stated by Robertson (1981) “teaching is caring” (Robertson, 1981, p58) and therefore, teachers should try and understand children’s problems and develop a relationship with the children so that they will improve their attitude to work and behave more appropriately.

Maslow’s (1968) concept of the basic human needs seems to indicate the main factors concerning students' needs. Maslow’s (1968) hierarchy of needs includes five basic human needs which are: self-actualization, self-respect, belongingness and affection, safety and security, and physiological needs. After analysing Maslow’s theory, Jones and Jones (1981) conclude that “Unproductive behaviour is therefore not viewed as an indication of a ‘bad’ child but rather as a reaction to the frustration associated with being in a situation in which one’s basic needs are not being met.” (Jones and Jones, 1981, p24) This indicates that in order for students to perform appropriate academic tasks, teachers must establish environments which meet the children’s basic needs. This will help teachers reduce discipline problems.

2.3.2 Pay-offs or Rewards for Unwanted Behaviour

This category asks the question: 'What do children gain by misbehaving?' It is important for teachers to ask this question since they may be encouraging the inappropriate behaviour without realising it. Some of the reasons why children misbehave are: attention seeking from teachers and peers, creating excitement, malicious teasing of teachers, and avoiding work. (Robertson, 1981)
i. Attention seeking

At the infant stage, teachers are more likely to reward unhelpful behaviour. This is not effective at all. Children must learn that to get the teacher's attention, they must behave appropriately. Attention seeking from peers is also very common, especially with older children. An effective strategy, suggested by various researchers, which teachers can implement, is to reward the whole class for the good behaviour of one child. Like this, the class will not be encouraged to approve the child's misbehaviour and the misbehaving child will be encouraged to behave rather than to misbehave.

ii. Creating excitement

Mills (1975) (as cited in Robertson, 1981) talks about an interesting theory which explains why some children misbehave. Due to the fact that some children face problems and stress in their homes where they may have no opportunity for quiet and privacy, at school they end up trying to create excitement, which usually involves disruptive behaviour. In this situation, the risk of being punished would encourage these children even more. Therefore, teachers must pay attention to how they react to misbehaviour in the classroom because they might think that the experience will be unpleasant for the child but without realising, they could be taking a leading role in the drama which the child is trying to create.

iii. Malicious teasing of teachers

In the classroom, teachers might have children who enjoy annoying and teasing them. This may start by having children asking questions or pass on comments during the lessons but by time, this can lead to disobedience and inappropriate behaviour intended to make the teacher angry. Teachers have to be aware that malicious teasing is successful if the victims, in this case the teachers themselves, are left angry and frustrated. Therefore, in order to avoid malicious teasing, teachers should behave in the way they normally behave when they are calm and tranquil.
iv. Avoiding work

When children are given work to do in the classroom, not all of them show interest to do it. In fact, some children try to avoid doing the work. This might happen because they do not pay attention during the explanation and therefore, they end up not knowing what they have to do or else because they get bored. Like this, unwanted behaviour is more likely to occur. In order to try and avoid this problem, teachers have to make the requirements, such as the work children are expected to complete and the remaining time, clear to the class. Teachers have to encourage their children to work hard so that they gain satisfaction from their efforts.

2.3.3 Contexts for Unwanted Behaviour

This refers to the teacher’s part in promoting unwanted behaviour. Sometimes, teachers create discipline problems by the way they manage the classroom such as: being negative, using an authoritarian approach, blaming children, using mass punishment and repeating already learned material. When it comes to instruction, teachers have to be aware that certain factors, such as the content and delivery of the lesson, may lead to unwanted behaviour. (Burden, 2006) Kounin (1970) suggests ‘movement management’, which can help teachers avoid discipline problems. Movement management refers to the pace and flow of one activity to a different activity and this type of management includes two important aspects: ‘momentum’ and ‘smoothness’. Momentum is the pace with which a lesson progresses. Smoothness refers to the importance of shifting from one type of activity to another smoothly.

It is crucial for teachers to be aware of the causes which lead to various discipline problems. “A knowledge of the associated causes may help the teacher to understand the children he deals with, and perhaps develop a more tolerant attitude towards those who persistently misbehave.” (Robertson, 1981, p82)
2.4 Discipline and the Situation in Malta

The concern about discipline in Maltese schools is not declining but is growing year by year.

2.4.1 Good Behaviour and Discipline Policy for Schools

In conformity with paragraph 47 (d) of the Education Act (CAP. 327), the Ministry of Education (2002) established a Committee in late 2000 to formulate policy guidelines on behaviour and discipline in schools. The document revokes The Code of Discipline and Behaviour in Schools published in 1980. This document provides schools with essential guidelines that would enable school communities to develop their own Code of Behaviour and Discipline so that:

- school environments achieve the aims of the school with the minimum of conflict;
- parameters are provided and understood by students, staff, and parents;
- staff manages pupil behaviour effectively;
- high standards of behaviour are developed and maintained;
- students learn how to become responsible.

2.4.2 For All Children to Succeed

In 2005, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment published the policy document ‘For All Children to Succeed’. This document shows that one of the functions of each college in Malta is to “lead the College schools in ensuring a safe environment and a culture of discipline.” (MEYE, 2005, p72) The document also reveals that one of the main responsibilities of the head of school is to “ensure order and discipline” (MEYE, 2005, p75) and that teachers must “maintain good order and discipline amongst students and safeguards their health and safety at any time and place.” (MEYE, 2005, p77)
2.4.3 Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties in Maltese Schools

Studies, carried out by the University of Malts and the University of Leicester, show that secondary schools are more likely to experience behaviour problems than primary schools. The Times of Malta (2008), in the article ‘Social, Emotional and Behaviour Difficulties in Maltese Schools’, conveys the ratio of 7:6. Boys display more difficulties than girls resulting in a percentage of 10.46 and 8.86 respectively. Whilst boys are more likely to show behavioural difficulties, girls tend to experience higher emotional difficulties. Findings showed that children who experience most difficulties with SEBD are those children who do not attend school on regular basis, those who have poor communication skills and those who received psychological or educational interventions. Students coming from the Inner Harbour and Northern regions are also more likely to have behaviour problems. Findings also showed that students attending streamed classes were exhibiting SEBD, indicating that streaming leads to disaffection. Home factors, such as family structure and socio-economic status, were also found to be related to SEBD.

Recommendations at community, institutional, school, classroom and individual levels were made in order to address the needs which came out from the study. These recommendations included staff training on behaviour management, college behaviour-support teams providing support to schools in developing behaviour policies and adequate support to staff in dealing with challenging behaviour.

2.5 Conclusion

This literature review has reached its aim by identifying the different definitions given to the word ‘discipline’, the causes of discipline problems and efficient strategies for dealing with these types of problems in the classroom. The numerous readings reviewed were used to develop a framework for the study. The vast knowledge obtained from the available literature related to classroom discipline helped the author to be prepared before actually carrying the study in the chosen school.
Chapter Three

Research and Methodology
3.1 Introduction

The focus of the study is about responsible classroom discipline in early schooling. The study tackles the issue of how teachers establish discipline in the classroom and how they could be more successful in implementing effective strategies needed for responsible and positive classroom discipline. The research was conducted through a qualitative approach, which involved observation in a Year 2 classroom in a state primary school in Malta. The study took 45 hours.

3.2 Adopting a Qualitative Methodological Approach

The author decided that a qualitative approach was most useful to learn about discipline in the classroom because it gave the chance to study a particular context in detail. According to Gonzales et al. (2008, as cited in Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2011), qualitative research provides a detailed description and understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable and observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions and behaviours.

It is a way of knowing in which a researcher gathers, organises, and interprets information obtained from humans using his or her eyes and ears as filters. It often involves in-depth interviews and/or observations of humans in natural and social settings. It can be contrasted with quantitative research, which relies heavily on hypothesis testing, cause and effect, and statistical analysis. (Lichtman, 2010, p5)

Additional relevance of the qualitative approach comes from the fact that this type of approach “deals with questions about how and why.” (Lichtman, 2010, p23) Furthermore, qualitative research is dynamic and provides the researcher with a variety of methods. According to Lichtman (2010), this type of research is holistic, views the situation in its entirety and studies limited phenomena in depth. When conducting a qualitative research, data is gathered in natural settings and the researcher is instrumental in constructing an interpretation of the reality. (Lichtman, 2010)

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research “draws the researcher into the phenomenological complexity of participants’ worlds; here situations
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unfold, and connections, causes and correlations can be observed as they occur over time.” (Cohen et al., 2011, p458) By conducting a qualitative research, the researcher had the opportunity to catch the dynamic nature of events, see intentionality and seek trends and patterns over a period of time.

**3.3 Access and Acceptance**

The stage of access and acceptance “offers the best opportunity for researchers to present their credentials as serious investigators and establish their own ethical position with respect to their proposed research.” (Cohen et al., 2011, p81)

The different authorities concerned were very helpful throughout the research. Permission to carry out the study and perform the classroom observations in the school was granted from the Directorate for Quality and Standards in Education. After that permission was granted, the author contacted the headmaster of the relevant school, who gave free access to what was needed for the research and promised the support of the school. “If the investigation involves teachers as participants, propositions may have to be put to the stakeholders and conditions negotiated.” (Cohen et al., 2011, p82) The author contacted the class teacher and the aims, nature and procedures of the research were discussed. The author was also granted the permission to conduct the study from the University Research Ethics Committee.

LeCompte and Preissle (1993, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) argue that the most important elements in securing access to their data are the willingness of researchers to be flexible and their sensitivity to nuances of behaviour and response in the participants. Similarly, De Laine (2000, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) states that the researcher’s ability to get on with people in the situation concerned, and the researcher’s willingness to join in and share experiences in the activities concerned, help the researcher gain and maintain access and entry into the field.
3.4 Research Design: Collecting the Data

The qualitative researcher is able to use a variety of data collection instruments such as field notes, participant observation, journal notes, interviews, artefacts, documents and video recordings. Some qualitative research can be highly structured, with the structure being determined before the research takes place. Qualitative research can also be less structured, in which case the research is highly sensitive to the situation, the participants, the relationships between the researcher and the participants and the suitable ways of conducting the data analysis. (Cohen et al., 2011) The author decided to use observation as a means of data collection. Field notes, that contained the results of observations, were written both in situ and away from the situation.

3.4.1 Observation

Observation as a research process “offers an investigator the opportunity to gather live data from naturally occurring social situations.” (Cohen et al., 2011, p456) The researcher looks directly at what is taking place rather than relying on second hand accounts. Observations gave unique help to the author as they gave direct access to what was actually happening in the classroom.

Morrison (1993, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) points out that observations enable the researcher to gather data on:

i. the physical setting
ii. the human setting
iii. the interactional setting
iv. the programme setting

During the observations, special attention was given to the physical environment of the classroom and its organisation. Special attention was also given to the individuals being observed, in this case the classroom teacher and the pupils. The interactions taking place between the teacher and the pupils and between the pupils themselves were also observed. Throughout the observations, the author gathered information about the resources used in the
classroom and their organisation, pedagogic styles, curricula and their organisation. These specific observations and the information obtained helped the researcher to gather data on how discipline is established in this particular classroom.

According to Cohen et al. (2011), the use of immediate awareness as a principle mode of research is observation's unique strength since it gives the opportunity to the researcher for more valid and authentic data. In addition, Robson (2002, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) argues that observation provides a reality check since there might be a difference between what people do and what they say they do.

A participant observation approach was adopted. In this type of approach, the observer engages him/herself in the activities s/he sets out to observe. (Cohen and Manion, 1998) “It enables the researcher to observe patterned culture-specific behaviours, whilst immersed in the contexts in which these are occurring. This is achieved by becoming a member of the group or observed community, and sometimes by actually becoming one of the participants.” (Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson, 2000, p116) The author actively engaged herself in the classroom’s daily life. During observations, the author helped the pupils during school work, worked along with the learning support assistant with her pupil, supervised some pupils during break time, distributed the indoor games, supervised the pupils with the computers and became part of the school community.

All the observations were done through descriptive recording (note taking). Questions related to the study were prepared beforehand so that during the observations, the researcher could be aware of what to observe in order to get meaningful answers related to the study. It is believed that there was an accurate understanding of the observed events, and actions were understood in the right context. Establishing a role in the classroom and in the school community in general helped greatly during the observations.

One of the effects of observation is that this kind of approach is time consuming. The researcher has to be present during various activities and has to spend a
long time with the group. Sometimes, the author used to attend for a whole day of school without observing situations that might provide an insight on the study. Indeed, the time aspects can also be seen as a positive aspect of observations. Observations take place over an extended period of time and this allows the researchers to develop more intimate and informal relationships with those whom they are observing, generally in more natural environments than those in which experiments and surveys are conducted. This level of interaction was achieved by the author, with the help of the teacher and the learning support assistant and with the help of the head of school and the assistant heads who were very helpful in providing any information requested.

Simpson and Tuson (2003, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) state that participant observation is the most subtly intrusive type of observation. They argue that when adopting this form of observation, the researcher has to be a sympathetic member of the group in order to gain access to insiders’ behaviours and activities while still acting as a researcher with a degree of detachment. Throughout the observations, the author tried to balance her participation in order to be able to observe and analyse the situation effectively.

Frequently, observers are said to make subjective conclusions, since they rarely observe all behaviour that occurs. (Zechermeister, Zechmeister and Shaugnessy, 1997) Likewise, Cohen et al. (2011) argue that qualitative data is often described as subjective, biased, and impressionistic. They state that this kind of data lacks precise quantifiable measures unlike survey research and experimentation. The author was very cautious to interpret the observations correctly. According to Cohen et al. (2011), our interpretations are affected by our judgements and preferences, what we like and what we don’t like about people and their behaviour together with the relationships established with those being observed. In addition, interpretations are also affected by the context of the situation, which according to Silverman 1993, (as cited in Cohen et al. 2011) is crucial. Therefore, the author tried to distance herself from the situation and address the question of her subjectivity.
In order to introduce some systematization into observations and to make them more reliable, the author took notes when in situ, expanded the notes after the observation sessions, wrote journal notes to record important issues and difficulties that arose during the study and developed a record of analysis and interpretation. It was important for the author to write the notes during or immediately after the observations because if written afterwards, the memory may neglect and select data. (Cohen et al. 2011)

When conducting the research, the author was not sure when to stop the observations. According to Adler and Adler (1994, as cited in Cohen et al. 2011), there are no rules that indicate how much observation to do or when to stop but it may be appropriate to stop when the situations that are being observed appear to be repeating data that have already been collected. When this situation began to occur, the author carried on collecting some more data before ending the observations in order to make sure that the data was reliable.

Although participant observation gives the opportunity to the researcher to study the situation in depth, the researcher runs the danger of ‘going native’ as a result of playing a role within the involved group. In fact, Cohen et al. (2011) ask the question ‘How do we know that observers do not lose their perspective and become blind to the peculiarities that they are supposed to be investigating?’ (Cohen et al. 2011, p468) Another risk of participant observation is that it could be highly selective, unrepresentative and more concerned with the agenda of the researcher rather than with the real situation. As a result, changes in the descriptions might occur. (Johnson and Sackett, 1998, as cited in Cohen et al. 2011)

3.5 Analysing the Data

‘Data analysis involves organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of data in terms of participants’ definitions of the situation, noting patterns, themes and categories and regularities.” (Cohen et al., 2011, p237) In order to analyse the observational data, the researcher can make use of tools of qualitative analysis such as: coding and categorising, nodes and
connections, summarising, narrative accounts, constant comparison, theoretical saturation, thematic analysis and patterning. (Cohen et al., 2011)

Data analysis involve organisation, finding patterns of behaviour and responses. Cohen et al., (2011) argue that usually, in qualitative research, the process of data analysis starts during the data collection process so that the researcher will be able to select the significant features for future focus. In fact, the author started analysing and coding early rather than accumulating too much data before analysis and also kept track of the data analysis over time. Furthermore, the author looked for clusters of events, activities and behaviours which took place in the studied classroom.

Analysis of the data showed the strategies implemented by the teacher to prevent misbehaviour from taking place. Data analysis also showed the most common misbehaviour, which misbehaviour was less likely to occur, how the teacher responded to certain forms of misbehaviour and the extent of the involvement, if any, of the senior staff. Strategies which the teacher used in order to establish discipline and control in the classroom were also revealed. Through the analysis of the field notes, the author could understand if responsible and positive discipline was present in the classroom and obtain other very relevant information on the subject.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

When conducting a qualitative research, several critical ethical issues need to be considered such as the matter of informed consent, whether and how to gain participant assent. In order to undertake observation, the author had to first obtain the permission from the head of school and then the informed consent of the classroom teacher. Mitchell (1993, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) argues that a dilemma for researchers is whether to conduct overt or covert research. The author decided to conduct overt observation, where the teacher was aware that she was being observed. The author decided to choose this kind of research because as Mitchell (1993, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) points out, covert research invades the privacy of subjects, treats the participants as research
objects and leads the researcher to deny his/her role. Despite this, in some cases, covert research can be more reliable and can produce less biased results than overt research. (Pearson, 2009, as cited in Cohen et al., 2011) When conducting overt research, the fact of being open with the participants being studied carries with it a number of potential limitations. One of these limitations is that in overt research, in this case overt observation, even though the participants are being studied in their natural environments, the presence of the observer might influence the way the participants behave. This could have a negative impact on the results gained from the research.

During the research study, the researcher made sure to respect the privacy, anonymity and confidentiality of all the participants concerned. The classroom teacher helped greatly in gathering the data. The teacher was made to feel that she was part of the study, not only because she was answering the questions and her class was being observed but also by being informed of what exactly was the aim of the study and by discussing the findings with her. It was the duty of the researcher, at a later stage, to study all the information collected and to delete identifying information.

3.7 Conclusion

“Observation can be a very useful research tool.” (Cohen et al., 2011, p474) In fact, it was an effective instrument for the researcher since it gave her the opportunity to study in detail how discipline is established in a particular early years’ classroom. However, “it exacts its price” (Cohen et al., 2011, p474) since it may take a long time for the researcher to obtain the required information, it can be costly in time and effort and the researcher might find difficulties when interpreting the gathered data.
Chapter Four

Analysis of Data
4.1 Introduction

The data used in this observation report was collected during a participant observation study in a Government Primary School in Malta. The school has about three hundred pupils. The observation sessions took 45 hours, conducted during a period of four weeks. During the course of the research a Year 2 class was observed and contacts were established with the pupils, the classroom teacher and the Learning Support Assistant. The class consisted of 10 pupils between six and seven years of age. The research involved extensive observations mostly within but also outside the classroom. The research also included spontaneous conversations with the pupils, the classroom teacher and the Learning Support Assistant.

4.2 Observation Sessions

In this section the author reports what was observed during the visits in the school. Through the observation sessions, the author saw that discipline was given importance in the school and discipline problems were always kept under control due to the constant attention of the teachers and all the staff. Most of the time, pupils were on time for the lessons. School started at 8:30a.m and pupils usually came half an hour earlier. As soon as the bell rang, the pupils promptly lined up for the assembly.

4.3 Self-Discipline in the Classroom

In the observed classroom, there were times when the teacher tried to assist the pupils in achieving self-discipline, even though the pupils were still a bit young. Although most of the time the teacher shouted at the pupils when they were behaving inappropriately, there were certain moments when instead of just raising her voice, the teacher explained calmly and discussed with the pupils about appropriate behaviours. The teacher tried to make the children aware of what is reasonable and fair and what is right or wrong. Sometimes, the teacher provided the pupils with opportunities that helped them become more
autonomous in their behaviour. She allowed the pupils control by giving them guided choices and by giving them opportunities to decide.

4.4 Classroom Control

During the observation sessions, it was noticed that even though there were times when pupils were allowed control, most of the time the classroom teacher controlled the pupils by giving them orders and instructions in the sense of commands. Frequently, the teacher just ordered the pupils to sit down, to stop talking, to pay attention and so on. Therefore, there were many times when the teacher failed to bring the class to order. Since the children were young, they seemed to have no idea what the point of obeying these commands could be. They did not understand why they had to behave in that manner. In fact, after some time, they usually ended up repeating the same behaviour.

4.5 Classroom Management

The classroom environment was normal. It was not very exciting but it was not unpleasant either. There were charts displayed according to subject. Some of the children’s work was also displayed. The seating arrangement consisted of three rows, having the children seated in pairs or else individually. Since the class consisted of ten children and some of them were frequently absent, the children often ended up seated on their own. The teacher's desk was at the back and she was able to reach all the pupils. In the classroom, there was no library corner or learning centres. There was just one shelf with some books and there were some games placed on a cupboard at the back of the classroom.

Classroom rules, which the young pupils had to obey, were not displayed in the classroom. Therefore, the pupils could not know what was expected of them, what behaviour was acceptable and what unacceptable. Hence, the teacher could not refer to the rules of the classroom when misbehaviour occurred. By contrast, routines were established in the classroom. The pupils were aware of when they were allowed to do certain activities such as going to the rest room, using the sharpener, drinking, going to the library or going to the office. The
pupils were used to the routines whereby the teacher takes the attendance and collects the homework first thing in the morning; the teacher distributes materials and collects their work herself. Routines were also established for the time when the pupils completed their task. They either read a book or at times played educational games using the computers. Whenever the pupils needed to go out of the classroom, such as to go out in the playground or for a lesson with a peripatetic teacher, they promptly lined up and waited in silence for the teacher’s signal.

In the observed classroom, the lessons planned and prepared by the teacher included a lot of writing tasks. The children spent a lot of time writing and copying exercises, both for class work and for homework, from the whiteboard. Once the children got bored and tired, they ended up fidgeting, staring, chatting or else asking to go to the toilet. There were times when the children copied the exercises but had no idea of how to complete them.

However, the teacher was always present to provide help and individual attention when children found difficulties to complete their work. During the lessons, the teacher mostly involved the children by asking them several questions in order to make sure they understood. Enthusiasm and motivation were hardly visible, however, throughout the lessons observed. The majority of the lessons were a bit monotonous, with few resources and with little involvement of children. Thus, there were times when the children ended up behaving inappropriately. Despite this, there were also times when they paid attention and were aware of what was taking place in the classroom. There were also smooth transitions between lessons. Throughout the observation sessions, no group work or pair work activities were observed, just whole group activities.

In the observed classroom, there seemed to be a positive relationship between the teacher and the pupils. Despite the fact that there were times when the teacher got angry at the pupils, shouted at them or else gave them punishments, the teacher showed that she cared for them and that she wanted to help them achieve. During break time, the teacher talked to the pupils about their hobbies.
and their everyday life at home. Whenever there were children who had problems, the teacher was always present to help them. When it comes to the relationships between the pupils themselves, it was observed that the pupils did not have enough time to interact with each other. The seating arrangement did not make it possible for the children to interact, work together and help each other when they were on task. Group work and pair work activities never took place during the observation sessions. Therefore, the only time when pupils were seen interacting with each other was during the break. Then, pupils seemed to get on very well with each other. They played together, shared their games and toys and they rarely had conflicts.

### 4.6 Behaviour and Discipline Problems

During the course of the research, certain behaviour and discipline problems were observed. The most common type of misbehaviour encountered in the observed classroom was that of pupils getting out of their seat without permission. Chatting during the lessons was also another problem faced by the classroom teacher. In addition, during the lessons, there were times when some pupils played with their things, made unnecessary noise and hindered other pupils instead of paying attention to the lessons. When the teacher asked questions, there were times when many children responded without putting up their hands. This usually led to disorder in the classroom. The majority of the pupils were always punctual for the lessons but it was noticed that there was a particular boy who was always late. Sometimes, calculated idleness and work avoidance were also present. Despite these behaviour problems, the author never observed serious discipline problems such as physical aggression and verbal abuse. It was also interesting to note that during the break, both inside and outside the classroom, the pupils always behaved in a good manner.
4.7 Looking for the Causes of Behaviour and Discipline Problems

One of the most evidently seen sources of behaviour and discipline problems was the inability for extended mental concentration. Some of the pupils had a short concentration span. These pupils were always the first to show signs that they cannot continue to work for extended periods. Once they had reached a state where they could not concentrate anymore, some of them asked to go to the toilet, sharpened their pencil, played with the things on their desk, hindered other pupils, others just stared. For these pupils, there was always something else to do to stop doing the assigned task. Besides, many of the behaviour problems in the classroom were related to avoiding work done. The classroom teacher reported that some pupils behaved inappropriately because they had emotional problems at home. The teacher still reacted to their misbehaviour but usually with less readiness to punish and more positive reinforcement.

In some cases, behaviour and discipline problems were caused by the way the teacher managed the classroom. There were times when the teacher was negative, blamed the pupils for their behaviour and adopted an authoritarian approach. Moreover, when it comes to instruction, there were certain factors such as the content and the delivery of the lessons which helped to create discipline problems.

4.8 Observed Strategies to Manage Behaviour and Discipline Problems

In order to tackle behaviour and discipline problems, the teacher used verbal reprimands. Most of the time, the teacher scolded the children, who behaved inappropriately, in front of all the class instead of taking them aside. The children seemed to feel very embarrassed. Despite this, the classroom teacher never used physical violence to reprimand the children, such as hitting the palm of the hand with a ruler.
Furthermore, to deal with misbehaving pupils, the teacher used the ‘time out chair’. This chair was placed at the front of the classroom, next to the whiteboard. The children who were asked to sit on this chair had to stay there for a few minutes without talking and without participating in the lesson. Changing of classroom seating was also another strategy applied by the teacher. The punishment that was most used by the observed classroom teacher, in order to deal with more serious behaviour, was to make the pupils stay in class during the break in order to complete undone or unfinished work.

Another common strategy was to try and talk to the pupils and make them understand why their behaviour was unacceptable. Sometimes, the teacher discussed with the whole class why things were going wrong. By contrast, there were also times when the teacher ignored the pupils’ misbehaviour.

During the observation sessions, although several sharp verbal exchanges occurred between the classroom teacher and the pupils, no physical punishment was ever seen. To cope with behaviour and discipline problems, classroom rules were not given any importance. In fact, none of the displayed charts represented a list of the classroom rules. The teacher never asked for the help of a senior member of staff when dealing with inappropriate behaviour. On the other hand, there were certain times when the teacher gave the misbehaving children a clear warning that if they continued to misbehave, they were going to be sent to the head teacher’s office. Besides, there were also certain times when the teacher warned the pupils that she was going to contact their parents.

4.9 Promoting Positive Behaviour

There were times when the teacher in the observed classroom promoted positive behaviour. The most common strategy she used was to praise the children for their academic achievement. At times, the teacher praised the children for behaving appropriately. Throughout the observation sessions, tangible rewards, such as stars and smiley faces, were rarely used. When the children behaved appropriately or completed a task neatly and correctly, as a
reward the teacher gave them extra time for painting or using the computer. In addition, in the classroom there was no behaviour charts so that the classroom teacher and the pupils together could identify target behaviours and monitor progress.

4.10 Conclusion

The detailed classroom observation sessions led the author to a more complete picture and a clearer understanding of the classroom management and the discipline strategies implemented within this classroom.

There were times when the classroom teacher tried to enable the pupils’ awareness about their behaviour and responsibility to others and to assist them in achieving self-discipline. In addition, it was observed that the classroom management, such as the physical environment, rules and routines, relationships and the lessons prepared, played an important role for the teacher to establish responsible classroom discipline and to prevent behaviour and discipline problems.

The most common behaviour problems seen were those of pupils getting out of their seat without permission, chatting and unwillingness to complete the tasks. Many times their object was to avoid work. The observations showed that reprimands and punishments were some of the strategies used by the teacher to tackle discipline problems but there were certain times when the classroom teacher tried to reason things out with the pupils. At times, the classroom teacher promoted positive behaviour by praising the pupils and giving them rewards.
Chapter Five

Discussion of Findings
5.1 Introduction

During the course of this study, the topic of classroom discipline was tackled with special reference to the importance of self-discipline and self-control, the causes of behaviour and discipline problems and the discipline strategies used by the classroom teachers to respond effectively to these problems but above all, to prevent these problems from taking place. First, the author wanted to establish what was to be understood by the term ‘classroom discipline’. Johns, MacNaughton and Karabinus (1989) define it as ‘the status of pupil behaviour in the classroom’. (Johns et al., 1989, p4) Similarly, the teacher of the classroom being studied reported that discipline refers to how the pupils behave in the classroom and how the teacher deals with inappropriate behaviours. In addition, for Jones and Jones (1981) discipline is not just about the behaviour of the pupils, it is about creating a philosophy of teaching that responds to the needs of both the pupils and the teachers and it involves teaching strategies that facilitate optimal learning and personal growth.

5.2 Causes of Behaviour and Discipline Problems

The literature review referred to the fact that the major causes of behaviour and discipline problems were family problems, attention seeking, a will to cause excitement to stop the boredom of the lesson, the malicious teasing of teachers and the avoidance of work. (Robertson, 1981) From the observation sessions done in the chosen classroom, a great deal of the persistent misbehaviour observed was intended to avoid work. There were many times when pupils were given work and many of them did not show any interest to complete it. Several pupils were seen exclaiming ‘I don’t understand them’. In most of the cases, the pupils concerned did not seem to want to understand the sums in front of them.
5.3 Promoting Unwanted Behaviour

As pointed out in the literature review, teachers can promote unwanted behaviour. According to Burden (2006), certain factors, such as the content and the delivery of the lessons, can lead to behaviour and discipline problems. When conducting the observation sessions, the author noticed that the majority of the lessons planned and delivered by the teacher did not seem to motivate the young pupils to learn. The Elton Report (DES, 1989) highlights the importance to plan and deliver lessons that flow smoothly and hold the pupils’ attention. Similarly, Burden (2006) argues that the structure of the lesson, the grouping for instructional activities, the pace of the lesson, smooth transitions, students’ accountability and motivation are crucial factors that help the teacher maintain order in the classroom.

5.4 Student Motivation and Learning

In the observed classroom, although most of the time the pace of the lessons was good and there were smooth transitions between lessons, the content of the lessons could have been much more motivating and interesting for the young pupils. Lessons that engage and motivate students are a key aspect of effective classroom management. (Evertson and Harris, 1992) To make the lessons more interesting and motivating, the teacher could have used a variety of resources. Furthermore, during the lessons, the classroom teacher observed could have provided opportunities for the pupils to learn by doing instead of just presenting the material to be learned and reinforcing the correct answers. Teachers should recognise the importance of having active learners rather than passive recipients of knowledge. Duckworth (1964, as cited in Schwebel and Raph, 1978) highlights Piaget’s notion that good pedagogy should involve presenting the pupils with various situations in which they experiment, try things out to see what happens, pose questions, seek for answers and compare their finding with other children. For Piaget, children, especially young ones, tend to learn what they do rather than what they see or hear.
5.5 Students' Accountability

As it was seen in the literature review, student accountability is one of the teachers' main concerns. (Burden, 2006) Johns et al. (1989) state that “all the other steps in classroom management are of no avail if teachers do not handle this important function effectively.” (Johns et al., 1989, p29) They suggest that teachers should communicate the importance of the assignment, the expectations of the quality and the quantity of work and the manner in which pupils are to carry out the assignment, to their pupils. These important suggestions were not always followed by the teacher in the observed classroom. Despite this, most of the time when the pupils were on task, the classroom teacher monitored and provided help to the pupils who found difficulties. This monitoring helped the teacher control the classroom and avoid wasted time by the pupils who might stray from the task. In fact, during certain times when the teacher could not circulate in the classroom since she had a substantial amount of work to correct, pupils ended up coming out of their places to ask for help, behaving inappropriately and avoiding work. In addition to what was quoted earlier, Johns et al. (1989) mention the immeasurable value of using student helpers in accountability procedures but this was never seen throughout the observation sessions.

5.6 Self-Discipline and Self-Control

Responsible classroom discipline is not just about teachers controlling their class and implementing strategies to deal with behaviour problems. Discipline also refers to the importance of teaching the pupils how to control themselves and become responsible for their own behaviour. Benedict (1954, as cited in Jones and Jones, 1981) presents the extremely important view that societies should provide young children with gradually increasing amounts of responsibility. Therefore, it is crucial that teachers start by recognising the value of helping their young pupils learn responsibility. Furthermore, teachers should teach their pupils how to solve their own problems and should provide them with opportunities to practice problem-solving skills and to display their
independence. According to Jones and Jones (1981), by implementing this approach, teachers reduce the amount of negative behaviour they are open to in the classroom. In addition, Curwin (1992, as cited in Charles and Senter, 2005) distinguishes between responsibility and obedience by stating that responsibility is more than obedience and that obedience refers to when pupils do as they are told whereas responsibility refers to when pupils make the best decisions possible.

5.7 The Physical Environment

Various studies show that the physical arrangement of the classroom is crucial, especially when teaching young kids. The way teachers arrange the classroom, such as the arranging of floor space, the placement of desks, learning centres and classroom storage, affects instruction and the behaviour of the pupils. (Burden, 2006) After observing the physical environment of the studied classroom, the author became aware that the classroom environment plays a crucial role. It should be colourful, attractive, comfortable and a place where the children feel safe and secure. As Kyraciou (1991) states, “The general appearance of a classroom indicates to pupils the care that goes into providing them with an environment which is conducive to learning.” (Kyraciou, 1991, p76)

Although the studied classroom included colourful charts and the children's work was displayed, this was not enough. The classroom space could be used more effectively. The kind of seating arrangement, having three rows with children sitting in pairs or individually, did not promote opportunities for discussion and group collaborative work. On the other hand, as Moyles (1992) states, though children seated around a table in a large group may lead to discussion and cooperative learning, it may also lead to distraction instead of concentration. Therefore, Moyles (1992) suggests small groups or tables around the perimeter of the room. In the classroom, the teacher should include a library corner where the children can take a book and read after completing the assigned task. Moreover, there was enough space for the teacher to create
learning centres with a variety of resources for the children to use. These will continue to give the young pupils opportunities to learn.

5.8 Positive Teacher-Student Relationships

In Chapter Two, the author quoted Edwards (1993, as cited in Felix, 2011) highlighting the importance of positive teacher-student relationships for establishing responsible classroom discipline. In addition, research indicates that academic achievement and pupils’ behaviour are influenced by the quality of the teacher-student relationship. (Jones and Jones, 1998)

When a teacher respects the dignity of a child, whether he be six or sixteen, and treats the child with understanding, kindliness, and constructive help, she is developing in him an ability to look within himself for the answers to his problems, and become responsible for himself as an independent individual in his own right. (Axline, 1947, p156)

The classroom teacher observed seemed to try her best to establish positive relationships with her young pupils. Although she was firm, she seemed to show care for her pupils and she was always there for them and ready to listen whenever they had problems. “Warmth and concern can exist side by side with firmness. Indeed, effective teaching involves blending these vital ingredients.” (Jones and Jones, 1998, p75) Although Walker (1979, as cited in Jones and Jones, 1998) argues that numerous studies show that positive statements are rarely used with children and that praise for appropriate behaviour is a rare event, there were certain times when the observed teacher praised the children for behaving in a good manner. It is interesting to note that even though praise seems to be the traditional positive re-enforcer, Kaiser and Rasminsky (2003) report that various critics believe that praise can be dangerous and can do more harm than good. They argue that since praise is an adult’s judgement of a child’s performance, pupils come to rely on the views of others and do not develop their own judgement to evaluate their own effort and satisfaction. Critics state that praise does not promote autonomy, creativity, self-control, self-esteem and pleasure.
5.9 Positive Peer Relationships

Although the concept of peer relationships was not mentioned in the literature review, throughout the observation sessions the author became aware that a positive relationship between the teacher and the pupils is not enough. In the classroom, there is also the need for positive peer relationships in order to eliminate discipline problems and enhance pupils’ achievement. Jones and Jones (1998) argue that peer relationships influence both the behaviour of the pupils and the involvement of children in the learning process. They emphasise the importance of cooperative learning, which leads to achievement and success.

In the observed classroom, positive peer relationships and cooperative learning were not much encouraged by the teacher. The seating arrangement did not promote opportunities for children to work together, since the majority of the children were seated individually or else in pairs. Moreover, group work and pair work activities never took place in any of the sessions observed. The only time when the author could observe peers interacting together was during the break and it seemed that they get on very well with each other. The classroom teacher should provide other opportunities for the young pupils to interact with each other, however, by including cooperative learning activities during which pupils learn and work together for the benefit of their peers and for themselves. Various studies highlight the benefits of pupils working together. In fact, Slavin (1987) found out that the effects of cooperative learning on pupils’ achievement and behaviour are remarkably consistent. Out of 38 studies, he found out that 33 studies showed greater achievement and appropriate behaviour for the classes cooperatively taught.

5.10 Classroom Rules

In the literature review, Docking (2002) emphasised the importance of classroom rules in order for teachers to remind pupils of what is expected of them. In the classroom observed, no rules were displayed for the young pupils to be aware of what is acceptable and what is not acceptable in their behaviour. Whenever the pupils misbehaved, the classroom teacher could not refer to the
classroom rules. Johns et al. (1989) argue that the teacher should keep in mind that establishing rules and setting limits are positive acts that help the teacher maintain order in the classroom. In fact, they state that “teaching students to be responsible for themselves and for each other in maintaining this order is one of the important tasks that the school performs.” (Jones and Jones, 1989, p32)

On the first day of school, the classroom teacher could have discussed with the pupils so that together they could come up with a set of positively phrased rules. A list of rules which teachers can discuss with their young pupils is given in Appendix A. By discussing and establishing the classroom rules together with the young pupils, the teacher is not just making the pupils aware of what is right or wrong, she is also teaching them self-control by giving them the opportunity to the rule-making, as suggested in Chapter Two by Botnarescue and Machado (1997).

Rules are also more readily obeyed when students are involved in their development. It is an accepted principle in organizational psychology that individuals will support and implement decisions they have helped make, while they will frequently resist obeying rules or implementing decisions that have been imposed upon them. (Jones and Jones, 1981, p71)

5.11 Pupil Movement

Throughout the study in the chosen classroom, the most common type of misbehaviour was pupil movement without permission. This type of misbehaviour requires careful control. In order to prevent it from occurring, the classroom teacher should establish useful routines at the beginning of the scholastic year. Moreover, the teacher should establish clear expectations concerning when pupils may leave their seat. As it was seen in the observed classroom, pupils spend the majority of their time in their seats. Therefore, the management of pupils who are out of their seat during periods of work when they are expected to work at their desk, is important.

In the observed classroom, there were many times when pupils wandered around the classroom when they were supposed to be on task in their seats. It is crucial that the teacher ensures that only a handful of pupils at any one time are
out of their seats, or away from their working area. When several pupils appear to be wandering about, it becomes much harder for the teacher to monitor pupils’ behaviour. This is one reason why the classroom teacher needs to set up an upper limit on how many pupils are allowed to queue up at the teacher’s desk. Being out of one’s seat for some pupils also acts as a break from their work and they may also, as a result, start to disturb others.

The author thinks that in order to prevent this behaviour problem, the classroom teacher should be consistent. The following observation illustrates this point well. The teacher was working at her desk and the pupils were supposed to be getting on quietly with their work. When one child moved out of her seat to approach the teacher, she intervened, “Don’t come out to my desk. If you want help, put your hand up, and I’ll come to you”. The child sat down, raised her hand and the teacher helped her out. Subsequently, another pupil was told not to interrupt the teacher, but some children still approached and were given help so that the rule came to nothing. This incident shows us the need for the classroom teacher to be more consistent and attentive in order to prevent the behaviour and discipline problems that follow the breaking down of a rule.

5.12 The Use of Reprimands

Burden (2006) highlights the importance of managing pupils’ behaviour effectively without using harsh and humiliating reprimands. Throughout the observation sessions, the author observed situations in which the classroom teacher used verbal reprimands and scolded pupils in front of all the class, in order to stop inappropriate behaviour. Moreover, there were certain times when the teacher was sarcastic and tended to react aggressively to minor incidents. The author thinks that such methods were not effective at all. The classroom teacher should make sparing and consistent use of reprimands by “being firm rather than aggressive, targeting the right pupil, criticising the behaviour and not the person, using private rather than public reprimands whenever possible, being fair and consistent, and avoiding sarcasm and idle
The author highlights a number of qualities which are vital for the effective use of reprimands. These are found in Appendix B.

5.13 Reasoning Out with the Pupils

When behaviour and discipline problems took place, there were times when the classroom teacher tackled the problem by talking to the pupils to help them understand what they were doing wrong. The author thinks that this is the most effective strategy for the teacher to use when discipline problems occur. This was evident in a survey of teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of different strategies used to deal with behaviour problems, conducted for the Elton Report (DES, 1989), in which results showed that while almost any strategy can be effective if used skilfully and in the right situation, strategies based on reasoning with pupils were perceived as being the most effective. If the teacher just uses commands and orders to stop misbehaviour, the young pupils might have no idea what the point of obeying these orders could be. Therefore, it is important for the classroom teacher to reason things out with the pupils so that they become aware of why they need to behave in a certain manner.

5.14 Ignoring Misbehaviour

Although the strategy of ignoring misbehaviour was not pointed out in the literature review, this strategy was sometimes used by the classroom teacher observed in order to deal with behaviour problems. On one hand, this strategy was effective when the teacher had to deal with behaviour problems that were caused to attract her attention. On the other hand, there were times when this strategy was not successful because when one pupil was left to misbehave, several pupils joined in almost immediately. Instead of correcting one pupil, the classroom teacher had to correct a whole team of friends. The author thinks that this strategy can slow down the pace of the lessons and can lead to more serious misbehaviour later on.
5.15 Code of Discipline and Behaviour in Schools

In the published document, *The Code of Discipline and Behaviour in Schools (2002, p4)*, it is stated that “the cornerstones of standards of students’ behaviour are respect for oneself, respect for others, respect for the school and the local community, and respect for the environment.” The published document assigns *responsibilities* to the managerial staff, teachers, parents and pupils in order to obtain appropriate behaviour. It is the responsibility of the Head of School to create the right climate within which individuals in the school community can fulfil their responsibilities and to ensure that the school’s Code is administered in a manner that is consistent and fair to all. School personnel should consider themselves responsible at all times for the behaviour of the students within sight or sound of them and should respond promptly and firmly to any instances of unacceptable behaviour. The document promotes the idea that teachers and managerial staff responsibilities are more important than those of the parents and pupils. A quick glance shows that fourteen lines in it are dedicated to the head’s responsibilities, twenty-four lines to the teachers’ responsibilities, while a five line note to the responsibilities of the parents and nine lines for the pupils’ responsibilities.

Both the literature review and the research carried out for this dissertation showed that one of the most important causes of behaviour and discipline problems was of family origin. In this context, parents’ responsibilities towards their children were extremely important. The author believes that for the well being of the children, help should be given to those families who are facing problems. With regards to parents’ responsibilities, all the Code (2002, p2) mentions is that parents should “not only be made aware of the aims, values and the nature of expected behaviour of the school but that they be actively encouraged to become involved in the process of the drawing up of the school Code.” Granted that all this, including another section in the document related to parent expectations, is fundamental for the process of controlling behaviour and avoiding discipline problems, the Code should include the responsibility which the parents have towards their children. The document should highlight
the importance of parents giving their children the values which are so important at school such as the intrinsic love towards reading and the appreciation of knowledge, sciences and art. Moreover, when dealing with serious behaviour problems, parents should work hand in hand with the school educational authorities for the common goal of helping the child eliminate the problem. A list of Parents’ Responsibilities is given in Appendix C.

With reference to the Code, it does not address student responsibilities either. Although several important skills are mentioned, such as self-control, conflict management, problem-solving and decision making, the author believes that pupils should be made accountable for their own behaviour. Pupils should be given all the help, support and understanding needed but they should recognise that despite having many rights, they have a number of responsibilities, primarily related to their own behaviour. A list of Pupils’ Responsibilities is given in Appendix D.

5.16 Conclusion

This chapter discussed fundamental principles that must be borne in mind when establishing responsible classroom discipline in early schooling. Instead of just focusing on how to deal with misbehaviour, teachers need to implement strategies in order to prevent behaviour and discipline problems. Prevention is a way to guide and control behaviour and according to Kazdin (1995), it increases a child’s chances of success, it helps to build self-esteem, competence and resilience. By creating an exciting classroom environment, establishing rules and routines, planning interesting and motivating lessons, establishing positive relationships, teaching self-control, and promoting positive behaviour in the classroom, teachers will prevent discipline problems and will help their young pupils become responsible for their own behaviour.
Chapter Six

Conclusions and Recommendations
6.1 Conclusion

In conclusion, the present study showed that in every form of schooling, especially in early schooling, responsible classroom discipline is very important because without it, the teaching-learning process cannot be efficient and ethical. For any thoughtful teaching to occur, there has to be a positive, supportive environment, which meets the needs of the pupils and which allows the learning process to flow smoothly. A good classroom environment should be encouraging, helpful and non-threatening. The more the class is disciplined, the easier it is for the teacher to teach and for the pupils to learn.

The most important thing to bear in mind in considering discipline is that creating the necessary order is more to do with the skills involved in effective teaching than it is to do with how you deal with pupil misbehaviour. If the learning activities are well planned and prepared, if the presentation elicits and maintains pupils’ attention, interest and involvement, and if the activities are challenging and offer realistic opportunities for success, then the necessary teaching environment will come out as a natural consequence of these qualities. The more prepared the teacher enters a class, the less likely it is that disciplinary problems would crop up, although in some situations even if the teacher is thoroughly prepared and very experienced, all classes can be challenging.

The study indicated that although unproductive student behaviour is frequently a response to factors within the classroom, student behaviour is also influenced by variables within the larger society. Although the classroom teacher cannot immediately or directly alter these social factors, understanding them does enable the teacher to place disruptive behaviour in perspective and to create environments that reduce rather than intensify their impact.

It has been said that ‘an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.’ The study showed that this statement is the key to effective classroom discipline. The classroom teacher can prevent discipline problems by creating a positive, safe classroom environment, employing effective instructional skills, meeting
pupils’ needs, promoting positive behaviour, identifying the origin of misbehaviour, establishing rules and routines, teaching pupils self-control, establishing positive teacher-student relationships and positive peer relationships. These factors are important because they help the classroom teacher to create an environment in which students feel happy and excited about learning, elicit more positive student behaviour and facilitate learning. Despite the teacher’s efforts to create a positive, supportive and stimulating environment, there will still be some pupils who will cause behaviour problems. The study showed that there are several ways to deal with misbehaviour. Some of these strategies are: reasoning with pupils, using reprimands effectively, by ignoring unwanted behaviour, through class work management skills, giving rewards, using a best behaviour star chart, changing seating arrangements, being consistent and by teaching pupils how to control their own behaviour.

The Code of Behaviour and Discipline in Schools, a policy published by the Ministry of Education, can be of a major help to educators since it includes guidelines of what precisely is a teacher supposed to do in the different classroom situations. After examining the document, the author pointed some modifications that might be done to improve the Code of Behaviour and Discipline in Schools. The modifications refer to more emphasis to be made on the parents’ and pupils’ responsibilities.

6.2 Suggestions

This final part of the dissertation is dedicated to three suggestions which the author thinks would be very beneficial to implement in the Maltese educational system in order to establish responsible classroom discipline. Firstly, the author suggests that a teacher should implement effective teaching methods that prevent negative behaviour and discipline problems and encourage positive behaviour.

The list presented below includes effective teaching methods, suggested by the author, which are designed to help new teachers and teachers who have
discipline and classroom management problems. In order to prevent behaviour and discipline problems, a teacher should:

1. Discover and understand students’ psychological needs
2. Understand students’ academic needs and interests
3. Create a positive environment that meets the students’ needs and facilitate optimal learning
4. Know what causes misbehaviour and how to deal with those causes
5. Provide clear rules and procedures
6. Establish a positive rapport with the students
7. Employ effective communication skills
8. Establish positive peer relationships
9. Develop positive self-concepts
10. Plan interesting and motivating lessons
11. Involve students in the learning process
12. Teach students to be responsible for their own behaviour
13. Involve parents and guardians to a reasonable degree

Secondly, in the discussion chapter the author gives a list of positively-phrased classroom rules (enclosed in Appendix A) designed for teachers to discuss with the young pupils and display in their classroom. Thirdly, in the discussion chapter the author also suggests a list of parent responsibilities (enclosed in Appendix C) and a list of pupil responsibilities (enclosed in Appendix D) that should help both parents and pupils to understand their responsibilities. The author thinks that the list of parent responsibilities should be given to the parents of the pupils, by the teacher. Moreover, the list of pupil responsibilities should be given to each and every pupil and the classroom teacher should discuss it with the young pupils and revise it with them from time to time.

6.3 Final Suggestions

In the school community there should be more cooperation between teachers and parents. More meetings for the parents should be held and parents should be assigned the role of co-educators so that they will always be aware of their
young children’s education, behaviour and progress. The importance of their own responsibilities for their own behaviour should also be emphasised more to pupils. Furthermore, before finding and implementing strategies to deal with behaviour and discipline problems, teachers should first apply strategies that prevent these problems from occurring.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

The data in this study comes from a limited sample of just one classroom with a classroom teacher, a Learning Support Assistant and ten pupils. Although this study highlights the importance of responsible classroom discipline in every form of schooling, it is more relevant to the early year groups in primary school.
References


Ministry of Education. (2002). *Good Behaviour and Discipline Policy for Schools*.


Appendices
Appendix A

*A List of Positively-Phrased Classroom Rules*

1. Walk quietly and safely
2. Listen carefully
3. Put your hand up to speak
4. Sit on your chair nicely
5. Work quietly
6. Play safely
7. Be polite and kind to others
8. Take care of classroom and school property
9. Always do your best
Appendix B

Qualities Vital for the Skilful and Effective Use of Reprimands

1. Correct targeting
2. Firmness
3. Express concern
4. Avoid anger
5. Emphasise what is required
6. Maintain psychological impact
7. Avoid confrontations
8. Criticize the behaviour not the pupil
9. Use private rather than public reprimands
10. Pre-emptive
11. State rules and rationale
12. Avoid making hostile remarks
13. Avoid unfair comparisons
14. Be consistent
15. Do not make empty threats
16. Avoid reprimanding the whole class
17. Make an example
Appendix C

Parents’ Responsibilities

At home, parents are responsible for:

1. Establishing high expectations for their children.
2. Creating a home environment that supports learning by:
   i. Making children aware of the importance of school
   ii. Providing quiet areas at home where study can take place
   iii. Making sure that their children do their homework and do it well
   iv. Enhancing love towards reading
   v. Talking to their children about schoolwork and current events
   vi. Making sure that their children are well-prepared for school each day
   vii. Discussing the school rules and classroom rules with their children
   viii. Teaching their children how to respect others and expecting them to show these qualities at home and in public areas
3. Becoming a positive role model in their children’s life.

At school, parents are responsible for:

1. Developing positive relationships with the classroom teacher and the school staff
2. Participating in parent-teacher conferences to be aware of their child’s performance and progress
3. Informing the classroom teacher or the school staff when their child is having problems at home or at school
4. Attending school events
5. Attending discussions about educational issues
6. Becoming involved about school issues
Appendix D

Pupils’ Responsibilities

At school, pupils are responsible for:

1. Using good manners
2. Acting in a safe manner
3. Keeping the school clean
4. Taking care of their classroom and the school property
5. Being punctual
6. Being prepared for each lesson
7. Participating in learning
8. Following the directions given by the classroom teacher and the school staff
9. Respecting the others
10. Working against any form of bullying
11. Solving conflicts in a non-violent way
12. Completing school tasks on time
13. Doing the homework and doing it well
14. Asking for help whenever they have problems