

**A Study of Student Perceptions of Teacher Characteristics and its Influence upon the  
Management  
of  
Student Behaviour in Four Malaysian Secondary Schools**

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**Abstract:**

This study is about how student perceptions of teacher behaviour influence their own behaviour and what implications follow for behavioural management in Malaysian secondary schools. A quantitative questionnaire was administered to 120 students from four secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. Semi structured and open interviews were used with a subsample of 32 students (8 from each school) and 8 Discipline Teachers (2 from each school) selected on the basis of survey responses which explored their relationships further. Data was analysed with SPSS. Exploratory factor analysis was used to identify the underlying domains. Secondly, stepwise logistic regression analysis was used to explore the combined and separate effects of teacher characteristics on student behaviour. Findings revealed that a considerable number of students disliked their teachers and subjects taught at their schools. The P values for most of the perceived teacher characteristics were significant ( $P < 0.05$ ). The data from both surveys and interviews were further analysed in the context of typology. The data compared teachers' professionalism with reference to their pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal and disciplining styles. Students' negative perceptions of some teachers were found to be correlated with students' self reported behaviour. In this respect the views of Discipline Teachers were supportive and added some nuance to students' perceived teacher characteristics. It was concluded that student perceptions of teacher characteristics may contribute to student disciplinary problems and hence this has implications for behavioural management in schools.

It is argued that schools need to examine problems that are within their means and their capacity to resolve. It is further proposed that in order to minimise student disciplinary problems, teachers need to reflect upon their own behaviour and professional practices. Implications for future

policies on teacher recruitment and professional development are discussed. It is concluded that teachers' skills in the effective management of student behaviour are indeed a sign of teacher professionalism.

**Key Phrases:**

**Teacher Behaviour:** refers to personal and emotional characteristics exhibited by teachers either voluntarily or involuntarily by means of verbal and non-verbal communications, or both, during the course of their professional engagement or relationship with students.

**Student Behaviour:** refers to a student's undesirable or disruptive behaviour in schools in general which brings about adverse effect not only upon the learning environment, but that leads to student suspension or exclusion, which in turn deprives them of their learning opportunity.

**Behavioural Management:** refers to a system adopted by schools to monitor and correct student behaviour, in order for students to hold respect for teachers and adhere to school rules so that teaching and learning can take place effectively.

**Pedagogical or Curricular Responsibilities:** refers to the core business of teaching and learning which incorporates teaching skills, adhering to school ethos and culture, such as observing the basic rules of punctuality, obeying administrative directives in following the timetable, the prescribed curriculum, and curriculum related issues such as marking assignments and providing feedback.

**Ethical Characteristics:** is mainly about teachers as value transmitters and the ability to provide exemplary behaviour which includes teacher attitudes, bias and preconceived notions about student's academic ability and of their ethnicity and culture. It also includes teacher morality and their moral views, the treatment of students as individuals and how teachers respond to their needs.

**Interpersonal Characteristics:** relates to teachers' social skills, showing love and care and acting in a manner that commands student respect and of student liking for teachers. For example, teachers showing a relaxed mood, being friendly, approachable, attending to student needs, patience, mannerism and of emotional control.

**Disciplining Style:** refers to a teacher's response to student behaviour in general, communication of rules, imposition of disciplinary sanctions and teachers' own attitude and seriousness about the importance of discipline as a prerequisite for the culture of successful schooling. It also includes the maintenance of student data and records of their behaviour.

## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to a number of people whom I come into contact throughout the duration of my doctoral candidacy at the School of Education, University of Leicester, UK. First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to **Dr Chris Comber** for the number of roles he played in my life since I joined the University as a Masters student. **Dr Chris Comber** was my supervisor, my mentor and a genuine friend whose intellectual calibre and benevolence I truly admire. He is indeed a model of humanity and of academic excellence. Words cannot express his relentless efforts in encouraging me to think in different ways in every stage of the research, helping me to find the language to articulate my thoughts and above all bringing out the researcher in me. His contribution to my professional development has been profound and enduring.

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Affecting student Dislike for Schools and Manifestation of  
Unwanted Behaviour in schools

### List of Abbreviations

01. BERNAMA	(National News Agency)
02. BMS	(Behavioural Management Systems)
03. DEO	(District Education Office)
04. EPU	(Economic Planning Unit- Prime Minister's Department)
05. FTED	(Federal Territory Education Department)
06. HRCM	(Human Rights Commission of Malaysia)
07. HRDM	(Human Resource Development of Malaysia)
08. MEG	(Malaysian Education Guide)
09. MGO	(Malaysian General Orders)
10. MOEM	(Ministry of Education Malaysia)
11. MSDG	(Malaysian Schools' Discipline Guide)
12. NEN	(National Education News)
13. NST	(New Straits Times)
14. SED	(State Education Department)



# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **Introduction to the Study**

### **1.00 Background:**

For the past two decades, there have been regular headlines (news) in the media about the growing concern and seriousness of student indiscipline in Malaysian secondary schools. It is the general perception of the Malaysian public, that student discipline in schools has deteriorated over the years and the problem has reached a crisis level and demands a serious response (The Star, April 2007). At the same time, teachers and teaching have been subjected to unrelenting criticism as many social ills like juvenile delinquency (Kassim et al., 2004) and hooliganism are increasingly being related to schooling and discipline in schools (NST, July 1999). Moreover in the context of behaviour management, schools are allegedly becoming breeding grounds for racial polarization and institutional marginalization of students belonging to minority ethnic groups (The Star, August 2008; Joseph, 2005). Though ethical guidelines (MOEM, 1994; MGO, 1993) are provided for teachers in discharging their professional duties there have been numerous cases of alleged negligence and deliberate discrepancies that question the fairness and integrity of teachers and the management of student discipline in Malaysian secondary schools (The Star, April 2007).

A scrutiny of the media criticism on the management of student behaviour in Malaysian schools reveals two clear points. Firstly schools in general are blamed for failing to control student behaviour and not doing enough to stop the

proliferation of indiscipline. Secondly, schools are being criticised for their inappropriate discipline strategies. This is because many affected students are allegedly victimized in the disciplining process (HRCM, 2003; NST, March 2002).

The Ministry of Education is gravely concerned about the increasing reports of disorder and danger in school environments (MOEM, 2004) as this is affecting the image and dignity of teachers and the teaching profession. In the pursuit of addressing this phenomenon the ministry has directed all schools to pay serious attention to student discipline and discipline strategies (The Educator, 2006; 2005). The ministry has also pledged to take action against principals who show an indifferent attitude and on those who fail to report cases of serious misbehaviour in the interest of safeguarding their school image (Daily Express Dec.2003; MOEM, 2004; 1993; 1991).

While schools are doing their best to safeguard their discipline image there are many unanswered questions regarding the reasons as to why students misbehave in a manner that result in office referrals, in-school suspensions, out of school suspensions or expulsions. In total, the perennial problem of student indiscipline in Malaysian secondary schools (Azlinawaty, 2006; Halijah, 2000) raises questions about the integrity of the behavioural management systems (Loh, 1995), the leadership of the school principals (Mamat, 1993), the relevance of the curriculum and above all the virtues of teacher professionalism.

### **1.01 The Purpose of the Study:**

The very essence of this study is the possible correlation between the perceived characteristics in some teachers and the pervasive phenomenon of student indiscipline in schools. In the endeavour to resolve student disciplinary issues in schools and to identify factors that contribute to this phenomenon (Psunder, 2006) this study looks into three pertinent weaknesses that are being overlooked. Firstly, schools often look for reasons or factors that are external (Macbeath and Sugimine, 2002; Macbeath, 2000) by placing much emphasis on matters such as students' background and the influence of media and other societal factors, that are clearly beyond the capacity of schools to exert control over (Arends, 2001). Secondly, it might also be important to say that schools often pay little or no attention to internal elements such as looking into possible weaknesses on the part of teachers (Nelson-Smith, 2008; Quinn, 2005), their leadership or flaws in the educational system (Avery, 2001; Skiba et al., 2000) and the implementation of policies that might not be effective in the management of student behaviour (Varma, 1993). Thirdly, schools seldom consider the views of the most important clients, the students themselves, (Cook-Sather, 2006; Smyth, 2006) on the issue of school discipline and matters that directly concern students' lives in schools.

### **1.02 Chapter Outline:**

This chapter is presented in four parts. The first introductory section briefly outlines the seriousness of student indiscipline in Malaysian schools, the urgency to address this pervasive phenomenon and the purpose of the study. The second part touches on the research problem, the need for teacher participation and their responsibility in student learning and discipline strategies. The third part

illustrates how both students and teachers via their actions and inactions jointly determine the discipline milieu in schools and how they influence the management of student behaviour. The concluding part provides a summary of the key issues raised in the chapter and thereby relates the significance and the rationale behind the study. The final part of the chapter gives a brief description on the writer's personal reasons for embarking upon this study. The chapter ends with the overview of the thesis structure.

Studies conducted in other educational settings have indicated that teacher characteristics hold the potential to influence student behaviour (Levin and Nolan, 2007). Teachers via their pedagogical skills, ethical behaviours, good interpersonal characteristics and positive disciplining styles could shape student behaviour. The crux of this study is based on the broad media allegations that characteristics of teachers could be a possible contributory factor in student indiscipline in Malaysian schools. The study investigates the interrelationship between student indiscipline and the alleged influence of 'negative characteristics' on the part of a handful of teachers who may be present in schools.

### **1.03 Ineffective Teachers:**

According to Yariv (2004) 'problematic' or ineffective workers comprise about 5-10% of the personnel in any organization and schools are no exception. Yariv claims that despite an estimate of 5% and higher for the teaching profession, the dismissal rate of ineffective teachers is less than 1% in many educational settings. It has been **estimated** that about 4% of the total teaching force in the UK (Wragg

et al., 2000; Ofsted, 1996:10) and about 5% of teachers in US (Tucker, 1997; Lavelly, 1992) are **estimated** to be ineffective. A similar proportion is also believed to prevail in other countries. However in the UK context, this might be attributed not so much to the incompetence among teachers but the inability of teachers in adapting to the demands of the new curriculum, rapid changes in teaching methods and the higher profile assigned to teaching standards by the government and the media (Yariv, 2004).

While the allegations about teachers in the above reports seemed to be confined to infractions in the school setting alone, it might be a totally a different scenario in the Malaysian context. As transmitters of values, it is the cultural norm and the aspiration of the Ministry of Education that teachers lead an unquestionable life both inside and outside school (Noordin, 1996). However, it was reported at the *Dewan Rakyat* (The House of Representatives) in Parliament that in recent years alone, the Ministry of Education has identified 200 ‘problematic teachers’ on alleged or proven involvement in cases both inside and outside schools (Bernama-The National News Agency, June, 2007). Among these, 37% of teachers were charged with absenteeism, 17% for outraging modesty or sexual harassment, 15% for corruption, and 10.5% for misconduct, dishonesty and failure to adhere to directives, 9.5% for drugs, 7.0% for religious violations (polygamy and adultery), 6.0% for theft, and 1.0% for serious debt. While these figures serve as clear evidence of breaches of professional ethics (MGO, 1993) they may not be ‘telling the whole story’, as there are numerous cases of teacher misbehaviour that goes unreported every year (The Star, July 2008; The Star, October 2003).

According to a report by American Federation of Teachers, schools are not generally the source of student behavioural problems (AFT, 2007). The report claims that although schools cannot completely eliminate them, they do have substantial power to prevent poor behaviour in some students and greatly reduce it in many others.

In light of the above, one pertinent question one might ask with regard to student indiscipline in schools is, 'Why the blame should always be on the students?' Students by virtue of their background variations do pose numerous challenges to teachers (Arends, 2001). However, it is undeniable that teachers' personal and professional characteristics can have the potential to influence students' live (Halstead and Taylor, 2000 cited in Rice, 2002, p.23; Turnuklu and Galton, 2001). It is the aspiration of this research that teachers reflect on the nature of their own professional practice by asking, 'in what way or ways their own behaviour may give rise to student indiscipline in schools?' In view of the reports on 'problematic' teachers (Bernama, June, 2007) it is hypothesized that some of the causes of student deviant behaviour in Malaysian schools may have links with perceived unethical behaviour in some teachers and their alleged violations of teacher professionalism.

As student indiscipline and allegations of teacher 'ineffectiveness' is continuing to take centre stage in the local media, the present study considered the following queries as the basis for investigation: 'Can teachers themselves be regarded perpetrators in student discipline matters? 'Can teachers in schools instigate, aggravate or add to student disciplinary problems?' As mediators, 'what do the

**Discipline Teachers** (teachers assigned with special responsibility to deal with student discipline matters) feel about the reported allegations of teacher misbehaviour and that of student behaviour?’

This study, via the perceptions of both students and Discipline Teachers, highlights and attributes some of the causes of student indiscipline to the perceived character traits of teachers (the people who play the *loco- parentis* role in schools). In other words, for the purpose of data gathering, this study used the perceptions of two groups of respondents: firstly students, the target group and secondly that of **Discipline Teachers**. The perception of this special group of teachers in this study served as counter evidence in triangulating and validating the data on student perceptions of teacher characteristics. Despite the methodological complexity and elements of sensitivity it raised, an attempt was made in the present study to seek answers for the above questions.

#### **1.04 Why Students?**

Educational leadership has often overlooked, marginalised or even neglected the inclusion of an important component, ‘the student voice’ in seeking solutions for problems pertaining to student related matters (Smyth, 2006). It is only rational or rather logical to ask the most informed group (Cook-Sather, 2006), the ‘clients’ of the educational process themselves, on what should be done about issues directly concerning their welfare.

Messiou (2004; Wearmouth, 2004; Ballard, 1995) claim that, as in any other endeavour, without the views of the affected parties, the picture on any

educational issue may be regarded as incomplete and therefore opportunities for improvements or solutions are also overlooked. Students' views on educational practices are often ignored or neglected due to the common assumptions that they would be in no position to provide valid information on educational matters. Thus a pertinent methodological question in this context might be, 'How can we rely on information given by students?' According to Joshua and Bassey (2004) students are the direct beneficiaries of instruction and they spend a great deal of time with their teachers. As such they can offer useful inputs in identifying flaws during instruction or interaction and ways of remediation. In the opinion of these two writers, students can do this in spite of their seeming immaturity or lack of responsibility. Messiou, (2004) supports this notion further, claiming that as clients, students' views must be given due consideration on educational practices; they (the students) not only have the right to be heard (HRCM, 2003) but more importantly their perspectives may have bearing that can help contribute towards improvement in the field.

Conversely, according to Smyth (2006) when students feel their needs and aspirations are ignored they tend to develop a kind of hostility to their institution of learning and of schooling in general. When their emotional and psychological investment required for engagement in their schoolwork dampens, or become meaningless altogether, students tend to disengage ending up exhibiting a variety of anti-social behaviour (Smyth, 2006; Avery, 2001). Since student hostility and their alienation from school itself is the basic issue that needs seriously addressing, it is only sensible that 'their voices' are heard before discipline policies are formulated in the name of 'student welfare'.



Research since the beginning of this decade has demonstrated the significance of incorporating student voices. Research has included, (i) the investigation of everyday life in schools (Pollard et al., 2000); (ii) Learning and teaching practices (Arnot et al., 2004; and (iii) the needs and feelings of pupils who are marginalized (Reay and Lucey, 2000; Riley and Docking, 2004). These studies convey the message that students can provide a great deal of relevant information about what is needed for improvement (Flutter and Rudduck (2004). In making an argument for the inclusion of 'student voices' in school improvement or educational revamps, Quinn (2005), Macbeath (2000), and Macbeath and Sugimine (2002) all claim that schools should engage in their own evaluation rather than become victims of external judgments about their efficacy. It is the contention of these writers that such localised self evaluations using schools' own resources will be more authentic and appropriate and effective in bringing about the desired changes.

Citing the DfES (2001) publication, *Schools building on success*, Thomson and Gunter (2006) suggest that students should be involved in decisions not just about their own individual learning, but about their class and school as a whole. This, they claim can be achieved through the establishment of such things as school councils and regular surveys of student attitudes. Research also argues that, apart from simply acting as respondents in educational studies, and being the sources of data in projects which others implement, students can also become researchers in their own right (Thomson and Gunter, 2006). Students can devise and conduct their own inquiries into schooling and bring about recommendations based on their findings (Fielding, 2004; 2001).

As greater emphasis is being placed upon student focused school improvement strategies by ‘listening to student voices’(Thomson and Gunter, 2006), it is the aspiration of this study to extend the concept, to privilege students with a view to seeking reforms for teachers’ professional development (with regard to the management of student discipline) in the Malaysian context.

### **1.05 Why Teachers?**

Teaching is the essential profession, the one that makes every other profession possible. Teachers play a pivotal role in the development of all other professions and therefore the social, political and economic development of a country (MEG, 1996; HRDM, 1997).

A high quality teaching force, that is always learning is *sine qua non* of coping with the dynamic complexity of a ever changing world (MOEM, 1996). Teachers have the ability to reflect, ‘live’ and ‘experience’ their own learning. No one can be a good teacher unless he/she is a good learner. For this reason, Hoban and Hastings (2006) claim teachers should not be just ‘trained’ but ‘educated’ to see teaching as a process of life-long learning for self and professional development. Only teachers with a heightened sense of awareness and commitment of what it is to learn will have that kind of empathy with learners.

Teaching is mainly concerned with cognitive domain. However, according to (Yero, 2002) limiting teaching to one domain does not prepare or qualify teachers for their true professionalism. According to him, teachers’ ways of thinking and thought processes influence their own behaviour and habits. This in turn has the

potential to influence student behaviour (Yero, 2002). Levin and Nolan (2007) believe that teaching is the use of pre-planned behaviours. In the words of the writers, the single most important factor in determining the learning environment is teacher behaviour. Intentionally or unintentionally teachers' verbal and non-verbal behaviours influence student behaviours. For example, according to Patrick et al. (2000) the enthusiasm teachers show in their work and their interest and care for students are important elements that motivate students to participate in the learning process, creating a learning environment in which there is no apparent need for teachers to prod, coax, wheedle and virtually beg students to pay attention. As teaching is a reciprocal activity, teacher actions, inactions and reactions influence students and students' reactions influence teachers (Levin and Nolan (2007).

With respect to the above, Nicolaides et al. (2002) argue that school effect studies have mainly considered variables pertaining to teacher demography such as gender, age and educational background but not teachers' personal capacities and qualities. According to Nicolaides et al. (2002), in most studies, teachers are often considered as a source of information about student behaviour or implementers of prevention programs, but are rarely considered as witnesses or victims of student undesirable behaviour or school violence. Likewise, teachers with or without their intention or simply due to sheer carelessness or negligence, cause discipline implications upon students but are rarely considered the perpetrators (Delfabbro, et al. (2006). As such it is only rational that studies on teachers and their practices are carried out for their own professional reflection.

### **1.06 Student Behaviour and Teacher Behaviour:**

Students, by virtue of their differences in upbringing or cultural background exhibit a variety of behavioural characteristics in schools which need to be managed in order for schools to function as effective learning institutions (Tyler et al., 2006; Wearmouth, 2004; Arends, 2001). Likewise teachers, by virtue of their personal and professional qualities affect the learning environment in a multitude of ways (Rubie-Davies et al., 2006; Xu and Gulucino, 2006; Acikgoz, 2005; Anderman, 2002; Turner and Meyer, 2000). As teachers perceive student behaviour in different ways (Yoon, 2002; Borg, 1998), students too tend to have varying degrees of expectations and perceptions about their teacher behaviour (Tatar and Yahav, 1999).

According to Waltzlawick et al's (1967-cited in Wubbles et al., 1985) theory of communication, the behaviour of the teacher is influenced by the behaviour of the students and in turn influences student behaviour. Educational literature often cites that student behaviour affects teacher attitudes (Kyriacou, 2002). Similarly teacher behaviour also exerts a strong influence in shaping student attitude and behaviour (Kagan, 1992; Clark and Paterson, 1986). For example misbehaving students can cause stress on the part of teachers. Teachers who succumb to stress may in turn exhibit unpleasant behaviours such as moodiness or unresponsive behaviours towards students (Quinn, 2005). Therefore in the words of Wubbles et al. (1985) a circular communication process (in the form of a vicious circle) develops between teachers and students which not only influences behaviour but determines behaviour as well.

Writers such as Kowalski (2000), Abel and Sewell (1999), Hart et al. (1995) and Cohran-Smith and Lytle (1992) agree on the view that teachers sometimes experience difficulties in the management of their interpersonal skills when it comes to building social bonds with administrators and students. Likewise students also tend to experience similar difficulties with their teachers and peers in the school environment (Hyman and Snook, 2000; Cowen et al., 1996). What goes on in classrooms and in schools, (be it in the learning or behavioural context) is influenced by both the cultural world views held by the students (Squire et al., 2003; Gay, 2002; Arends, 2001; Fisher and Waldrup, 1999) and teachers' beliefs, attitudes and own set of values with regard to students, and the teaching and learning process (Squire et al., 2003; Gay, 2002). Inevitably the interaction of both teachers and students tend to jointly determine the discipline milieu in schools (Koul and Fisher, 2006; Kyriacou, 2002). When teacher expectations and student interests do not go hand in hand, there is a strong tendency for the occurrence of problems or a rift in the relationship between the two groups (Yoon, 2002) which is clearly a cause of concern for behavioural management.

According to Turnuklu and Galton (2001), teachers often do not consider the fact that their own behavioural characteristics can affect their pupils' behaviour in the classroom. Instead they attribute students' behaviour problems to individual characteristics and students' home factors. Perhaps such attributions can also reflect teachers' own ways of thinking and reacting in the context of their interaction with students (Turnuklu and Galton, 2001).

Teachers often complain about students' unwanted behaviour and ask the administrators and other stakeholders for intervention (Mallet and Paty, 1999; Price and Everett, 1997). Student misbehaviour can be a powerful predictor of teacher stress and burn out (Quinn, 2005; Borg et al., 1991). Studies indicate that perceived inattentiveness and disrespect from students are associated with teacher emotional exhaustion (Hastings and Bham, 2003). Van Dick and Wagner (2001) and Pierce and Molloy (1990) provide further evidence claiming that this factor is indeed a strong determinant of teacher dissatisfaction, absenteeism, turnover and leaving teaching. While these issues are causes of concern in their own right, Kyriacou (1987) cautions that teachers must accept the fact that disengagement on their part could deprive students of their learning opportunities. Galand et al. (2007) and Clemance (2001) believe that although the consequences of indiscipline in schools may be borne by both parties (teachers and students) the actual negative impact is felt more on the part of students.

Teachers and students are jointly accountable for the creation of a suitable learning environment in schools. Silins and Mulford (2004) claim that students and teachers are regarded as partners not only in the process of teaching and learning but everything that goes on in schools. Building productive learning communities and motivating students to engage in meaningful learning activities may be difficult but it is the major goal of education (Arends, 2001; Carr, 2000). Without strong commitment from teachers and co-operation on the part of students it might be virtually impossible to create learning environments in schools that are conducive (Rogers, 2002).

Willemse et al. (2005) suggest that in spite of all the other possible intruding factors such as the influence of student background factors, students' individual characteristics, the influence of peer subcultures and the media in students' school lives, somehow teachers have to assume responsibility for student behaviour. As in the direction of the present study it might be important to consider the 'Pygmalion Effect' (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1992). It is proposed that the way teachers perceive students is the way they tend to treat them and the way they treat them is the way students often become. Perceptions on the part of students with regard to others' behaviours might lead to hardening of attitudes and hence manifestation of their own behaviour. Quinn (2005) describes student behaviour as the expression of a complex interplay of biological and environmental factors. As such she argues that unless situational factors are accounted for, there might be a risk that students could be held disproportionately accountable for problems generated elsewhere in the school system.

Turnuklu and Galton (2001; Acikgoz, 1996; Grey and Richer, 1988) identify three common characteristics of students who exhibit disruptive behaviour in schools. Firstly, most disruptive students show low academic attainment and ability. Secondly, they often come from relatively poor socio-economic backgrounds. Thirdly, they may be subjected to abusive and inconsistent discipline in their homes. However, as Turnuklu and Galton (2001), (Osterman, 2000) and Maxwell (1987) point out, factors related to schools such as teachers' class management styles, teachers' lack of understanding, support and guidance have also been noted to be responsible for student disruptive behaviours. In the opinion of Ismail (1995) and Mamat (1993), the important aspects in behavioural

management in Malaysian schools is the failure on the part of teachers in understanding student home factors and in the ways they responded to student behaviour.

In the light of the above argument, the present study examines the influences of teacher characteristics in shaping student attitude and behaviour, and how teacher-student relationships implicate student behavioural management in Malaysian secondary schools.

#### **1.07 Policies of Inclusion and Teacher Responsibilities:**

The notion of a ‘common school for all’ is becoming the pedagogical norm in many countries around the world (Wearmouth, 2004; Parsons, 1999). It is a usual policy to include almost all students, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, in mainstream classes. Policies of inclusion lead to greater diversity of students including students whose behaviour might be difficult to manage. This policy ensures the democratic right of every child to be educated (Hoover and Kindsvatter, 1997) but the onus is now on the teachers to rely on class management skills to maintain on-task orientation and discipline. Studies have shown that policies of inclusion (with regard to equal placement and treatment of students) may help prevent and to reduce the incidence of student misbehaviour (Short and Shapiro, 1993). As policies of inclusion may **also** pose numerous discipline problems (Wearmouth, 2004) and it is argued that effectiveness of policies of inclusion is much dependent on the leadership, pedagogical skills and above all the caring attitude of teachers. With the



introduction of policies of inclusion in Malaysia (MOEM, 1994), there is now greater emphasis on the role of schools in fighting indiscipline.

Arends (2001) who supports these notions argues that there are many things that students bring to school that the school authorities, especially teachers, can do little about. For example, teachers have little influence over students' basic personalities, their home lives, or their early childhood experiences. Arends argues that some teachers attend only to these aspects pertaining to student background and that such attention is mostly unproductive and tends to induce or further deteriorate a discipline situation. It might be true that social factors, such as students' background or their parents' expectations, influence how hard students work in school. Similarly students' psychological well-being, anxieties, and dependencies also affect their effort (Anderman, 2003; Osterman, 2000). However teachers' influence in these areas is relatively limited as they cannot exert control over the influence of cultural, social and psychological factors. Instead argues Arends (2001), teachers are more effective in enhancing student motivation if they concentrate their efforts on factors that are within their abilities to control and influence. According to Arends, the most important things that teachers can control are their own attitudes towards and beliefs about children, particularly those they may have about students who come from different backgrounds than they do. 'Believing that every child can learn and that every child sees the world through his or her own cultural lenses can shift the burden of low engagement and low achievement from the child's background to where it often belongs- an understanding classroom and school' (Arends, 2001, p. 97).

In the words of Steele (1992, p.78 in Arends, 2001) 'If what is meaningful and important to a teacher is to become meaningful and important to a student, the student must feel valued by the teacher for his or her potential and as a person'. Thus the challenge for the teacher is to stimulate learning while not resulting in the student becoming alienated from their society knowledge, beliefs and values. Richardson (1996) found that teachers' beliefs about students and their learning abilities are among the major constructs which drive teachers' ways of thinking and classroom practices. He claims that teachers' belief systems crystallised through various cultural contexts, results in the development of different educational ideologies. For example, according to Quinn (2005) teachers' preconceived notions and judgmental views on students' ability often bring about direct impact on student behaviour.

In the pursuit of resolving student disciplinary issues, Quinn (2005) suggests that schools must put emphasis on factors that are within the ability of schools to exercise control. In other words, what is being implied here is that problems that originate from schools' internal sources must be regarded as the primary concern for schools. In the views of Psunder (2006), schools must identify the underpinning reasons for student disengagement before they can come up with possible solutions for student behavioural problems. He believes that without recognizing the underlying problems as to why students are misbehaving, the disciplinary actions taken by schools might be deemed reactive and not proactive. Reactive strategies such as suspension or expulsion or other forms of punishment can only bring about temporary relief and do not address the crux of the problem (Psunder, 2006). Moreover, such discipline strategies are regarded as negative and

may hold the potential for psychological implications on the part of the affected students. Furthermore, punitive strategies such as corporal punishment might bring about an adverse effect in the form of lawsuits against the imposing schools (MOEM, 2004). In such circumstances the authenticity and integrity of school leadership might be subjected to media criticism.

Acikgoz (2005) has indicated that teacher characteristics influence student engagement rates and students' liking for their schools in general. As such it is hypothesized that, if students' liking for their teachers improves it will foster greater engagement in schooling and thereby decrease unwanted student discipline problems in schools. In other words, by improving teacher-student relationships which are pivotal for students' liking for their schools, student respect for their teachers and their motivation to learn, schools can minimise student misbehaviour (Acikgoz, 2005).

In order for school authorities to make students follow what is expected of them and comply with the institution of schooling, students have to have some form of personal connection to the school and a sense of worthiness of the schooling experience (Angus, 2006). Angus suggests that the onus is on the part of the school, its teachers and leaders, to reach out to students, rather than expecting them to adjust to the entrenched school and teacher variables. If needs are not met, students who most need support to become engaged (Wallace, 1998) will feel disillusioned, ignored, and even denigrated by the school system (Angus, 2006).

### **1.08 The Significance of the Study:**

To recap, in recent years due to the declining standards of student discipline in secondary schools, there has been severe criticism from many quarters on the role of teachers in Malaysia. Students have impeded the educational process through severe behaviour infractions warranting disciplinary responses. The number of students involving in deviant behaviours nationwide has increased tremendously over the years (MOEM, 2004). The nature of discipline problems in schools have become more severe, with serious cases of indiscipline such as student disrespect for teachers, vandalism, peer bullying, and gang fights. Following these incidences of severity, there has been a notable increase in student exclusion rates and students held for criminal behaviour (Kassim et al, 2004).

The declining trend in discipline values as advocated by the various NGO's in Malaysian society is indeed a clear cause of concern for behavioural management systems in schools. Disruptions in whatever manner, hamper lessons for all students and serious discipline cases take away the teachers' precious time in dealing with the perpetrators (Nelson, 2002), which could otherwise be devoted to effective learning and student improvement. The time spent by teachers addressing discipline leads to a lack of learning and time off task. Furthermore, students who exhibit disruptive behaviours infringe the rights of other students who are well behaved, in having to forgo their valuable lessons and at the same time handicap themselves by depriving their own learning opportunities (Wearmouth, 2004). Nelson's study (as cited in Jones, 1989) has noted a subtler and more debilitating effect of a continual barrage of classroom problems and

interruption – the stress and related energy drain on teachers who are attempting to maintain discipline control.

With reference to the above, there are two areas of criticism in general whereby Malaysian teachers come under attack in the media. Firstly, teachers are allegedly not playing their part in the control and prevention of student indiscipline in schools. Secondly, there are alleged reports of some teachers who act as perpetrators in inducing or aggravating student indiscipline in schools, which has brought the credibility and trustworthiness of the once noble profession into a questionable status. As student indiscipline can create an unhealthy learning environment for both teachers and students, research in this area in the direction of the present study is highly desirable.

Previous studies have shown the influence of teacher characteristics upon student behaviour and learning outcomes (e.g. Osterman, 2000; Daley et al., 2005; Abrantes et al., 2007). Research has also used student perceptions in the analysis of teacher behaviour and of student liking for their schools (Miller, et al 2000; Carr, 2005). However researchers like Hanna (1998) and Marchesi (1998) feel that many studies had examined student behavioural issues with simplistic and narrow terms associated with academic achievement, and in relation to methods for controlling problem students. This study takes this further into another area of interest, by investigating the inherent elements of teacher behaviour and its possible impact upon student behavioural management in Malaysian schools. The significant aspect of this study is the use of student voices in the identification of flaws in the school system. The study endeavoured to explore the amount of

commitment and emphasis teachers place in considering their professional and personal image or how they value their professionalism in terms of their (i) pedagogical skills (ii) ethical characteristics (iii) inter-personal relationships with their students and (iii) positive disciplining style.

The results of the study will be useful for the Ministry of Education especially for the Teacher training division. It is also expected to benefit teacher unions which often come to the forefront to defend teachers against allegations on teacher-student conflicts. The study can also be useful for school heads and administrators in organizing in-service programs and developing professional guidelines for teachers. Above all the outcome might be beneficial for the School Discipline Units under the various state Education Departments. Last but not least the study might also useful for the various NGO's who might have interest in school affairs.

#### **1.09 The Writer's Interest in Embarking upon this Study:**

The writer was a regular classroom teacher for sixteen years and a **Head of Discipline** for the ten years prior to conducting this study and during that time has noted the influence of teacher characteristics among students developing negative attitudes towards teachers, schools and interest in learning. The motivation for this study was based on the writer's concern as a Head of Discipline as to the amount of time disruptive students taking away from classroom instruction and the increasing number of induced or aggravated behaviour problems due to teacher characteristics or their styles of behaviour management in the school he had worked. This is in line with Child and Williams' (1996) claim that, personal

reasons and to some extent implies an initial degree of learner motivation and involvement in particular research.

The writer has personally experienced many cases of student indiscipline, originating from student teacher conflicts. Moreover he has received numerous complaints from parents and students which have placed him in a difficult situation in the context of decision making and seeking solutions for student disciplinary problems in his own institution. He has also heard of the same issues being reported by his counterparts in other schools during official meetings and professional dealings with them where student disciplinary issues were discussed.

Scheurich (1994) feels that to a large extent what one believes in determines what one wants to study. This notion is further supported by Mehra (2002) who claims that a researcher's personal beliefs and values are reflected not only in the choice of methodology and interpretations of the findings, but also in the choice of research topics. In view of this the writer developed a personal interest in the study to satisfy both his professional interests and to complete his doctoral thesis.

#### **1.10 Overview of Thesis:**

In view of psychological, educational and sociological implications surrounding the issue of pervasive student discipline, this Malaysian study examined the possible causes of student indiscipline via student perceptions of teacher characteristics. This study reiterates that strategies and policies have been ignoring the significance of student voices in bringing about the necessary changes in educational endeavour. This study is organized and presented in ten

chapters. The following are a brief outline of the chapters in terms of some of the theoretical, methodological and structural approaches used in the study.

As noted, **the first chapter** examined the purpose and context of the study in general terms. It introduced the research problem and provided some background information on the status of school discipline in Malaysian schools. The following is a summary of some of the key concepts embedded in the chapter. (i) Schools should look into internal factors that might help identify some of the possible flaws in the school system and that of teacher characteristics. (ii) By allowing student participation in the identification of behavioural problems, it is believed that schools would be in a position to understand the discipline situation better. (iii) The hypothetical basis for this study is that student perceptions may lead to manifestations in attitudes and behaviour and thereby can bring about implications upon behavioural management in schools. (iv) Teachers need to reflect upon their self and the role they play in the management of student behaviour in schools.

**The second chapter**, via some of the available local literature, discusses the contexts and cultural aspects pertaining to the pervasive problem of student indiscipline in Malaysia. While highlighting the significance and seriousness of student disciplinary issues in Malaysian secondary schools, it also explains further the need and rationale for the present study.

**The third chapter** contains a review of literature on understanding student discipline and behavioural management that supports the need for the present



study. This chapter defines what discipline is and describes the significance of student discipline and portrays the implications of teacher-student interactions when teachers fail to articulate their classroom management skills. The chapter also contains descriptions of some of the common behavioural approaches.

In substantiating and strengthening its purpose, **the fourth chapter** reviewed some of the existing literature that focused on the significance of student voices in bringing about changes in school improvement. This chapter reviews literature on teacher related factors that carry the potential for conflict in student-teacher relationship as identified by students.

As the findings of the study is analysed and discussed in the context of teacher professionalism, **the fifth chapter** provides a brief review of literature on some of the key aspects of teacher professionalism in the context of teachers' pedagogical skills, ethical perspectives, interpersonal relationships and disciplining styles. The second part of this chapter reviews some of the empirical literature that is identical to the purpose and design of the present study.

**The sixth chapter** outlines the methodological aspects of the study. Based on the conceptual framework derived from literature on past studies this section supports the methodological approach that justifies the sampling and the dual approach (mixed mode) that uses a quantitative instrument and qualitative interviews.

**Chapter Seven** presents the reporting and analysis of data obtained via quantitative methods while **Chapter Eight** reports the findings and analytical

interpretations of the qualitative interviews with selected students and Discipline Teachers.

**Chapter Nine** provides a summary and discusses the findings and analytical interpretations of the quantitative and qualitative aspects contained in chapter seven and eight respectively.

**Chapter Ten** briefly summarises the entire context of the present study and concludes as how it might contribute to construction of new knowledge in resolving student disciplinary problems using student voices in the Malaysian context. It addresses the limitations and delimitations, and presents suggestions and recommendations for effective management of student behaviour, teacher reflections for staff-development and in-service courses, and of future teacher training programs.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **CONTEXTS AND CULTURES**

Teaching by virtue of the responsible nature of its task has intrinsically a claim of its own. It could be recognized and accorded the status of a profession endowed with privilege and status preserved for the exclusive guild or body of men of superior knowledge and skill and bound by the spirit of coterie. The high regard in which some of the early teachers were held in estimation of the public as an image of respectability and wisdom was almost legendary.

Education is a service which is responsible to the well being of a progressive and dynamic society. It is an investment in the human resources of a nation... The service of a teacher is unique. He deals with the human mind which is indefinitely variable and definitely impressionable. Society cannot afford to entrust such responsible task to any but to those who have personal qualities and high competence to discharge that duty...

Education is only as good as the teacher. It would be sinful to allow deterioration of the teaching standards through any cause whatsoever!

**Royal Commission on the Teaching Service  
West Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 1971  
Pages 97-98**

#### **2.00 Introduction:**

Education is one of the essential tools for the growth and development of the individual, society and the nation as a whole. According to Freeman (2005) it is increasingly recognized as the cornerstone to the continued growth of a country (p.153). The current Education System though inherited from the British, is reflective of the development of the national education policies since independence in 1957.

#### **2.01 Chapter Outline:**

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the purpose of education in Malaysia and the ongoing concern for student discipline in schools. It provides the reader with some understanding of the historical development, contexts and cultures that

underpin the purpose of this study. The second part provides information on the organizational structure of the Malaysian public school system and the behavioural management system that operates within schools. The third part discusses the seriousness of student discipline in Malaysian schools which reiterates the very purpose of the study by highlighting the ‘conflict’ faced by some teachers and their reluctance to participate in student discipline. In light of local literature and in line with the objectives of the present study, it discusses the need for a changing role, and of expectations placed on teachers endeavouring to counter the growing demands of social changes and the subsequent trends in student behaviour. The chapter ends with brief statistical information on teachers and schools in Malaysia.

## **2.02 The Background:**

The aim of education in Malaysia, as it has been embodied in the National Philosophy of Education (NPE), is to produce citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal wellbeing as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and improvement of the family, the society, and the nation at large (MOEM, 1987). In view of students’ holistic development as stressed in the NPE, the Ministry of Education places equal, if not more emphasis on behaviour compared to academic achievements. As the main purpose of education in Malaysia is good citizenship and the creation of a united society (Saravanamuthu, 2001), school discipline policies and guidelines were introduced as early as 1959 (MOEM, 1959).

### **2.03 The Role Expectation of Teachers:**

The salient feature of the 1976 Teachers' Day celebrations in Malaysia was the promulgation of a Code of Ethics for teachers by the National Union of the Teaching Profession NUTP in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (NUTP, 1994). The code stated that the primary purpose of education "is to develop enlightened, loyal, responsible and able citizens who will recognize the supreme importance of the pursuit of truth and aspiration to excellence, and who will believe in democracy, the freedom of the individual and the principals of the Malaysian National Ideology, *The Rukunegara*." (p.503). The Code set out the teachers' (i) Responsibility to Students (ii) Responsibility to Parents (iii) Responsibility to Society and the Nation and (iv) Responsibility to Colleagues and the Profession.

In line with the above aspirations, teachers as civil servants are to adhere to their work ethics outlined in the General Orders on Behaviour and Mannerisms (MGO,1993) and abide by a special code of professional ethics (INTAN, 1994). This code of ethics calls for the internalisation and practice of moral values, require commitment on the part of the teachers to be sensitive about the nature of the self image they portray and the kind of mannerisms they exhibit during their presence in schools (Noordin, 1996). It also calls for teachers to lead a dignified and exemplary life to safeguard their professional image outside school in the public eye.

## **2.04 Moral Education:**

In fostering social values based on cultural heritage, the ministry introduced Moral Education in the early 90's as one of the compulsory subjects in its school curriculum (Barone, 2004; Hamidon, 2001). The values cited in the subject cut across the curriculum and teachers are to incorporate these values in their pedagogical skills not only in the content delivery but via exemplary behaviour in their interactions with students as well. In other words, the moral values are to be taught and instilled both as direct and indirect curriculum. As values are normally 'caught' and not 'taught', teachers are to set exemplary behaviours in upholding moral, social and cultural values typical of the Malaysian multicultural identity and to safeguard and strengthen national unity (Noordin, 1996).

The Malaysian National Report in the Geneva Convention ICE/1996 (MOEM, 2004) further emphasised the role of teachers. Among the expectations placed are that teachers become aware of their identity and are tolerant, open to others and develop sensitivity to other cultures.

In respect of the above, the Malaysian society has always placed high expectations on teachers (MOEM, 1996); even more so today with the move away from extended families and towards the nuclear family, the increasing involvement of women in the workforce, the expansion of universal literacy programs and the deluge of information due to technological advancement. Many of these factors are frequently cited for the declining standards of student behaviour and the resultant social ills in the local arena (Kassim, et al., 2004). Due to the involvement of both parents in the labour force, changing trends are

noted in family values in the modern Malaysian society (Kassim et al, 2004; Halijah, 2000; Melati, 1999). As such, the great responsibility of *loco parentis* and student welfare is increasingly becoming the responsibility of schools (MOEM, 1996). In this context schools are not only regarded as institutions that cater for educational needs but are deemed students' second homes (MOEM, 2001). Therefore, without well-qualified, caring and committed teachers; neither improved curricula and assessments, nor safe schools with the best standards can ensure that students are fully prepared for the future challenges and opportunities.

### **2.05 Seriousness of Student Discipline:**

In 1978, via its periodical *The Malaysian Teacher*, the National Union of the Teaching profession (NUTP), for the first time highlighted the seriousness of student discipline in schools. It said, 'The Education Ministry has acknowledged the seriousness of student discipline problems in schools and has called for combined efforts of both teachers and the education authorities to arrest the undesirable trends in student behaviour'. It added that, issues of student discipline will be given due priority; highlighting the statement by the then Director General of Malaysian Education, Datuk Haji Murad Bin Mohd Noor "*The future development of the society depended on school discipline today!*"

### **2.06 Trends in Student Behaviour:**

Since the 1990's there have been consistent reports in the Malaysian media on student deviant behaviour (Hassani Dali, 2006; Armani, 2005). There have also been many incidences of student-teacher conflicts in Malaysian secondary schools in the recent past which have manifested into student disciplinary problems. With

declining standards of student discipline during the last two decades (Azlinawaty, 2003; Loh, 1995) and the recent increase in and severity of incidents of truancy, school violence and vandalism, there have been remarks and wide spread concern from many quarters on the issue of student discipline in Malaysian secondary schools (The Star, October, 2003). According to a media report, in 2006 alone there were 3,358 juveniles (students) charged in courts nationwide for various offences under the Penal Code (The Star, April, 2007). Persistent and increasingly serious cases of student misbehaviour, where some students have ‘graduated’ from bullying to rape, robbery and murder, have caused a desperate call from many sectors (The Star April, 2007) for a workable solution that can restore faith in Malaysian public schools.

As evident in various reports (NST, 17/10/2003; The Star, 19/09/2003; National Education News, (NEN) 21/10/2003), many measures have been proposed and enforced to subdue the worsening discipline in schools. Campaigns, road shows and spot checks have been organized; hotlines and crime prevention clubs introduced (MOEM, 1999); and the Moral Studies curriculum revised (MOEM, 1999). There have been threats of expulsion, caning and jail; the police have been brought in some schools to assist in student monitoring; and the number of school counsellors increased. Lately the ministry has even launched mandatory programs for racial integration in schools (MOEM, 2004) to curb discipline problems resulting from racial polarisation. However, there has been little impact. Those were the days when one teacher, with a cane tucked under his arm, ensured discipline in schools. As reported in the media it was when parents entrusted the teachers with responsibility of giving their children an education, and gave them a



mandate to put the young ones on the right path, with the help of the cane if necessary. On the contrary, due to changing trends in society Malaysian parents in general are getting over protective and more students of today are showing undesirable behaviour, some even resorting to violence. According to media claims (NST, Nov.2006) the fundamental question here is that, has this been brought about by social changes and technological advancement or teachers themselves who have over the years become indifferent, incompetent, biased and are bullies themselves?

In respect of the above views it may be important to highlight the recent statement by the Deputy Education Minister in the local media, calling on schools to take a second look at their discipline strategies (NST, Nov. 2006). The minister expressed his dissatisfaction on a number of teacher characteristics and ethical issues involving schooling, teachers not being role models and of dissatisfactory teacher behaviour in confronting and resolving student discipline problems in schools. The minister's statements were in response to various allegations by the media directed towards teachers; especially with regard to their disciplining styles; criticising teachers as 'crazy', 'weird' and 'insane' (The Star, April, 2007). According to the minister it might be rather difficult to resolve any student disciplinary situation in schools when teachers themselves turn out to be the cause of it or insist on pursuing the matter. The minister has alleged that discipline systems are getting 'complicated' because teachers decide to take matters into their own hands when disciplining students. He cautioned school authorities to remember that schools simply cannot punish anyone. He cited a number of cases

where students claimed they did not know the reason why they were caned or penalised.

In view of the increasing number of teacher-student conflicts and allegations of teachers' unethical practices, the ministry has issued numerous circulars reminding teachers and school heads to strictly adhere to the INTAN code of ethics (1994), and report unwanted incidences (MOEM, 2007; 2005; 1996; 1995; 1993).

Meanwhile educational research reports in the local arena have indicated that students are gradually losing their sense of belonging to their schools (The Educator, 2006; 2005; Melati, 1999). The current trends in the culture of schooling are reflected in student antagonism manifesting in numerous student deviant behaviours which are becoming beyond the ability of schools to exercise control against (Hassani Dali, 2006; Azlinawaty, 2003). Finding the root causes for student disengagement and deviant behaviours might be a difficult task because student disciplinary issues in Malaysia are closely interlinked with other educational issues such as government educational policies on inclusion (MOEM, 1997), the influence of racial politics (Joseph, 2004), the relevance of the curriculum to the changing needs of society and the changing role of teachers and of teacher professionalism (The Star, 31<sup>st</sup> August, 2007).

Frequent curriculum changes, the increasing amount of unproductive paperwork, emphasis on academic excellence (which is based on rote learning) is not only affecting students' liking for schools but straining student-teacher interaction as

well, contributing to student disaffection and student alienation (The Star, 31August, 2007).

While there is an ongoing debate about the various causes of worsening student discipline, schools are caught in the midst of providing education and their efforts to address the situation. Lately the issue of student discipline in Malaysia has received even higher levels of attention, after a series of parliamentary debate. The integrity of behavioural management in schools and the quality of principals' leadership was highlighted as two of the major weaknesses in the system in arresting student disciplinary problems (The Star, November 2005).

## **2.07 Educational Administration and the Organisational Structure of Schools:**

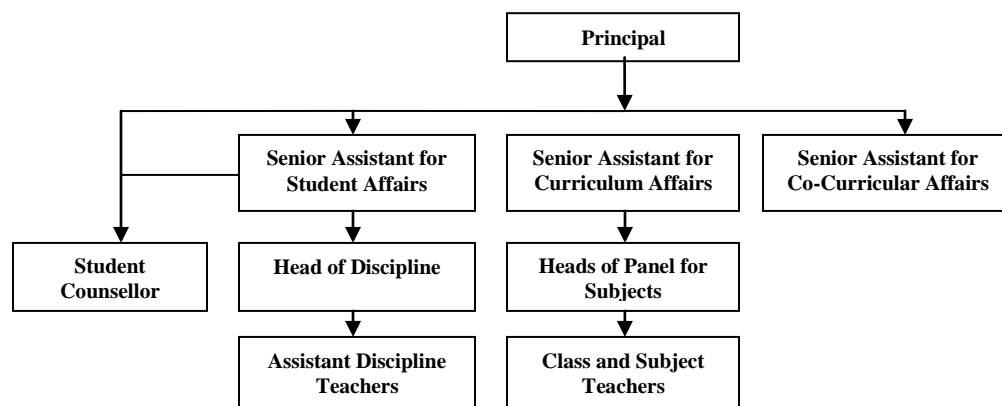
The organisation of educational administration in Malaysia is centralized and its administrative structure has four distinct hierarchy levels namely federal, state, district and school. The institutions representing these four levels are the Ministry of Education (MOEM), the State Education Department (SED), the District Education Office (DEO) and schools.

In general the Malaysian education system is content and examination orientated. The highly standardised examination system moulds the pedagogy in classrooms. As such, the system focuses sharply on the cognitive rather than the affective domains (Hamidon, 2001; Harris, 1997). Schools are empowered to implement rules and to ensure a safe learning environment under the provision of the Educational Act of 1959. In view of the seriousness of the declining trends in

school discipline over the years and the increasing exclusion rates, amendments were made in the ordinance in 1996 (which saw the inclusion of the rights of the members of the school community) and to tighten the loopholes in the system (School Ordinance-Malaysian Judiciary, 1998).

## 2.08 The Organisational Structure of the School Behavioural Management System:

As stated in Loh (1995), the organisational structure for the management of student discipline and student welfare in Malaysian schools is separate from the management of academics. As shown in figure 1, student discipline and welfare is placed under one of the teacher- administrators, called the Senior Assistant for Student Affairs (HEM). He/She is empowered by the principal to delegate and supervise a number of teachers who will ensure that students follow rules and thereby order and discipline is maintained in schools. Since the HEM (Malay abbreviation) has to be involved in other managerial and administrative duties, he/she will be assisted by one of the Discipline Teachers, the Head of Discipline. (A brief description of the role of Discipline Heads is attached as an appendix).



**Fig.1 Organisational Structure of Malaysian Schools**

A full-time counsellor whose duty is to counsel students, referred by the Discipline Teachers, also comes under the directives and supervision of the HEM. Likewise the academic management is supervised by the Senior Assistant for Curriculum who will be assisted by Panel Heads for various academic subjects. Similarly, non-curricular aspects like sports activities, clubs and societies come under the supervision of the Senior Assistant for Co-curriculum. Except for the counsellor, everyone including the principal will have to shoulder some teaching responsibility. However the teaching time varies according to the nature of their other managerial duties. Due to a lack of teachers in every school, the same set of teachers carry out different duties under the three administrative divisions (Loh, 1995).

### **2.09 The Concept of School Discipline in the Malaysian Context:**

According to the Malaysian School Discipline Guide (MSDG, 2004), the word 'discipline' is defined as 'teaching students to behave responsibly'. Discipline is also seen as punishing students in order to make them behave. As such many discipline approaches in Malaysian schools tend to be punitive in nature but use rewards to influence behaviour at the same time. There are two main aims for the implementation of discipline in schools. The first aim relates to safety of the school community, i.e. students and teachers. The second is to provide a conducive learning environment that can ensure effective teaching and learning. In this respect, teachers and school principals are to play a greater leadership role. This is because effective behavioural management either directly or indirectly paves the way for better academic success in schools (Loh. 1995; Mamat, 1993).

## **2.10 Rules and Behaviour:**

In Malaysian Schools, the enforcement of discipline is via the school rules. Disciplinary actions taken against the violations of school rules are mainly for the purpose of deterrence and restraint (MSDG, 2004). In this respect, students who observe school rules are deemed 'good' and those who do not are deemed 'problematic' (Loh, 1995). If there are no violations of rules, by students in a school, then students are considered well behaved and the school concerned is declared free of disciplinary problems. This situation, according to Loh (1995) brings about two implications. Firstly it brings about the notion that discipline is everything and regarded as the sole achievement. On the other hand this may be seen to be a negative attribute in the sense that the schools will start to act only when students break rules and show deviant behaviour. Secondly, discipline problems that are not serious, such as lack of initiative or motivation for learning are overlooked or not given due consideration by the school authorities.

## **2.11 Corporal Punishment:**

While most western countries have done away with corporal punishments, caning has always been legal in Malaysian schools. The Education Ordinance 1957 (amended in 1959) allows corporal punishment, such as caning to be meted out by school authorities but only to school boys. An Education Ministry directive issued in 1994 listed eight offences that could warrant caning: truancy, involvement in criminal activities, obscene and impolite behaviour, loitering, dishonesty, a dirty appearance and vandalism. The Education Ministry has stipulated that caning must be used only as the last resort and only the Principals themselves or Discipline Teachers, (who are empowered by the Principals) can execute corporal

punishment. However, the ‘2003-probe on human rights awareness’ among secondary school teachers, students and administrators conducted by researchers from local universities assigned by the Human Rights Commission of Malaysia revealed the abuse of and regular use of the cane in schools (HRCM, 2003).

### **2.12 Classroom and School-wide Discipline: The Role of Discipline Teachers:**

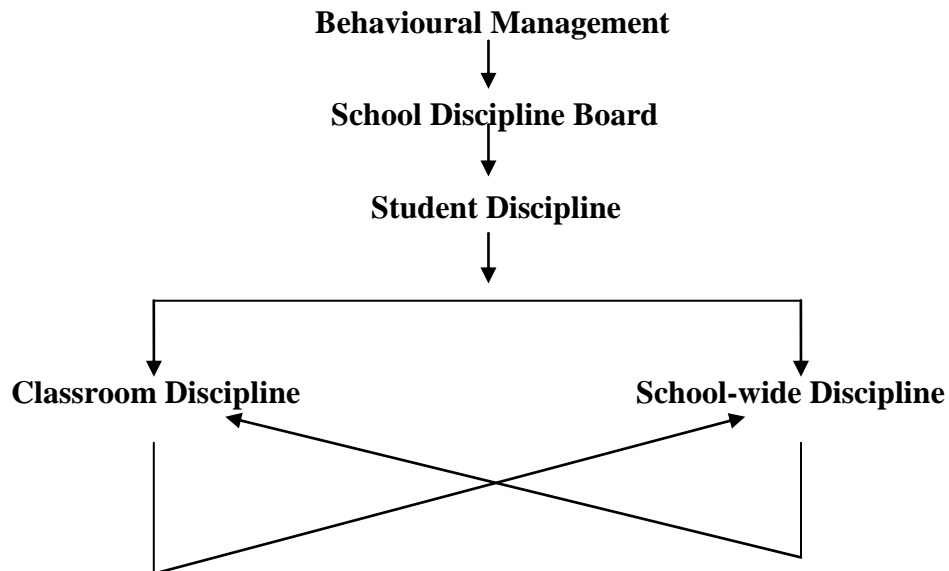
Well-disciplined schools tend to be those in which there is a school-wide emphasis on the importance of learning and the intolerance of conditions which inhibit learning (Rogers, 2002; Carr, 2005; Wayson and Lasley, 1984). Commitment, on the part of all staff in establishing and maintaining appropriate student behaviour is an essential precondition of learning (MSDG, 2004).

In the context of the present study, the term discipline covers both classroom discipline (which often becomes the responsibility of class or subject teachers) and school-wide discipline which involves management plans on school safety and a continuum of positive behaviour support for all students within a school. The latter is implemented in a range of areas including the classroom and non-classroom settings such as the hallways, cafeteria, toilets and school playgrounds. To some extent this also encompasses discipline problems that occur outside school such as in the school bus and those in the community where school children are involved (MSDG, 2004).

While classroom discipline is (mostly) regarded as the responsibility of the class or subject teacher; school wide discipline becomes the responsibility of the Discipline Teachers specially assigned for the purpose. It might be important to mention here that although technically all teachers have this responsibility, in

practice it mainly falls to a centrally designated Discipline Teacher to deal with most major infringements. While classroom discipline is mostly about disruption; not paying attention or ignoring teacher instructions (Nur Riha, 2005), non-classroom discipline problems range from the relatively common- (this includes truancy, tardiness, violation of school rules and loitering), to less common, to more serious behaviours (such as fights, bullying, extortion, gang activities, sexual assault, possession and distribution of pornographic materials, drug use, vandalism to school properties and juvenile delinquencies) (MSDG, 2004; MOEM, 1998). These occur both inside and outside schools that involve school children, and in this respect behavioural management systems in schools may be seen as an extension, involving work with other agencies such as the police (MOEM, 2001) and other relevant NGO's such as the Malaysian Crime Prevention Foundation, (MCPF) and Anti Drug Agency etc. (MOEM, 1999). In the context of *loco parentis*, schools are the first representatives for students involved in criminal activities during school hours (MSDG, 2004). In view of the complexities involved in the school behavioural management system, Special Liaison Officers from the police department are appointed for every school to monitor student discipline problems that are delinquent in nature (MOEM, 2001). Discipline in the context of the Malaysian Education System is therefore complex and sometimes involves difficult processes which go well beyond the school walls. In this respect, the Discipline Teachers (especially the Heads of Discipline) are directly involved and empowered with more responsibility in behavioural management in schools. However commitment and cooperation on the part of all teachers is essential in order to ensure the smooth running of the behavioural management system (MSDG, 2004).





**Fig.2 Components of Behavioural Management in Malaysian Schools**

Figure 2 represents diagrammatically the two components of behavioural management in Malaysian schools and how they may influence each other. Thus when the ministry says every teacher is a discipline teacher (MOEM, 2004, 2000, 1999) it is mostly in the context of supervising student behaviour in the school-wide context. Although classroom discipline is regarded as a sub-set of school discipline, it is important to note that most of the time both classroom discipline and school-wide discipline are treated as synonymous, as they exert influence upon each other. For example, disciplinary actions against the perpetrators (in the classroom and school-wide context) become the responsibility of the discipline board under the behavioural management system which receives policy guidelines from the Ministry of Education and the relevant state education departments.

Establishing and maintaining appropriate student behaviour is not only a precondition of learning but an important aspect in safeguarding the image of the school in the eyes of the community. In this respect teachers as value transmitters

(Noordin, 1996) are to set exemplary behaviours both inside and outside schools (Armani, 2005) and are expected to play a greater role in school discipline.

### **2.13 Teacher Reluctance and Role Conflict:**

Due to the rise in unwanted and uncontrollable student behaviour, the ministry has called on all teachers to assume the responsibility of a Discipline Teacher (MOEM, 1999). This includes Class Teachers (teachers who are assigned to teach and look after the needs and welfare of specific classes) and subject teachers. Very often classroom teachers are tied down to other bureaucratic and clerical duties like record keeping, collection of school fees and other aspects of classroom management. As such there is a controversy among teachers as to why they should be part of the discipline system (Loh, 1995). Furthermore, the presence of Discipline Teachers (who have been specially appointed to look into student discipline matters) makes the normal teachers (non-discipline) wonder why there is a need for every other teacher to play a role in discipline (Seloamoney, 2007; 2004). As school heads are finding it difficult to impose this additional commitment on all teachers, a bulk of the student disciplinary problems (including classroom behaviours) become the responsibility of the Discipline Teachers (Seloamoney, 2004; 2007; Loh, 1995).

In this regard, the duties of the Head of Discipline are most critical, as he/she is the one who is in direct confrontation with the 'problematic students' and parents who come to their support. The other Assistant Discipline Teachers are no better than the classroom or subject teachers as most of the time they refer the cases to the Heads of Discipline (Seloamoney, 2004; Loh, 1995). This might be due to

anticipation and belief on the part of the teachers that the matter will be resolved quickly if the Head of Discipline directly intervenes. As a result, the Heads of Discipline are burdened with trivial matters which are within the capacity of the classroom teachers to find solutions to. Though schools have a discipline board, on most occasions the Discipline Heads are the ones who make decisions about student inclusion or exclusion status and the nature of punishments students might deserve. However, their decisions or suggestions need the consent of the Principal who is the supreme authority (School Discipline Act, 1959; MSDG, 2004).

#### **2.14 The Need for Teacher Reflection:**

According to Azlinawaty (2006), contrary to what many teachers believe, the main objective of schooling in Malaysia is to educate students to be responsible citizens in the future and not to raise the academic standards of the school. Instead of placing much emphasis on academic improvement, she suggests that schools show interest in educating students to be more responsible in their every undertaking. She suggests that discipline procedures enable students to maximise their experiences while in schools. In other words via discipline strategies students acquire the necessary social skills that would enable them to adapt themselves in society before they are out of school (Azlinawaty, 2006).

Azlinawaty (2006) and Loh (1995) argue that schools place emphasis upon curricular and co-curricular aspects and often reward students for their involvement and success. While students who excel in those arena are given the due recognition, students who obey school rules and show respect for authority are often unnoticed or ignored (Loh, 1995). If well behaved students are not

rewarded, they might be subjected to the gradual influence of their peers who are not well-behaved. According to suggestions by (Nur Riha, 2006; Hassani Dali, 2006 and Loh, 1995) student discipline policies need more communication and coordination among the various units under the school organisational structure. They suggest that pastoral care and other student welfare aspects should never be separated from the management of curriculum and co-curriculum. This they believe will ensure the holistic development of individual students as per the requirement of the National Educational Philosophy. Besides, such moves may also help resolve student disciplinary issues.

In view of the above the responsibilities of the class teachers and the subject teachers are not confined to raising academic standards but playing a greater role in discipline as well. As class teachers are the first people who could detect problem behaviour among students they can help a lot by playing the role of a Discipline Teacher and of a counsellor (Hassani Dali, 2006; Loh, 1995).

### **2.15 Concluding Comments:**

As noted in the above discussion, student disciplinary issues in Malaysian secondary schools are increasingly gaining attention from the media. Conversely, it might be counter argued that the media reports could be misleading, as it simply adds to the ‘culture of finger pointing’ as to who is to be blamed for the pervasive phenomenon of student indiscipline in schools. At the same time, it might also be argued that many of the reports and allegations claimed by the media may be isolated or exaggerated incidences and may not necessarily be representative of typical teacher characteristics in the Malaysian context. Moreover the causes of

different discipline problems may vary and it might be difficult to generalise or attribute the same causes for every discipline problem (Hassani Dali, 2006).

As has been pointed out in the first chapter, student discipline problems may have an internal or external origin and may be intertwined with other issues that might be beyond the capacity of schools to address. Furthermore, teachers nowadays are shouldering too many curricular and co-curricular responsibilities which may see them stressed or 'burn out' (NUTP, 1994). As such, the chances are that they may exhibit behaviours that might be perceived negatively by their students.

However on the contrary, as students spend a lot of time with their teachers, it must be acknowledged that teacher characteristics can impact on students to a considerable extent (Melati, 1993; Ismail, 1995). In this respect, students could be a source of information not only in studying teacher characteristics but recognising other flaws in the school system as well. At this point it is equally expected that there may be variations or even exceptions in terms of students' responses. Students' level of comprehension and their enthusiasm may vary and their views may not be taken seriously. However (Ismail, 1995) believes that the common views of the majority might provide some clues to the investigation. It is assumed that the majority of students can be motivated and behave in an appropriate manner when teachers succeed to create the correct environment for motivating and learning via the exhibition of their own positive characteristics (Ismail, 1995).

In view of the declining status of student discipline in many schools nationwide, there is an urgent need to identify the underlying causes of the pervasive phenomenon of student indiscipline. As in the direction of the present study it is desirable that an investigation is carried out to identify the extent to which teacher related causes might be significant in student discipline matters. This is because the ongoing debate on teacher quality and efficacy might further exasperate the already ailing image of the teaching profession in Malaysia (NST, September, 2003).

#### **2.16 Teachers in Government Secondary Schools:**

According to ministry data (MOEM, 2008) there are currently about 160,000 teachers serving in Malaysian government secondary schools all over the country. These include residential, vocational, religious and special schools. There are 28 government teacher training institutions including one that has been upgraded to university status. According to the current structure, students who have finished their first degree in local public universities and who meet the age requirement may qualify as full-fledged teachers for government schools upon completing their one year teacher diploma at the same universities (MOEM, 2008). Teachers who gained entry into teacher training colleges after their Malaysian Education Certificate (SPM) and who have upgraded themselves to graduate status at a later stage are often transferred from primary to secondary schools. In the context of the present study it might be of importance to note the number, gender and age differences among teachers in Malaysia.

**Table 1****Number of Teachers in Secondary Schools by Gender (2004-2008)**

Gender	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Male	47097	48609	48800	49310	50887
Female	85201	87989	89783	91678	99979
% Female	64.40	64.41	64.79	65.03	66.27
Total	132298	136598	138583	140988	150866

**Source: Education Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia:  
Malaysian Educational Statistics, 2004- 2008**

Table 1 presents the number of teachers in secondary schools by gender. It is noted that there has been a gradual increase in the percentage of female teachers in Malaysia between 2004 and 2008.

**Table 2****Number of Teachers in Secondary Schools by Gender and Age Group**

Age Group 2008	Gender and Age Groups							
	< 25	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49	50-55	> 50
Male	527	5951	7005	9804	11784	8421	6775	609
Female	2157	18328	19121	21377	19815	11551	7111	508
Total	2684	24279	26126	31181	31599	19972	13886	1117

**Source: Education Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia:  
Malaysian Educational Statistics, 2008**

Table 2 presents the number of teachers in secondary schools according to gender and age group. It is noted that there are a greater number of young females entering the profession compared to males.

**Table 3****Average Class and School Size, Teacher – Student Ratio and Number of Schools**

No	Indicator	Primary		Secondary	
		1998	2003	1998	2003
1	Average Class Size	32	31	35	33
2	Average School Size	405	400	1219	1047
3	Student-Teacher Ratio	19	17	19	16
4	Number of Schools	7130	7504	1566	1902

**Source: Education Planning and Research Division, Ministry of Education Malaysia:  
Malaysian Educational Statistics, 1998 and 2003**

Table 3 presents average class and school size, student-teacher ratio and number of schools. However there has been a gradual increase in student enrolment in many schools (2000 - 2500 in some cases). As such, the average number of students per class may be touching 40. Some of these are usually double-session schools which face teacher shortage from time to time.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **Literature Review- 1**

In the present study an attempt is made to capture how perceptions of teacher behaviour can possibly influence student behaviour and the implications that follow for behavioural management in schools. The literature review for this study is presented via three separate chapters (Chapter 3-5). The following is the first of the three-part literature review. The rationale for presenting it via three chapters is explained in the introductory section of each chapter.

As the thematic concern of this study in a broader spectrum deals with student discipline, this chapter presents a review of literature on the significance of student discipline in schools. In light of school leadership literature and empirical studies this chapter discusses the significance of teachers' professional role in the management of student behaviour. It is the writer's contention that the background knowledge on the issue of school discipline, in terms of its underpinning philosophy, fundamental concepts, theoretical aspirations, and its practical constraints will lead the reader to a better understanding of the context and purpose of the present study.

#### **3.00 Introduction:**

The issue of how best to discipline students in classrooms and in the school setting is a continuing interest that concerns education in a wider sense. In many countries around the world, student indiscipline is regarded as the number one challenge in education (Crothers and Kolbert, 2008; McCluskey, 2008;

Wearmouth, 2004; Hastings and Bham, 2003; Duke, 1999; Cotton, 1990; Chernow and Chernow, 1981) and a major source of teacher stress (Quinn, 2005; Gold and Roth, 1993; Bonfadini, 1993). Most teachers, in many different learning cultures, have moments when their students fail to cooperate in some way, thus disrupting the learning process by disadvantaging their own and others' learning opportunities, which sometimes gets significantly 'out of control'(Rogers, 2002).

Teaching and learning cannot be accomplished effectively in an undisciplined environment (Margaret, 2004; Watson, 1996; Docking, 1989). Without a sound discipline system, which can ensure peace and harmony, schools cannot carry out effective learning strategies and thereby fail in the endeavour to educate the young (Wearmouth et al., 2004; Rogers, 2002) and fail to function as effective learning institutions. Student indiscipline not only disrupts the teaching and learning process but adversely affects the wellbeing of the entire school community (Watson, 1996). For example, a serious discipline case deprives the learning opportunities of not only those who are directly involved but those who are well behaved as well. It takes away the precious time of the teacher(s) and administrators in dealing with the perpetrators (Bonfadini, 1993). As considerable time is wasted in 'the dealing or investigation process', teachers are unable to cater to the needs of other students who are well behaved (Wearmouth et al., 2004). In this respect, student disciplinary issues in schools are the major cause of teacher stress (Quinn, 2005), burn out, lack of job satisfaction and a major reason for teachers leaving the profession (Gold and Roth, 1993). Disruption can be a real challenge to a teacher's authority and their sense of self-efficacy to the extent

that disruptive pupils are typified as 'worthless' (Munn et al., 2000; Lloyd et al., 2001).

While the issue of student indiscipline remains one of the toughest challenges faced by schools, the ways schools react to student indiscipline and impose discipline strategies has received severe criticism from some quarters (Nelson et al., 2002). As per the suggestions of Psunder (2006) and Dwivedi and Gupta (2000), one way of addressing undesirable student behaviour is to identify and alter the stimulus context in which the behaviour occurs. In other words it is important to remove whatever element it is that is rewarding and reinforcing the behaviour, so that the bad behaviour is eliminated. Likewise, it is equally important to show acknowledgement for behaviour seen as more appropriate and it should be rewarded in a way that clearly recognizes the greater acceptability of the new behaviours in settings where it occurs (Dwivedi and Gupta, 2000). In this respect, Lewis (1997) and Ingersoll (1996) have argued that of all related factors capable of influencing student responsibility, the discipline strategies imposed by teachers are among the most potent for good or otherwise. For example, Hyman and Snook (2000) claim that unnecessarily harsh and punitive disciplinary practices against students create a climate that contributes to severe discipline problems such as school violence.

Comments about the influence of teachers' attitudes towards and expectations of, pupils are echoed in much of the psychological and sociological research literature on disaffection (e.g. Daley et al., 2005; Lloyd et al., 2001). There is research evidence to suggest that teachers' ways of thinking about, and emotional

reactions to behaviour perceived as disturbing, bear a strong relation to teachers' 'intentional' and 'actual' behaviour (Poulou and Norwich, 2002, p.111). Different teachers advocate different levels of control over their students. Some teachers may feel that students need a strict disciplined environment to learn, while some others may feel that given a greater degree of freedom students develop a sense of responsibility and creativity towards their learning (Lourdusamy and Swee Khine (2001). However, students tend to behave differently in different classrooms and the key influences on behaviour might be the teacher's own self concept, sense of self esteem, the image they portray and the reputation they enjoy (Lloyd et al., 2001).

According to Charles (2005) behaviour refers to everything people do, good or bad, right or wrong, helpful or useless, productive or wasteful (p.3). In Charles' view, misbehaviour is the same as behaviour except that it is inappropriate for the setting or situation in which it occurs, and secondly it is done wilfully, on purpose or out of ignorance of what is expected (p.3).

Another dimension deals with the basis of discipline-behaviour that has been well thought-out by students as appropriate under the circumstances; or whether it is behaviour compelled by teachers by way of rules and procedures and to which adherence is obligatory and hence compliance is mandatory. The former is preferable since the preferred behaviour is likely to be maintained at all times, whereas with the latter, compliance is likely to be the norm only in the presence of teachers. According to Dreikers and Grey (1995) reasoning implies a conscious behaviour in consonance with the assertion that discipline implies teaching

students with the asset of inner controls to provide them with acceptable patterns of behaviour.

As behaviour is a form of communication, student discipline matters need to be seen as an educational concept for understanding disruptive behaviour in schools (Wearmouth et al., 2004; Slee, 1988), rather than considering it as an occupational hazard for teachers and administrators (Gold and Roth, 1993). According to Rogers (2002) focusing attention to the latter is a classic case of attacking symptoms rather than causes. As Dwivedi and Gupta (2000) argue, “school’s response to individual student behaviour perceived as disturbing is often based on behavioural management approaches where the reinforcing conditions or consequences of a behaviour are adjusted in order to moderate its frequency” (p.76).

Before exploring the issue further and considering suggestions on discipline, it might be appropriate to understand the meaning and purpose of school discipline, its significance and the role of teachers in providing adequate leadership in the management of student behaviour.

### **3.01 Discipline:**

The Pack Report (SED, 1977) defines discipline in an educational context “as the maintenance of an orderly system that creates the conditions in which learning takes place, and that allows the aims and objectives of the school to be achieved” (paragraph 3.1). According to Docking (1989) school discipline serves two essential functions. Firstly it allows schools to function as a harmonious social

institution. Secondly, it paves way for a conducive learning environment that ensures effective teaching and learning processes. Good discipline is not only a necessary condition for effective teaching and learning but an important outcome of education (OFSTED, 1993:1). As stated in the Pack Report, and in the views of Vacek and Lasek (2006) and Rothstein (2000), enabling students to achieve good behaviour is one of the ultimate goals of the educational process and the learning goals of schools to produce good citizens in the future. Based on these views it could be argued that if students can achieve the educational aims of the school, then the discipline sanctions imposed by the school are deemed justified (regardless of the manner they are carried out). This is because the discipline strategies have helped to create a conducive learning environment for learning to take place. In this respect discipline serves the dual function of being the ‘means that justifies the end’ and the ‘end that justifies the means’. Hence discipline values are of serious concern in the effective practice of curriculum and schooling (OFSTED, 1993). At this juncture it might be equally important to understand the subjective concept of ‘indiscipline’ in the context of the present study.

### **3.02 Indiscipline:**

According to Burden (1995) any behaviour that threatens the conduct of teaching and learning, or the flow of academic performance in a particular context, can be defined as indiscipline. Kyriacou (1986, p.4) shares a similar view in this respect, claiming that indiscipline is behaviour by a pupil that undermines the teachers’ ability to establish and maintain an effective learning experience in the classroom. However, he cautions that the meaning of misbehaviour or indeed what constitutes a well-ordered discipline classroom is subject to the teacher’s

perception and interpretation. A point also made by Poulou and Norwick (2002); Lloyd et al (2001) and Brown and McIntyre (1993). This takes us towards the notion of student behaviour as a response to the teacher's behaviour or expectations. As Doyle (1986) argues, the interaction between an individual and the environment is responsible for behaviour variations. As such the notion of 'indiscipline' might be deduced as only a response to a situation or a person (in this case the teacher), rather than residing in the individual (Cohen and Cohen, 1987).

### **3.03 The Significance of Discipline:**

In elaborating the significance of discipline, the writer wishes to emphasize four aspects that are relevant to the present study. Firstly, discipline is important in the creation of an environment in which effective teaching and learning is ensured. Secondly, a conducive learning atmosphere that is free of student indiscipline also ensures safety for students and teachers. Thirdly, it ensures a stress-free life for students and teachers and lastly it prepares and educates students to become responsible citizens.

According to Vacek and Lasek (2006) ensuring student behaviour in schools, especially in the classroom setting is important for two vital reasons. Firstly, it serves as a means of preparing students to take their place in society as responsible citizens, in conjunction with the primary aim of schooling and education (Rothstein, 2000). Secondly, without satisfactory levels of responsible behaviour, the best planned and potentially the most engaging lesson may fail to have the desired impact. Good teaching and excellent teaching materials and

superb facilities will take a back seat if students continue to be disruptive and refuse to engage in the learning process (Wearmouth et al., 2004; Rogers, 2002; Duke, 1999; Cotton, 1990).

The issue of discipline relates not only to the good it can do but also the harm or damage that inappropriate discipline can cause. As pointed out by Munn et al. (2000), if disorder and disrespectful behaviours are tolerated or ignored they might proliferate. Over time, almost imperceptibly, expectations of what constitutes acceptable behaviour might be redefined. Though research in this area (e.g. Barton et al., 1998) claims that only a small proportion of students are involved in school discipline problems. They may nevertheless gain sufficient impetus to distract the whole class and frustrate the teacher. As such schools must ensure that proper strategies are enforced to avoid student-teacher confrontations.

Disciplinary issues can have a severe effect upon students in general. According to Quinn (2005) and Barton et al. (1998), the debilitating influence of indiscipline in schools can be a source of stress for both groups of students; those who misbehave and those who are well-behaved. This is because the time spent by teachers on disciplinary actions imposed on those who misbehave such as suspension and expulsion deprives well-behaved students of their learning opportunities. Munn et al. (2000) points out that sometimes the after-effect of such school exclusionary practices also bring about adverse psychological repercussions later in students' lives and these might add to social ills.



In the argument on the significance of student discipline, the above ideas can be reduced into three pertinent issues. Firstly, the good it can bring about in achieving the aims of schools as effective educational institutions (Wearmouth et al., 2004). Secondly the serious harm it can bring about upon students and teachers (Barton et al., 1998) if schools fail to safeguard against student indiscipline. Thirdly, the significance of the role teachers play in maintaining effective discipline.

### **3.04 Behavioural Management:**

Rogers (2002) identifies three major aims for behavioural management. He claims all management and discipline practice is a teacher's best efforts to enable the individual and the classroom group:

a) to enable students to take ownership and accountability for their behaviour; to enable students to develop self-discipline in relation to others. b) respect the rights of others in their classroom group/s, and across the school; the non negotiable rights, in this sense, are the 'right to feel safe', 'the right to respect and fair treatment' and the 'right to learn' within one's ability, without undue or unfair distraction from others c) build workable relationships between teachers and students. Given the organizational characteristics of the school system, it is relevant to investigate to what extent class management style affects student behaviour (Rogers, 2002).

### **3.05 Behavioural Approaches:**

In light of the above argument, Daniel (1998) presents a Teacher Discipline Model to describe teachers various responses to discipline management. Based on

the responses of teachers in disciplinary matters, i.e. the degree of teachers' enforcement of rules and support of students, Daniel proposes five disciplining styles, namely: the enforcer, the abdicator, the supporter, the compromiser and the negotiator. The model was developed based on an empirical study of 120 teachers from a public school in North East Illinois, in America. In view of the purpose and focus of the present study it might be of interest to outline the five categories of teachers' disciplining style.

### **3.06 Enforcer:**

The 'enforcer' describes a teacher who has a high degree of enforcement of rules coupled with a low degree of support for students. Such teachers are very much like a dictator in demanding that his/her students obey his/her rules and allow little room for discussions or negotiations. These teachers often feel that 'it was their way that rules' and students faced consequences when they refuse to oblige.

Enforcers take a 'zero tolerance' approach to discipline problems, a style characteristic of teachers who take a consistent hard-line approach with their students. Thus there was little or no room for approaching a disciplinary problem on an individual basis. These were teachers who believed that if one student 'gets a break' then they might have to give all students 'a break'. As such the consequence was immediate, consistent and impersonal. Teachers who articulated this style of discipline management placed high values on order and control and had little or no regard for students' personal problems. This style has characteristics that might be described as being autocratic, self-righteous, over threatening, intimidating and demeaning. Furthermore, the enforcer was one who

imposed strict rules and seemed to desire the creation of a confining and controlling climate within the classroom.

Daniel (1998) noted that some students became 'yes students' in order to avoid the teacher's threatening style. On the other hand, some students kept their distance from the teachers and had difficulty becoming personal with these teachers.

### **3.07 Abdicator:**

Daniels's second style of discipline model is that of an abdicator. The abdicator style showed characteristics of those teachers who had low supporting and enforcing attributes. They tended to be apathetic towards handling disciplinary problems and had little interest in their students. The abdicator had the characteristics of the stereotypical teacher who had taught for many years and had become disgruntled with the profession. These teachers appeared to be burned out with the teaching profession and were waiting retirement or were seeking another job. Hence abdicators tended to tolerate a great deal of misbehaviour in the classroom for the sake of avoiding confrontation with students or their parents in addressing disciplinary problems. They seemed to be somewhat reclusive, did little to motivate the students and did not care if the students behaved or not. Abdicators believed that they would rather send their problem students to the School Disciplinary Dean than deal with the students themselves. They showed little support to the students, unless they were forced to by the school authorities.

The implications of this style of discipline management were that when students recognised this discipline style in a teacher, they would attempt to get away with as much as they could. Another important consequence was that the students displayed little respect for the teacher. This style led to student de-motivation, poor academic achievement and class disruption.

### **3.08 Compromiser:**

This third model of teachers exhibited a moderate degree of enforcing and supporting characteristics. They showed a great deal of 'give and take' attitude when disciplining students. The teachers were willing to compromise their own positions or those of the students. Therefore, Daniel says these teachers were inconsistent in enforcing school discipline policies. They believed that if students are not allowed flexibility they may get nowhere with them. They balanced their style by appearing to be strict at times but tolerant during other times.

However, students appeared to be confused as the teachers concerned gave the impression of being manipulative. Students did not seem to know where they stood in dealing with this type of teacher. Daniel cautions that students may become frustrated in seeking a balance between their own behaviour and the expectations of the teachers. Thus these teachers may end up creating a conflict among the students and they may develop resentment towards their classmates for receiving preferential treatment.

### **3.09 Supporter:**

These teachers, in the words of Daniel, exhibited a high degree of supporting and a low degree of enforcing characteristics. They took great effort to talk with students about disciplinary problems and gave a great deal of latitude in the disciplinary action they administered. They placed a high degree of empathy and concern for the students but showed little or no assertiveness. This set of teachers seemed very concerned about the personal feelings of the students and had a difficult time enforcing strict policies. They gave the impression to students that they were sympathetic towards them and were reluctant to take disciplinary action against them.

The implications for this style or model of discipline management were that classrooms were somewhat disruptive as they placed more importance on the needs of the students over the needs of rules and regulations. They sacrificed learning for the personal attention and feelings of the students.

### **3.10 Negotiator:**

Teachers placed in this category exhibited a high degree of emphasis on enforcing and supporting. They took a win-win approach to disciplining students. They appeared to strive to create a learning environment where students would excel to their fullest potential. They demonstrated a balance between empathy and assertiveness with their students. They seemed to make use of many approaches to discipline such as parent/teacher conferences, listening to students, enforcing rules and policies, and counselling sessions with their students. They placed a high value in giving extra time after school to talk with students and parents in an

effort to maintain a collaborative and mutually satisfying environment. They appeared to be objective, committed, responsible and interested in taking charge in maintaining discipline in the classroom. They did not resort to 'zero discipline' policies but recognized that all situations may warrant different disciplinary actions because of extenuating circumstances. They often investigated the situation and circumstances before executing or administering discipline. They exhibited value assertiveness in maintaining control and most importantly they were respected by the students. As these teachers were fair and worked in the interest of the students, Daniel concludes that they experienced the least amount of problems.

### **3.11 Behaviourist versus Sociological Theories:**

Discipline theories fall broadly into two categories. Firstly, there are those who are categorized as 'behaviourists'. In the views of these people, disruptive behaviour is often confined to students who are 'problematic'. As such, they need to be dealt with using a wide range of discipline strategies such as counselling and other behavioural modification programs in order to make them compliant with expectations and routines. Cohen and Cohen (1987) feel that this approach is a manifestation of social control, having little or nothing to do with education, learning or discipline.

The second strand of literature on discipline is deemed 'sociological' in its orientation. This approach according to Cohen and Cohen (1987) seeks explanations for students 'resistance' within the interaction and conflict between the student and the school milieu. This perspective argues that disruption

emanates from a disjunction between culture, student interests and (the) curriculum content. Under this spectrum, factors such as class, gender, ethnicity and teacher and student expectations become crucial variables in the genesis and maintenance of resistance and disruption (Slee, 1988; Apple, 1982). Therefore it may be clear that the behavioural approach is the denial of the context and broader social function of schooling. As discipline strategies under these theoretical contexts detach school factors in the analysis for causes on student indiscipline, it does not provide blueprints for curriculum development and teacher reflection (Slee, 1988).

### **3.12 Concluding Comments:**

This chapter, via some of the literature on student discipline, threw some light on the seriousness of student behaviour and its implications for schooling in general. It also identified some of the common disciplinary styles of teachers and discussed their positive and negative repercussions in the management of behaviour. The chapter also highlighted the two categories of discipline theories and showed what implications followed for each category.

Malaysian schools tend to favour the behaviourist theory. As this theory detaches students from the learning aspect and views behaviour in its own right, external forces such as counsellors and Discipline Teachers are needed in the system to seek student compliance. However if sociological theories are considered for the management of student behaviour (where school and teacher factors are detached), the present system in schools neither allows room for teacher reflections nor curriculum development.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **Literature Review-2**

#### **4.00 Introduction:**

This chapter is a review of literature on some of the empirical studies on student perceptions. As perceptions are normally underpinned by expectations or needs, the chapter begins with students' needs theory followed by definitions of what might be perceptions. The second stage of the chapter provides a summary of studies on student perceptions. Knowledge of students' ways of thinking may be useful for understanding student behaviour and considering strategies for behavioural management and improvement.

#### **4.01 Needs Theory:**

According to Barber and Geddes (1997) it has been identified that, all children who come into the school setting tend to have the following four needs: the need for inclusion (a sense of belongingness); the need for control or to have a say in what happens; the need for affection, to like and to be liked; and the need for competency (to be seen as capable). Teachers as educators have to bond them in the schooling process to fulfil these needs. When teachers fail in their endeavour to meet these needs, children are driven away from them (Barber and Geddes, 1997).

According to Conway (2006) and Kohn (1996) students either consciously or unconsciously look to their teachers for help and guidance. In the context of schooling and discipline, Kohn feels that there are two main reasons why students



behave in a manner that may be regarded as non-compliant. Firstly, he says much undesirable behaviour among students is attributed to poor home conditions, rejection from family members, harsh and ineffective parental discipline and child abuse or neglect. Other factors that are more community or school based are low school involvement, low academic and social skills and poor peer relationships. As these students may not have positive role models at home, the chances are that they do not even know what might constitute proper behaviour. As such, it is the concern of Kohn (1996) that when students disappoint teachers by exhibiting unwanted behaviours, they convey the message that they are missing something they need.

Noddings (2006) feels that there is often some confusion when teachers in schools interpret student needs. According to Noddings, a distinction must be made between students' expressed needs and students' inferred needs. Expressed needs are those that arise within the students having them; and inferred needs are those identified by outside decision makers that are imposed or forced on students. In terms of curriculum relevance and of student non-compliance, materials taught in schools may represent inferred needs.

Students rarely express a personal need or a need to learn the things required of them. However, teachers who are caring and responsive hear their students' expressed needs, whether those needs are expressed verbally or in some other way. Noddings suggests that teachers should strike a balance between these two needs when considering a learning or behavioural strategy. By meeting some of the expressed needs of the students (provided they are not harmful) teachers might

win students over and they will become more willing to work on the needs identified for them (Noddings, 2006).

#### **4.02 Perceptions:**

According to Buldu (2006), perceptions can generally be defined as impressions or the ability or the state of being aware or knowing. Myers (1995) defined perceptions as a scientific process whereby stimuli and knowledge in the outer world are transmitted to the brain via the five human senses and intuition. Thus while in the state of activation, they claim that perception allows a person to become aware of things, people, ideas and occurrences. Perception may also be defined from physical, psychological and physiological perspectives.

In Eggen and Kauchak's (2001) view, perceptions are cognitive dimensions by which people attach meaning to their lived experiences. Thus perceptions cannot be done in vacuum, and it depends on some background information that will trigger a reaction. Other research findings (Baron and Byrne, 1997; Glover et al., 1990) corroborate that background knowledge resulting from experiences strongly influence one's perceptions. In this respect, most often first impressions are likely to last forever (Finson and Beaver, 1995).

For the purpose of this study it shall be limited to its scope as postulated by Allport (1966) in Adediwura and Bada Tayo (2007), which is the way we normally judge or evaluate others, or the way individuals evaluate people with whom they are familiar in everyday life. In the present study the perceptions of the students are dependent on the fact that they have been taught by the teachers

under evaluation and are familiar with them. Therefore their minds are already preoccupied with memories and reactions that inventory for data collection will measure.

#### **4.03 Student Perceptions and Educational Research:**

Perceptions might be important in educational research, especially those involving people who are under aged. As youngsters, students may not necessarily have the knowledge or have attained the maturity to voice out their ideas in a constructive or critical manner (Joshua and Bassey, 2004). Nevertheless, their views may serve as important pointers in eliciting weaknesses in educational practice (Messiou, 2004). According to Buldu (2006), educational studies that analyzed children's perceptions began to draw attention from the 1950's. Since the turn of the century much educational research has used 'student voices' to bring about policy changes and organisational restructuring.

However this endeavour had its own setbacks as there were controversial views among 'researchers' and those who were 'researched about' with regards to student voices in school affairs and school improvement. For example, in the context of school discipline Nelson (2002) believes that using student voices might be a productive strategy for school improvement. The purpose is to create a feeling among students that they share in the operation of schools. In contrast he claims that educators are sometimes threatened because they seem to consider student involvement in studies such as rule and policy making which lead students to challenge teachers' authority (Nelson, 2002).

#### **4.04 Summary of Studies that Investigated Student Perceptions:**

Since the beginning of the 1990's there have been a number of surveys and studies in the UK that used student attitudes to secondary school (McCallum et al., 2000; Thomas et al., 1998; Harris et al., 1996; Wragg, 1994; Barber, 1994; Keys and Fernandez, 1993; Macbeath et al., 1992; Woods, 1990). What the relevant research studies have shown is that for secondary pupils, 'good teachers' were ones who: presented work in a way which interested and motivated students; provided conditions so that students understood the work; made clear what students were to do and achieve; helped students with difficulties (Brown and McIntyre, 1993, pp. 28-29). What students liked best about their teachers varied across years and between genders. However, the issue of student autonomy was noted to have emerged in most of the findings i.e. students preferred not to be constantly controlled and directed (Rudduck et al., 1996; Pollard et al., 1994)

Rudduck et al's (1996, p.174) report on students' views on what made good conditions for learning includes: respect for students as individuals; fairness to all students irrespective of their class, gender, ethnicity or academic status; autonomy; intellectual challenge that helps students to experience learning as dynamic, engaging and empowering activity.

In an Australian study Connell et al. (1982) (in Rogers, S., 1988) found that students who have been identified as intelligent; described their considered and purposive resistance to 'conventional schooling, to heavy-handed discipline, to hypocritical teacher behaviour, and to poor teaching' (p.84). In a study by DeCocco and Richards (1994) on urban, suburban, and rural high schools,

students expressed strong interest in helping with classroom planning, school policy-making, and discipline. 81% of the students who participated in the study expressed that their most violated right was teacher respect for their opinions.

Recently, more attention has been given to how increased student autonomy in the shaping of learning tasks can affect motivation and behaviour. Research suggests that students who perceived that the classroom climate allowed them a degree of autonomy were more committed and intrinsically motivated, compared to students who regarded the climate as more controlling and interfering (Boggiano et al., 1992). However this research noted that if increased student influence was combined with a reduction in teacher guidance or supervision, this might work against students who need help in organising their school-work or who require frequent reinforcements to keep up their efforts to complete tasks (Boggiano et al., 1992).

#### **4.05 Perceptions and Student Stress:**

Peach (1991) claims that research findings on student perceptions of their teachers showed how such perceptions induced student stress. The results also revealed that difficulty in handling stress on the part of students brought negative implications in terms of unwanted behaviours.

In the context of understanding students, Peach (1991) professes that students, especially those who are in the secondary level, might be more prone to stress as they undergo lots of changes in terms of biology, social and emotional aspects during their teenage period. Hence in the endeavour to adapt to situational

demands, students might face stress. In this regard, often factors such as teacher expectations might induce further stress in them. Atan Long (1981) claims that teachers who show poor attitudes to students, have poor teaching skills and teachers who are regarded as ‘no good at teaching’ not only fail in their endeavour to impart knowledge but end up inducing great stress in students.

#### **4.06 Lessons from a Malaysian Study:**

In light of the above, in a local study on secondary school students Melati (1999) found that 95% of the students reportedly have experienced stress due to teacher criticism; 78% were unhappy or felt uncomfortable with teachers because they purportedly did not know how to teach or did not know what was good teaching; 77% of the students attributed their stress to teachers who often compared their ability with that of their peers and teachers who were always looked for ‘faults’ in their students; 71% related their stress to teachers who only showed interest in students whom they liked and 68% claimed their attribution of stress to communication problems with their teachers. Students could not look to their class teachers or even school counsellors (who were assigned to look after student welfare) for help whenever they experienced stressful situations (Hui and Ling, 1983 in Melati, 1999).

In terms of implications of student stress Melati (1999) places emphasis on the creation of conducive learning environments in Malaysian schools. She says the ministry must come up with a comprehensive curriculum that meets student needs. In the event of no intervention or lack of sufficient coping strategies, stress may cause emotional problems on the part of those experiencing them and it

might conflict with their environment (Gold and Roth, 1993). However, in Melati's (1999) study there was little or no mention of the negative implications of stress upon student behaviour and the overall discipline of schools.

Vaux and Ruggiero (1983) in their research involving 531 secondary school students in California, revealed that discipline problems with a crime origin, such as vandalism, drug abuse and stealing were directly linked with student stress. Novy and Donohue (1985) in their study involving 55 secondary school students in Texas also indicated a strong correlation between student stress and discipline related problems such as truancy. According to Terry (1998), in extreme cases unmanaged stress on the part of students may lead to teachers becoming targets of student bullying. As Niehaus (2000) claims attacks on teachers and learners resulting in death are not uncommon. Due to student unmanaged stress; women teachers and learners become victims of violence, rape, sexual assault and harassment (Morrel, 2002).

#### **4.07 Consideration for Student Interest:**

If teachers are not considerate of student interests or needs when planning their content selection or pedagogical tasks, the chances are that it may lead to student resentment which in turn invites a wide range of disciplinary problems that are difficult for teachers to manage. Using a sample of more than 1000 students, Abrantes et al. (2007) found that students' perceived learning directly depended on their interest, pedagogical effect, and their learning performance. The study carried out in a Cyprus setting also noted that aspects like instructors' likeability, their responsiveness and concern, course organisation and teacher-student

interactions indirectly contributed to learning outcomes. Based on their findings, the authors concluded that student interest is the primary influence on perceived learning, followed by pedagogical affect and learning performance. Students preferred and appreciated interactive styles of learning and student-focused instructional approaches that catered for student interest. This study supplements findings from earlier studies such as (Young et al., 2003; Marks, 2000) claimed, ‘student interest’ is the number one stimulant for academic success.

#### **4.08 A Look at Discipline from the Student Perspective:**

Under normal circumstances, students, especially the younger ones, tend to regard all forms of punishments as unfair and undeserved; whereas older students generally regard punishment for misbehaviour as fair and acceptable, if the punishment is equitable and fits the problem (Cotton, 1990). A study to obtain views about school discipline from student perceptions was conducted by Masciarelli (1998) at an urban middle school in Colorado, America. The researcher interviewed 51 middle school seventh graders on the topic of student behaviour. Findings revealed that few perceived discipline as a tool to learn self-management. The students felt that discipline was merely a consequence for misbehaviour, or rules to prevent misbehaviour. Reasons given by students for obeying school rules were: a) to avoid home consequences, b) to avoid school consequences, c) to gain school and home recognition and d) to avoid legal consequences.



#### **4.09 Student Perceptions of Causes of Disciplinary Problems:**

In another parallel study by Supaporn (1998), students defined misbehaviour as doing something that they were not supposed to do or not doing something that they were supposed to be doing. Most students admitted they misbehaved in class at sometime during the two-week duration of the study. Supaporn reports that teachers losing accountability and a lack of intervention allowed many opportunities for students to misbehave in class. Less effective teaching and lack of organisation and delivery of instructional tasks appeared to be the major issues that encouraged students to misbehave.

Miller et al. (2000) using Year 7 pupils (12 years of age) carried out a study on 125 students on 'What do pupils see as the causes of misbehaviour' in an inner-city comprehensive school?'. The items for the questionnaire were derived from a number of prior small-group interviews with elected students, judged by their teachers in terms of ability, behaviour and gender. This is a similar approach to that used in the present study. The results of the study revealed that students attribute to teachers a significantly greater responsibility for pupil misbehaviour than that which they attribute to their parents or background factors. The study noted that teachers were insensitive to students' needs and that they were allegedly displaying various 'negative characteristics' responsible for student dislike for schools and their teachers. For example in the curriculum context teachers did not take notice of students' good work.

In the interpersonal context, teachers were perceived as having favourites in their classes and reported as having bad moods that caused students to distance

themselves from their teachers. Likewise, in their disciplining styles, teachers were reported as shouting all the time and being rude to students. Teachers gave too many detentions and there were allegations that students were 'picked on' by teachers and were unfairly blamed.

Similarly, in seeking answers to a study on 'what do parents see as the causes of difficult behaviour in schools', Miller (2003) noted that 'fairness of teacher's actions', emerged from the study. For both parents and pupils, this factor (teacher fairness) is also seen as one of the most prominent causes of misbehaviour in schools.

From analysis of data gathered from a national survey of schools completed in 1976 Wu et al. (1982) conclude that it is more the ways in which different schools operate than in which students behave, that affects disciplinary actions against students. Wu et al. (1982) using a range of analytical techniques on a large study that measured student perceptions concluded that, in addition to their behaviour, students' chances of being involved in a disciplinary problem increase if : a) teachers are seen by students as relatively uninterested in them; b) teachers believe that students are incapable of solving problems; c) disciplinary matters are handled largely by administrative rules; d) the school is not able to provide consistent and fair governance; e) there is a relatively high degree of academic bias among school personnel; f) there is a relatively high degree of racial bias present at school.

#### **4.10 Lessons from the Voices of Excluded Students:**

The voices of students excluded from school for disciplinary reasons are frequently heard. Munn and Lloyd (2005) point out that exclusion for disruptive or deviant behaviour is perhaps the most explicit form of rejection by a school of its students and for some students it even increased the likelihood of wider social exclusion. In this respect, the perceptions of students, especially those who exhibit deviant behaviour, are important because they can illuminate ‘the taken-for-granted’ feelings about the way teachers behave or how the school system operates (Munn and Lloyd, 2005). This is not only to ensure that those who are disaffected are given a fair deal but can provide a particular perspective that may be different from those students for whom schooling is happy, rewarding or at least a tolerable experience (Munn and Lloyd, 2005; Reay and Lucey, 2000).

In elaborating their view further, the authors suggest that, by listening and analysing views of disaffected students, schools might develop practices which would help to sustain some of these young people in a mainstream school. As schools are increasingly seen as the answer to more fundamental problems of modern society (Esteve, 2000) this move would reduce student dropout rates and possibly some of the social ills in which they are likely to be trapped, with criminal behaviour just a step away (Munn and Lloyd, 2005).

Students’ accounts of the lack of consistency in school practices of exclusion and their sense of unfairness and unreasonableness resonates with the findings of many other studies (Parsons, 1999; Hayden, 1997; Booth, 1996; De Pear and Garner, 1996; Cohen et al., 1994). These studies suggest that schools need to

develop procedures which encourage them to look critically at their exclusion patterns to explore whether some classes, subjects or teachers feature more prominently than others. Furthermore, awareness of the potentially dire consequences of school exclusion on already disadvantaged students (poor economic, social and home background) is an important consideration in behavioural management in schools.

#### **4.11 Student Perceptions of Class Management and Self Reported Misbehaviour:**

Bru et al. (2002) carried out a study to examine ‘the relationships between students’ perceptions of class management and their self reported misbehaviour’, a parallel study which bears much similarity in terms of its motive and design to that of the present study but in a Norwegian setting. The study by Bru et al. (2002) set out to explore associations between students’ perceptions of classroom management and their reports of their own misbehaviour at both individual and class level.

The study was based on a national representative sample of 3834 students from 227 classes in grades 6 and 9 who were attending Norwegian schools. The results revealed that students’ perception of classroom management accounted for significant amounts of variance in self-reported misbehaviour. There was also a strong association with off-task orientation and opposition toward teachers compared to other disciplinary aspects such as bullying. Bru et al. (2002) claim that variance accounted for at this level could indicate that misbehaving students were more likely to appraise teacher behaviour in a more negative way. However,

variance explained on the individual student level might alternatively indicate that students in the same class were exposed to different kinds of teacher behaviour and that differences in how students were treated by teachers produced differences in student behaviour within the same class. The writers attribute this relatively high variance (off-task orientation and opposition toward teachers as well as the perceived class management at an individual level) to how teachers adapted their management to particular students or rather how students were favoured by teachers. The study also revealed that student perceptions of lack of emotional support from teachers showed a correlation to student misbehaviour. Such perceptions were significantly and positively correlated with the other class management dimensions such as variances in 'off-task orientation'. The other important revelation in the study which holds relevance to the present study is that students' perceptions of high levels of teacher support were found to be significantly associated with low levels of antisocial behaviour in schools (Bru et al., 2002). Likewise, perceived emotional support from teachers indicated the strongest positive associations with desired student behaviour.

Based on their findings Bru et al. (2002) suggest that, the greatest potential for improving student behaviour through class management lies in improving adaptations of management to the variety of student needs, and ensuring that no student is favoured over the others. They also indicate that academic support, allowance of student influence and effective monitoring are likely to be important aspects of the emotionally supportive and caring teacher behaviour that can prevent or reduce students' misbehaviour.

#### **4.12 Students as Research Agents:**

In light of the above, it would be no exaggeration to claim that consideration for student views is the most vital aspect in identifying problem areas in educational settings and seeking strategies to rectify them. One recent study that matched this aspiration was that of Thomson and Gunter (2006). As schools in England are being encouraged to ‘personalise’ the curriculum by consulting students about teaching and learning, Thomson and Gunter (2006) carried out a study in an English high school, which was working very hard to increase student subject choices. The study was to evaluate the effectiveness of school improvement strategies using student voices. In other words, the researchers wanted to re-evaluate the ‘success strategies’ of the school in personalising the curriculum from the perspectives of students. The school had earlier introduced an integrated curriculum in the middle years to improve teaching and learning while maintaining a commitment to inclusive and equitable comprehensive education.

The authors worked with a small group of students as consultants to develop ‘a student’s eye’ set of evaluative categories in their school-wide student survey. They also conducted teacher, student and governor interviews, lesson and meeting observation, and student ‘mind-mapping’ exercises to triangulate and to validate their findings.

Thomson and Gunter’s (2006) findings revealed a number of aspects that showed student dissatisfaction which contradicted the self acclaimed success strategies of the school. Firstly, students indicated that they were not happy with the number of testing processes they had to undergo. Though students acknowledged the

importance of testing, somehow the process was seen as tedious and students felt over tested. Secondly, they did not like the idea of being constantly compared by the ability with others by their teachers. They also hated to be placed in ability groupings. It was also learnt that students wanted to be with their own choice of friends when it comes to group work. Besides these aspects, students were also not happy with the teacher centred pedagogical approach in classrooms.

When expressing their dissatisfaction further, Thomson and Gunter (2006) claim that students also insisted on items related to facilities, safety and even quality of food at the school canteen. The amazing part was that none of these items appeared in the researchers' evaluative list. Likewise, when given an opportunity to be part of a research project, the topic which received the greatest vote from the participants was 'Bullying and Safety', an important area in the management of behaviour, that had been overlooked by the researchers.

Apparently in the school where Thomson and Gunter (2006) conducted the research, teachers were unaware or deliberately ignored student undesirable behaviour such as bullying. Bullying by any form is regarded as a serious problem that demands much attention from the behavioural management in schools (MOEM, 2006). The researchers noted that, much of the bullying in the school occurred during lessons and often in front of teachers, using peer group argot, references, and gestures which teachers neither understood nor were aware of. This has been noted to be the impact of different peer group cultures.

At the end of the study the staff was presented with disconcerting information that they did not have and which was profoundly educational, going directly to questions of classroom organisation and culture, values, and of the subterranean everyday life of students as both disconnected from and produced by the practices of schooling. This ‘evidence’ strongly supports research which advocates the importance of students as researchers. Apart from this, the study also helped the researchers to develop a comprehensive instrument that included items that were never thought of earlier. Students were in agreement, such as having the teacher make explicit the learning expectations and explaining things clearly. There was also an approval among students on setting and testing, practices which heavily implicated in the (re) production of class, race and gender privilege. Hence, Thomson and Gunter (2006) via student voices have identified a number of pertinent items missing or ignored in the policy and advocacy discussions about ‘personalisation’.

#### **4.13 Conclusions:**

In summing up, this chapter defined the meaning of perceptions and their significance by providing empirical evidence on studies that measured student perceptions and how they contributed to educational research in the context of school improvement. The findings of the studies reveal that student undesirable behaviours may be exacerbated by teachers who insensitively demonstrate lack of respect and consideration for students and treat students improperly or unfairly.

Although the above studies were conducted in different cultural settings they hold direct relevance to the present study on some of the teacher related causes of



disciplinary problems in Malaysian schools. The influence of teachers and teacher related factors are deemed a cause of concern, whether they are direct or indirect contributions to student behaviour.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Review of Literature -3**

#### **5.00 Introduction:**

Teacher characteristics may be a complex issue as the nature of exhibited characteristics are usually intertwined with that of teachers' personal, social, professional, moral and psychological aspects of their lives. However despite the nature of variations, teacher characteristics tend to have a strong potential to influence the lives of students in terms of their academic achievement as well as their behaviours. The present study endeavoured to highlight how teacher characteristics influenced students' lives in Malaysian secondary schools and how they determined their behaviours. This chapter reviews literature on empirical studies related to the purpose and design of the present study, on the influence of teacher characteristics in other settings.

#### **5.01 Chapter Outline:**

The introductory section throws some light on the general influence of teachers' 'negative characteristics' and how they infringe the norms of the teaching profession. The chapter is followed by a summary of studies that provide evidence for the influence on such perceptions. The studies identified in this chapter are similar to the purpose and design of the present study that included aspects of violation of teacher professionalism in the context of pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal and teachers' disciplining styles. As such, literature on aspects of teacher professionalism precedes the rest. The conclusion part sums up

the three sections on literature review (Chapter 3-5) as how they might serve as the conceptual and theoretical framework for the present study.

### **5.02 Teacher Professionalism and Teacher's Professional Identities:**

According to Becker and Riel (1999); Whitty (1996) and Lofgren (1995) the very concept of teacher professionalism can be reduced to one word; 'competence'. Whitty (1996, pp.89-90) identifies two sets of qualities that characterize a professional teacher: professional characteristics and professional competences. Professional characteristics include professional values, personal and professional development, communication and relationships as well as synthesis and application. Professional competences refer to **pedagogical skills** which include knowledge and understanding of students and their learning, subject knowledge, curriculum, the education system and the teacher's role as well as skills such as subject application, classroom methodology, classroom management, assessment and recording and undertaking a wider role.

Lofgren (1995) divides teacher competence into three main components: **interpersonal skills**, classroom procedures and subject knowledge. The first component includes parts that can be associated with social competence and teachers' **ethical behaviour**. The first being the teacher's ability to communicate with the student, a positive student approach, understanding students' learning difficulties, acknowledging the individual student, being someone the student can trust. The second component includes that; which in more general terms are called teaching skills, i.e. the ability to organise and teach in interesting and flexible ways and using good teaching methods. The third component is related to the

teachers' subject knowledge and ability to plan and structure the content. These different components are naturally assumed to be interrelated. For example, the students are positive towards teaching situations that are characterized by a clear structure and openness, i.e. the teacher is able to both structure content as well as be open to students' reactions (Lofgren, 1995).

Medley and Shannon (1994) distinguish between three dimensions of teacher quality: teacher effectiveness (the degree to which a teacher achieves desired effects upon students), teacher competence (the extent to which a teacher has the knowledge and skills) and performance (how a teacher behaves in the process of teaching).

Malm and Lofgren (2006) regard student **discipline and conflict handling** strategies as one of the main components in the measurement of teacher competence. They say the more positive student's attitude to schooling and teacher competence; the less likely they are to display aggressive or unwanted behaviour. Using a sample of 551 students (271 boys and 280 girls) in a Swedish setting, they found that there are strong correlations between teacher competence, school attitudes and self confidence. In other words there are substantial causal relationships between these three correlated factors and student conflict handling strategies. The more positive students' attitudes to schooling and teacher competence are, the less likely they are to display aggressive behaviour. In the same way, highly rated teacher competence, positive school attitudes and positive self-confidence among students result in compromising behaviour.

Various researchers (Carr, 2005; Rogers, 2002; Kyriacou, 2002) have outlined that good classroom control and discipline are the product of good teaching. When teachers teach well and provide appropriate learning support, students are more likely to follow teachers' instructions instead of becoming bored or frustrated and withdrawn (Atwood, 1983). When teachers provide clear explanations, this may improve students' perceptions of the meaningfulness of schoolwork and thereby enhance a commitment to learning and therefore distancing them from unwanted behaviour (Small, 1996).

Another pertinent aspect that may be regarded as equally important in the context of good teaching and good classroom management is 'withidness' (monitoring skills). According to Fry and Coe (1980) monitoring includes intervention to correct inappropriate student behaviour. However, monitoring can only bring about good effects with supportive teacher behaviours. Control oriented monitoring can have negative consequences for student motivation (Cooper and Upton, 1991; Doyle, 1986; Fry and Coe, 1980).

Teacher attitudes are important in educational psychology and positive teacher attitudes are fundamental to effective teaching. Wragg et al. (2000) claim that teacher characteristics such as personal teacher efficacy, modelling and enthusiasm, caring and high expectations, promote learner's motivation. These characteristics are also responsible for boosting students' academic achievement. According to Wallace (2008; 1998) learning takes place with ease without disruption under teachers who are well organised. The way they interacted with

students influenced student motivation and liking for teachers and schools in general.

Most often people associate competence as a measure to evaluate teachers. If teachers do not perform well or achieve the desired results, as per the goals of the schools they might be considered 'incompetent'. According to Kruger and Dunning (1999) 'incompetence' is a matter of degree and not one of absolutes. In other words when we say incompetent, the term refers to people 'who are less competent than their peers' (p.1122) with regard to performance in a certain skill. Some believe that the term 'competence' has no precise meaning but is subjected to individuals' definitions (Wragg et al., 2000: p.37; Bridges, 1992: p.24). In the context of teaching, another definition states that 'incompetence' is a lack of relevant content knowledge or skills required for instruction and classroom management (Tannenbaum, 1999). The phrase 'poorly performing' indicates the results of an actual behaviour while 'incompetence' emphasizes skills that includes personality or character traits (Yariv, 2004: p. 150).

In defining competence, consideration must also be given to the effect on students, the teaching process, or the overall achievement and functioning of the school (Rubie-Davies, et al., 2006; Mansfield, 2001; Sumison, 2000; Parry, 1999). According to Wragg et al. (2000) the inability of teachers to communicate effectively with parents about student performance and the inability to adapt and respond to changes also reflects teachers' incompetency. The phrase 'marginal teacher' is sometimes related with incompetence as well. However, according to Sweeney and Manat (1984: 25 in Yariv, 2004) 'marginal teachers' may have

sufficient content knowledge but lack other aspects of professional attributes such as classroom management skills, collegiality, moral behaviour and motivation.

### **5.03 “Challenging Teachers” in the Israeli Context:**

Yariv (2004) conducted qualitative interviews with 40 elementary school principals in different parts of Israel. He used quantitative as well as qualitative analysis on his second sample (a total of 1157 teachers across 40 schools) to show the relationship between teacher characteristics and teachers’ biographic variables, and the implications of that relationship on the general administration of schools. In his findings around 7% (80 teachers) were described as challenging or problematic by the principals. This group consisted of mostly veteran teachers who manifested either insensitive attitudes to students or showed low motivation. Most served in deprived schools with inexperienced principals.

In Yariv’s second sample he describes the perceived characteristics of 40 problematic teachers described as posing one of the toughest challenges to the school principals concerned. The evaluation on this set of teachers was from schools where the principals were currently working or from the schools they had served earlier. Though teaching is predominantly a feminine job in Israel (Addi-Raccach, 2002), 6 out of the 40 problematic teachers identified in the study turned out to be males and all of them were subject teachers. The teachers were relatively older with long teaching experience. About half of the teachers were serving in a responsible role, teaching the majority of the lessons and were responsible for students’ social, academic and personal aspects. Most of the teachers had at least a basic degree while some even had post graduate qualifications. According to

Yariv, the principals were less occupied with extreme cases which were usually rare but more often were concerned with teachers' daily behaviour which might be improper (e.g. aggressive responses to pupils) or describing the teachers as suffering from poor fundamental teaching skills. The following are some of the highlights of Yariv's (2004) findings, based on the descriptions by the principals' who participated in the Israeli study on teachers who lacked competence.

The teachers concerned often turned out to be bossy or arrogant, untidy in appearance and were experiencing problems in disciplining students. They also experienced frequent discipline problems and conflicts with students. The male teachers experienced more discipline problems compared to the females. The principals also described these teachers as lazy, stupid and childish, etc. The teachers could not even prove reasonable class achievement and often produced poor results. Some of these teachers showed no regards for the safety of the students. For example the sports teachers did not care about students' safety and let the students play football without supervision. The teachers were described as lazy because they were often late or not punctual, moved slowly, did not participate in official ceremonies and school events and took many sick leaves. They shouted at the students, insulted them, related to them impatiently, did not listen to students' grievances and loudly and publically discussed students' weaknesses or mistakes. Some of the teachers had good teaching skills but occasionally exploded into verbal and physical assault towards students. Overall they were regarded as insensitive to the needs of the students and the demands of the institutional goals.



In some cases the teachers were regarded as old fashioned and did not respond to teaching methods required of them. The teachers were highly de-motivated and paid no attention to the principals' advice to change their habits or upgrade their academic qualifications. In one case a problematic teacher was engaged in a private practice at the expense of her professional obligations as a teacher. She disregarded the principals' authority, had poor collegial relationships, displayed arrogant behaviour and had a strong tendency to criticise others. Almost a quarter of the teachers were capable of spreading rumours, 'blowing up' petty issues and had the tendency to deny their own difficulties. According to the principals, the behaviour of these teachers distorted the organisational climate of the schools.

Yariv admits that the principals' notion of incompetence is only one side of the story and may not necessarily reflect the reality of the actual position of the teachers concerned. Even if the principals could identify such teachers it might not be easy to 'weed them out' without consistent records of evidence and the due procedural process might be tedious. For example as Jones (1997) describes, the increasing amount of due process tenure that teachers were entitled to in some states in the US discouraged schools from pursuing dismissals of even the most unsatisfactory teachers.

In light of the above, the following section provides a brief summary on studies that point out some of the negatively perceived teacher characteristics and the implications upon student behaviour. The studies also account for students' positive perceptions of teacher characteristics that have contributed to the desired outcome in student behaviour.

#### **5.04 Student Perceptions in the US:**

In an American setting Friedal et al. (2002) investigated the relationship between the students' perceived classroom environment and students' maladaptive behaviours. In their investigation the researchers noted that some of the teachers' characteristics had the potential to influence students to engage in a number of behaviours considered detrimental to learning.

One prominent aspect highlighted in their research is students' deliberate behaviours which reflected the dire need to safeguard or protect their self-worth. Such behaviours include student avoidance of teachers in seeking support with their lessons or help in other aspects of schooling. Students avoided asking questions because they felt, or assumed, that doing so might demonstrate a lack of knowledge or ability compared to their peers. This was because students were often caught in situations where they perceived that they were likely to be judged negatively by their teachers. Such situations, as Friedal et al. (2002) argue, threatened students' self worth and resulted in avoidance of the situations. The authors also noted that students who succumbed to such situations had the tendency to engage in 'projective coping' (blaming teachers when they perform poorly in their academic tasks) or being disruptive in class in order to deflect attention from their difficulty protecting their self worth.

Friedal et al. (2002) also noted that when students perceived teachers to be enthusiastic about what they were teaching, supportive when students needed help, and above all careful not to embarrass students with whom teachers faced

difficulty, they were more likely to seek help and less likely to disrupt class or blame their teachers for their difficulties in class. By contrast, students who distanced themselves from their teachers created implications in terms of their learning behaviour and thereby failed to achieve curriculum goals and the purpose of schooling in general (Friedal et al., 2002).

In a study conducted in another American setting Teven (2007) studied the relationship between teacher caring and classroom behaviour. This study investigated the impact of teacher misbehaviour and caring on students' affect, teacher evaluation, teacher competence and trustworthiness. Based on the outcome of the study Teven demonstrated that teachers should maintain appropriate classroom behaviours and communicate caring towards students in order to preserve their credibility and affect in the classroom. He also suggests that teachers be able to communicate to their students that they do care about them in order for students to perceive them as caring.

Teven's (2007) views are identical to these of Teven and Hanson's (2004) findings which claim that verbally caring messages generate positive student perceptions of teacher competence and trustworthiness. Teachers who used verbally aggressive messages that attacked student characters, competence and ability, background, physical appearance and teachers who ridicule, use threats and swore, were perceived as less competent and less caring. On the contrary, teachers who were caring and successful in communicating this attitude towards their students created a positive learning environment (Teven and Hanson, 2004). This relates to an assumption made about teacher-student relationships that the

behaviour pattern of teachers affects the behaviour pattern of students (Wittrock, 1986 cited in Teven, 2007).

#### **5.05 A Nigerian Study:**

In a Nigerian study that involved 1600 students from 15 secondary schools, Adediwura and Bada Tayo (2007) investigated the relationships and effects of student perceptions of teachers' knowledge of subject matter, attitudes to work and teaching skills with that of student academic performance. They found a significant association between student perceptions of teachers' pedagogical skills and student academic achievement. It has been established that there is a high correlation between what teachers know and what teachers teach. These findings are important in the sense that positive perceptions of teachers' pedagogical skills often lead to good behaviour on the part of the students and good behaviour underpins academic achievement.

Their findings were identical to those of Eggen and Kauchak (2001) and Wilson et al. (1987) who had noted that where pedagogical content knowledge was lacking teachers had the tendency to paraphrase information in learners' textbooks or provide abstract explanations that were not meaningful to their students.

#### **5.06 Student Perceptions in Australia:**

Koul and Fisher (2006) carried out a study in an Australian setting which studied the educational experiences of aboriginal students. Among the 471 students participated in the quantitative study, a sizeable minority (42%) reported they never liked their teachers, while over a third indicated that their teachers never

cared for them. Around a fifth (21%) of the students claimed teachers were picking on them while 12% believed teachers were ganging up on them. Despite these figures, eight out of the ten students claimed they had respect for their teachers. The researchers concluded that teachers had influence over aboriginal children's aspirations in the educational and social aspects of school. While the majority of students enjoyed positive relationships with their teachers, the percentage of students who experienced relationship problems with teachers was worryingly high.

In another empirical study, via the perceptions of 3500 students, Lewis (2001), identified two distinct discipline styles among Australian teachers. The first was called 'Coercive Discipline', which comprised of punishment and aggression, and was characterized by teachers yelling in anger, using sarcasm or using group punishment, etc. These characteristics showed clear infringement of professional and ethical behaviours such as shouting all the time, unfairly blaming or deliberately picking on students and being rude and authoritative. The findings of the study unravelled the fact that such negative characteristics on the part of teachers stimulated student resistance and subsequent misbehaviour. Conversely, the second style that comprised aspects like discussion, hints, recognition, involvement and punishment in the disciplining process was noted as 'Relationship Based Discipline.' Lewis (2001) found that students who were subjected to the latter version of discipline, significantly exhibited more responsible behaviour than in the former.

### **5.07 Teacher Ethics in the Czech Republic:**

Vacek and Lasek (2006) examined ethical aspects of the teaching profession by comparing opinions of teachers and student teachers in the Czech Republic. 220 practicing teachers (50 men and 170 women) and 200 student teachers (44 men and 156 women) participated in the study (the proportion of the men and women in the samples represented the gender ratio of the teaching force in the Czech Republic). The researchers engaged student teachers as part of the sample, with the anticipation that they would be more critical (by virtue of their closeness to their experience as students) in recalling unethical behaviours than would practicing teachers.

For the purpose of the study the researchers used two sets of purpose-developed questionnaires. The first was a ten-item version that examined perceptions of professional and ethical characteristics of practicing teachers. A slightly adjusted seven item version was administered on the student teachers. The first part of the questionnaire asked about the importance of teachers' influence on the moral development of the pupils. The second part requested agreement on teachers' unethical characteristics based on self experiences and observation. The final section asked for evidence on the frequency of unethical practices among teachers in school.

In part one, the findings claimed that 92% of the teacher respondents and 89% of the student teachers acknowledged the importance of ethics in teaching and developing moral behaviour standards for students. While there was slightly more agreement on the part of women on this notion, most respondents from both

groups thought that the existing system in the republic was only partially or half successful in fulfilling this criterion. Student teachers cited the following as evidence of teacher unethical behaviours from their experiences:

- Talking down to pupils, degrading them or being sarcastic :- (e.g.) Teachers intentionally mispronouncing students' names, ridiculing student ability and likening or comparing them with animals.
- Deliberately unfair evaluation or marking, favouritism and bending rules.
- Aggression and corporal punishment :- (e.g.) an elementary school teacher (woman) kicked and repeatedly hit students with a ruler.
- Vulgar behaviour and verbal abuse against students for not bringing documents or books.
- Setting bad examples (alcohol consumption, drunkenness and smoking in front of pupils: - (e.g.) one of the teachers often came to school intoxicated and the headmistress took no notice of pupils' or parents' complaints. The teacher concerned even vomited in the classroom.
- Indiscrimination towards pupils and colleagues :- (e.g.) one of the teachers disclosed personal information about a pupil and expressed harsh comments about the family's financial status.
- Teachers were prone to unpredictable shifts of mood.

To substantiate the above claims, the practicing teachers also agreed on the prevalence, frequency and the seriousness of their characteristics. For example, teachers admitted their weaknesses whereby they were content to simply go

through the curriculum and not really teach it. They were lacking innovation in working procedures and refused further professional development. There was agreement on the blame that, teachers lacked punctuality. In their disciplining aspect, teachers admitted that there were instances where they were degrading, ridiculing and sarcastic to students. The researchers suggested that the discrepancy between the teachers' and student teacher perceptions might indicate that the teacher respondent either felt too emotionally threatened by the issue (because of unpleasant memories or guilt connected with their own unethical behaviour) or that they were inconsistent in considering the problem (Vacek and Lasek, 2006).

#### **5.08 Caribbean Study:**

According to a study report (OERU, 2006) school discipline problems in the East Caribbean States is on the rise and the growing discipline issues impair the capacity of the education system to effectively accomplish its main aims. The study involved 3703 students (14-16 years old), 444 teachers and 78 principals. Among students, the strongest predictors of discipline problem frequencies were unethical practices such as teachers arriving late, being absent and leaving early (OERU, 2006). Teachers admitted their weaknesses claiming that there were often instances where they cursed students and made fun of them. In the disciplining aspect, teachers admitted that they physically harmed students by hitting them. About 43% of teachers were unable to handle disruptive students and chose to send them to the principals. In the event of student fights and bullying, some teachers (20%) are reported to have admitted that they did not stop the fight and let students work it out on their own.



### **5.09 Cross-cultural Study in Australia, China and Israel:**

The Lewis et al (2005) study highlighted the influence of a teachers' disciplining style upon student behaviour. This large study compared teachers' disciplining styles in three different cultural settings namely Australia, China and Israel. In spite of the cross-cultural nature, this study attributed to teachers a significantly greater responsibility for pupil misbehaviour than they attribute to parents or students' home environment (p.93).

A total of 5521 students at three different age levels (7-8; 9-10; 11-12) and 748 teachers from the three countries participated in the study. Overall 48% of the students were male but their percentage varied (from 38% to 60%) across year level and within countries. The gender distribution of teachers was divided less evenly. The males represented 11%, 12% and 46% respectively in Israel, Australia and China. The smaller percentage of male teachers in Israel is a reflection of the predominance of women in the teaching force (Romi and Katz, 2003).

10 % of the teachers from each of the sample schools, in the three different countries, were asked to answer two questions pertaining to teacher perceptions of student discipline. The first question: (a) how many students misbehave in the first class you would normally be teaching next Monday? and the second (b) to what extent is the issue of classroom discipline and student misbehaviour an issue of concern to you? The responses for the first question was presented in a five point Likert-type scale which read as (5) nearly all, (4) most, (3) some, (2) hardly any, (1) none. Likewise the responses for the second question translated as (5) of major concern (4) of

moderate concern (3) of minor concern (2) of almost no concern and (1) of no concern.

Initial results of the study showed that there was no significant statistical difference on the perceived level of classroom misbehaviour among teachers in the three countries. However, a substantial group of teachers, in at least two national settings, expressed a moderate level of concern over student misbehaviour in their classes. The pattern of discipline strategies used in the Australian and Israel setting indicated some similarity. In Australia and Israel teachers commonly reacted by letting students know what was wrong with student behaviour. They did this with a hope that students improved their behaviour. In addition, teachers in both countries resorted to some form of punishment while discussing with the students their concern about the negative impact of their behaviour on others. The important point was that more often teachers communicated appropriate behaviours in advance to avoid or reduce misbehaviors among the students. Within the dimension of discipline, two other strategies utilised less frequently than others were aggression and involvement of the class in setting rules and consequences.

The pattern in China was that students reported greater use of all strategies except aggression and punishment. There was more hinting perceived in year 7, 8, and 9 than in year 11 and 12. This data may reflect a greater need for intervention with younger students who are new to secondary schooling and in the process of adaptation. However, punishment was noted as rare or insignificant at this level and the researchers concluded that teachers use more positive techniques, such as ones that imply trust with younger students.

The results of the study also indicated that teachers in China were more open towards rewarding positive discipline strategies, followed by Israel and Australia reporting the least. Teachers in China appear to be more supportive of students with Australia being ranked the last among the three nations. The Israeli teachers stood somewhere in the middle though they were reported as being the most aggressive.

The main effects for the country applied to all six discipline strategies and showed that students in China compared to those in Israel report less usage of punishment and aggression and greater use of recognition, discussion, hinting and involvement. Students in Australia and Israel showed no difference in reported levels of involvement, aggression and hinting. Australian students reported less use of discussion and recognition but more punishment than those in Israel. In Australia, the male and female teachers displayed low levels of aggression and punishment for older students. In China the older students reported more aggression, seen coming mainly from women teachers. In general the authors attribute lesser aggression and punishment by Chinese teachers due to the lesser prevalence of provocative behaviour among Chinese students. It is cultural for Chinese students to show greater respect for their teachers and the tendency to trust and listen to their teachers' advice (Jin and Cortazzi, 1998). Furthermore, Chinese teachers can rely upon parental support to ease their burden in disciplining students (Peng, 1993; Gao, 1998). Australian and Israeli teachers' relative contribution to empower students in classroom decision making and rule

setting is related to the low levels of unconditional respect they are likely to receive from students and the reduced support from parents.

#### **5.10 Cross Cultural Study in Maldives and Fiji:**

Booth et al. (1998) explored the perceptions of student teachers (trainees) in two different cultural settings, The Maldives and Fiji. Respondents were asked to identify factors that facilitated or encouraged student learning and those that discouraged or frustrated the teachers. The purpose of this exercise was to make the student teachers aware of the ‘realities’ faced by the students and to gain some understanding of the complexities experienced by teachers in schools.

The findings were reported under several headings. Among the similarities noted in the two different cultural settings was the ‘teacher factor’ that encouraged or discouraged student learning. Teachers were reported as showing perceived negative behaviour in their teaching. The negative teaching strategies focused primarily on the teachers’ attitude towards slower or more disruptive learners. The respondents believed such children were labelled as below average and teachers were seen to be ignoring their questions and answers, not catering for their needs and lowering their expectation of success.

Teaching practices that drew the most criticism included inconsistent teacher expectation, shouting, unfriendliness, over-valuing average students, negative reinforcement (placing ‘black stars’ on the ‘star chart’) and providing unjust punishments and rewards. Perceived teacher behaviours that dampened students’ enthusiasm included lack of appreciation of achievement and depriving students

from participating in physical education as punishment. Verbal bullying and humiliation of students by teachers in both settings were mentioned by the all trainee groups.

Some of the teaching styles of teachers, especially those from the Fijian setting were perceived to be a discouraging factor for student learning. In this regard, the conventional ‘Chalk and Talk’ method employed by teachers was considered boring and did not allow room for student participation. Lessons were monotonous owing to ‘too much teacher talk’, repetition, lecturing, note taking, board work, book work and the lack of creative activities and extension opportunities. Some needy learners were perceived to be receiving little or no individual attention.

An overview of data provided in this study (Booth et al., 1998) did show some positive accounts of favourable learning, such as teachers’ motivational strategies that enhanced student learning and fostering good student relationships. However, the factors that discouraged or frustrated learning were perceived by the trainees to be more pervasive than the factors that encouraged or facilitated student learning.

#### **5.11 Teachers Acting as Bullies:**

According to Madsen (1996) “a large number of teachers and parents overlook incidents which children see as bullying” (p.19). This implies that teachers and parents may see children as oversensitive to bullying but may also send the message that some bullying is acceptable. Olweus (1999) (as cited in Rigby, 2007) suggest that bullying occurs only when there is an imbalance of power. The

aggressor or aggressors are more powerful in some way than the person they are targeting. If defining bullying is difficult or perceptual, teachers may not recognize their own actions as bullying, while students may perceive teachers' actions as such. On the other hand, Manke (1997) comments that in general teachers are perceived as having a problem if they do not have any power over students. He adds that such teachers often receive more criticism than teachers who are authoritarian and exercise control even if students do not learn. As such teachers are sometimes compelled to exercise their power. In this regard Parsons (2005) claims that 'teachers who can keep their classes quiet, obedient and on task are valued by their superiors and the easiest way to achieve this kind of control is by the imbalance of power intrinsic to teaching' (p.43). Teachers can use ridicule, intimidation and fear to maintain control in their classrooms. Those teachers are rewarded and gain a reputation for 'being tough but fair', 'strict but get the job done'; 'know how to make them toe the line' (p.430). With classroom control considered to be a quality of effective teachers, Stronge (2007) claims that it might be difficult to draw the line and it might be difficult for educators to protect their reputation.

Some teachers may resort to inactions for avoidance of self destructive consequences when dealing with students. Some teachers feel that firm control is stifling and inhumane. However Whendall (1992) and Lee and Canter (1993) believe that firm control maintained humanly is liberating. They feel that the assertive teacher is more effective than the non-assertive or hostile teacher. Hostile teachers typically use aversive approaches characterized by shouting, threats and sarcasm. Both hostile and non-assertive teachers are violative of

student rights. It is hostility and ‘wishy-washiness’ of the teacher that cause confusion and psychological trauma in students, not calm, firm and consistent assertiveness. The assertive teacher is able to maintain a positive, caring and productive climate in the classroom. A climate of care and support produces the climate of learning.

Twemlow et al (2006) examined teacher perceptions of bullying by other teachers. 116 teachers from seven elementary schools in an US setting responded to a unanimous questionnaire aimed at finding out about teachers’ experience and their perceptions of their colleagues. The results revealed that teachers who had themselves experienced bullying in their schooldays were likely to bully or be bullied by students. The study also revealed two main type of bullying characteristics among teachers. The first being a sadistic bully, and the second a bully victim. The sadistic bully is the type of person who bullies for pleasure. The bully victim is the type of person who provokes the bullying and then gets victimised by their own actions. About 45% of teachers surveyed in the study admitted to bullying students themselves. The more reflective teachers in the study realized that bullying is a hazard to teaching and may have serious consequences on student behaviour. The teachers added that “all teachers bully their students at times, become victims and bystanders at times” (p.194). According to McEvoy (2005) although peer bullying has been targeted in school programming policies, students often see parallels in teacher behaviours during instructional lessons. He adds that bullying is a form of power abuse and when the abuse is public; the bullied students may also become targets or scapegoats among their peers.

### **5.12 Concluding Comments:**

In summary, the findings indicate that in general there is a lot of similarity between the perceptions of students and student teachers on teacher characteristics in many educational settings. It is apparent that the perceived influence of teachers unethical practices hold the potential for student behaviour development. Some of the negative characteristics that emerged in the findings are indications of violations of teacher morality and infringement of teacher professionalism, and certainly points of for teacher reflections.

Not all students behave badly in schools. Likewise not all teachers are considered bad either. While the behaviour of some teachers may lead to negative student perceptions, not all perceptions contribute to student indiscipline. Students perceive their teacher characteristics in different orders and might respond to them in a different manner subjected to factors such as home background and of peer culture. Depending on their level of coping strategies, some students may develop maladaptive behaviours while some may develop aggressive or other forms of deviant behaviours. For some students the emotional injuries they might suffer may persist in a later part of their lives, even after they have left their school.

It might be difficult to evaluate and classify teachers as a ‘wholesome aspect’ as they may have different degrees of variability in their personal and professional skills. For example, a teacher who has a good command of content knowledge may be unable to perform well due to his/her lack of pedagogical skills. A teacher



who might be very popular with students due to his/her excellent interpersonal characteristics may be lacking in the required pedagogical skills. Likewise a teacher who is good at pedagogical skills may be unpopular due to his/her lack of interpersonal skills, ethical qualities or good disciplining styles.

The present study is about how students perceived their characteristics and whether the influence of such characteristics contributed to student indiscipline. Part one of the literature review (Chapter Three) discussed the needs theory and the significance of discipline in schools. Using a discipline model it pointed out the different styles of teacher disciplining and their implications on student behaviour. The second part (Chapter Four), examined literature that studied student perceptions and its repercussions. The third part (Chapter Five), reviewed literature that has direct relevance to the design and objective of the present study. The studies touched on the four aspects of teacher professionalism that include teachers' pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal and disciplining styles. The review of literature via the three different chapters (3-5) helped to formulate the theoretical and conceptual framework for the present study.

### **5.13 Theoretical Framework:**

According to Eisenhart (1991) **Theoretical framework** is a structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory...constructed by using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships (p.205). The theoretical framework can be expected to invoke a host of values and beliefs, not unique to the researcher, but shared in a common paradigm with other scholars.

That is to say, researchers seek to identify the perspectives that align their work with other research.

The theoretical Framework for **the present study** builds upon perspectives and findings supported by earlier studies (Literature Review), mostly in the context of psychological and behavioural theories which claim that, some teachers by virtue of weaknesses in their pedagogical skills, lack of ethical qualities, poor interpersonal relationships and negative disciplining styles have the potential to induce much stress upon students under their care (Quinn, 2005). Teachers' lack of understanding of student background factors (Tyler et al., 2006), student needs, psychological and emotional attributes and learning styles (Barber and Geddes, 1997) contributes or adds to student dislike for schools, feelings of alienation and a range of disruptive or maladaptive behaviours in students (Teven, 2007). Likewise teachers' authoritarian or egoistic nature, refusal to listen to students, unethical behaviours such as embarrassing and ridiculing students (Friedal et al., 2002) not only causes student disengagement but provokes a multitude of undesirable behaviours in students.

In a similar tone, student perceptions of the contexts they encounter and operate within have a powerful influence on their motivation to learn and thereby determine their behaviour and school adjustment (Margaret, 2004). Student perceptions of the school context (Crothers and Kolbert, 2008; Anderman and Anderman, 1999), classroom and instructional environment, perceptions they hold of their teachers (Charles, 2005; Dreikers and Grey, 1995), student-teacher relationships (Wallace, 2008; Friedal et al., 2002; Murry and Greenberg, 2000),

perceived teacher support (Teven, 2007) and teacher recognition and praise (Clemance, 2001; Wubbles and Levy, 1993) have the potential to shape student behaviour.

The theme for the present study was obtained by coining the nature of teacher and student attributes stated above. It is hypothesized that teachers' negative characteristics may worsen the deteriorating discipline situation, and may bring about clear implications for behavioural management systems in schools.

#### **5.14 Conceptual Framework:**

According to Reichael and Ramey (1987) (as cited in Smyth, 2004), a conceptual framework is described as a set of broad ideas and principles derived from relevant fields of enquiry to structure a subsequent study or presentation. When clearly articulated, a conceptual framework has the potential to scaffold research and thereby allows the researcher to make meaning of subsequent findings. Such a framework helps the researcher not only develop awareness and understanding of the situation under scrutiny, but also enables them to communicate this in a comprehensive and systematic manner (Anfara and Mertz, 2006). As with all investigation in the social world, the framework itself forms part of the 'agenda for negotiation' to be scrutinised and tested, reviewed and reformed as a result of investigation (Guba and Lincoln, 1989).

In educational contexts conceptual frameworks are a type of intermediate theory (Shields et al., 2006) that has the potential to organize not only the core themes but may connect and synchronize all aspects of inquiry (e.g., problem definition,

purpose, literature review, methodology, data collection and analysis). In this respect, conceptual frameworks act as mind maps that give coherence to empirical inquiry. They may take different forms depending on the nature and complexities involved in an investigation and to some extent the inclination of the researcher to 'model or design' a particular approach to achieve the intended aims.

Existing conceptual frameworks are often used to test theories in other educational settings. In a new research endeavour it contributes to the authenticity of the study by guiding researchers to identify the gap in the literature, formulate research goals, and thereby contribute to new knowledge in the area of investigation (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). As such, they represent the 'organizational structure' that provides clear links from the literature to the research goals and questions (what has already been found and what is missing or lacking). They inform the research design in the initial stage and provide reference points for discussion of literature, methodology and analysis of data in the secondary stage (Goetz and Le Compte, 1984). Researchers are cautioned to be wary of the limitations and personal sensitivities in the use of conceptual frameworks (Mason and Waywood, 1996) and remain open to new and unexpected occurrences such as changes in the data and the investigation (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

In a broad sense the present study was intended to explore the extent to which schools' internal problems, such as what might be termed as teachers' 'abusive', 'unethical' or 'victimizing' behaviour (if there might be any) contributed to student disciplinary problems in Malaysian schools. Therefore, the conceptual

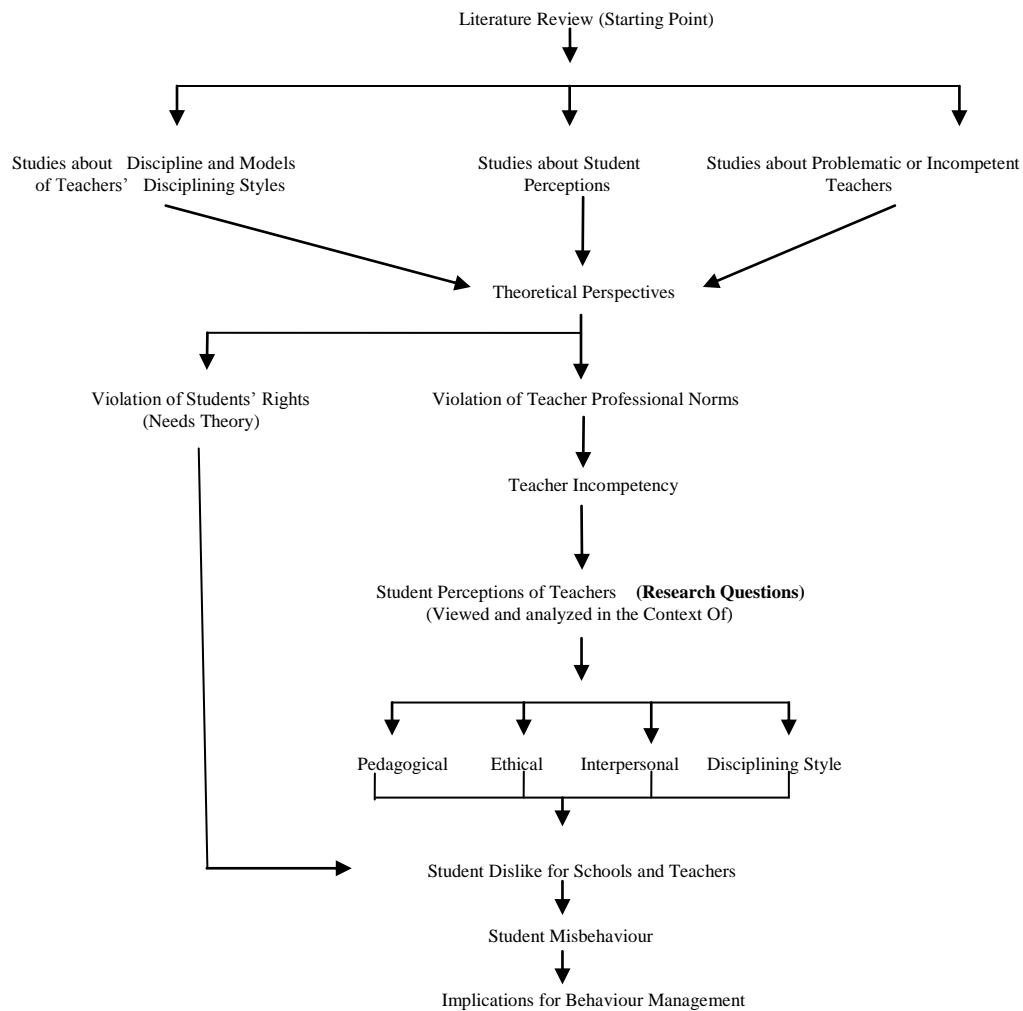
framework for the **present study** (Fig. 1) begins with the literature review which includes models of teachers' disciplining styles, the significance of student perceptions (how they might be useful in school improvement) and student perceptions of teacher characteristics in various cultural settings. However, the main focus for the literature review with regard to the conceptual framework is student perceptions of teacher characteristics in different cultural settings. It was noted in the literature that some teachers via their actions, inactions and reactions (verbal or non verbal) not only infringe the rights of students (Needs Theory) (Barber and Geddes, 1997) but end up violating their professional norms. However these studies focused only on 'how students perceived their teacher characteristics'. That is to say there is no evidence how student perceptions of teacher characteristics may contribute to student indiscipline. As such the present study was undertaken to fill what may be the gap in the literature which resulted in the formulation of three research questions presented in the following order:

- a) How students perceived their teacher characteristics in Malaysia?
- b) How perceptions of teacher characteristics may influence student behaviour?
- c) What might be the implications for behavioural management in schools?

The first question is common to the literature as many past studies investigated how students perceived their teacher characteristics in different settings. With regard to Goetz and Le Compte's (1984) statement of the purpose of conceptual framework, this question might confirm or unconfirm earlier findings in the Malaysian context. The second and third questions focus on two new areas of investigation, thereby contributing to new knowledge i.e. how negatively

perceived teacher characteristics might bring about student indiscipline and how it might implicate behavioural management in schools.

Student perceptions of teacher behaviour were evaluated in the context of teacher professionalism (Malm and Lofgren, 2006; Becker and Riel, 1999; Whitty, 1996; Lofgren, 1995). Four aspects of teacher ‘competency’ a) pedagogical b) ethical c) interpersonal and d) disciplining style were considered for the present inquiry. The relationship between the different factors and variables is presented diagrammatically in figure 3 followed by a brief explanation of the diagram for the reader. The link between literature and research questions are explained in the following section on research questions.



**Fig.3 Conceptual Framework**

The review of relevant literature (in the three aspects mentioned above) gave rise to a number of theoretical perspectives which were indicative of a violation of teachers' professional norms. Parallels were also observed in the violation of student rights (Needs theory). Student perceptions of teacher characteristics were analysed in the context of the four aspects of professional 'competency' considered for the study.

In light of the above, this study investigated how student perceptions of the infringement of teacher professionalism and the violation of student rights related to student dislike of schools and teachers. On a further note, this study also investigated if student perceptions of teacher characteristics contributed to student discipline and what implications followed for behavioural management.



## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **Methodology**

#### **6.00 Introduction:**

As discussed in the literature review, this study is focused on finding answers on queries as to whether perceived teacher characteristics contribute to student discipline problems. The purpose of this chapter is to briefly remind the reader of the aims and objectives of the study, and to describe and justify the research design, and the methodological approaches chosen by the writer.

#### **6.01 Chapter Outline:**

The first part of the chapter discusses the research paradigm providing justification for mixed mode strategy applied in the study. The second part talks about the purpose of the study, the research aims, the sampling procedures and the research methods and tools. The final part discusses the issue of authenticity and ethics.

#### **6.02 Justification for Mixed Mode Strategy:**

In the conduct of the research for this thesis, the writer had used a mixed method approach. As the name implies, mixed methods research means adopting a research strategy employing more than one type of research method. The methodological approach for this study is a blend of quantitative and qualitative methods. Data was gathered using a quantitative survey (questionnaire) and qualitative interviews were conducted with selected participants and Discipline Teachers.

Literature outlines three schools of thought on the relationship between quantitative and qualitative research: the purist, the situationalist and the pragmatist. While the purists advocate mono-method studies, there is no mixture of research methods, situationalists contend that the selection method must be situational and the pragmatists argue that researchers must integrate various methods in a single study (Creswell, 2005; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998)

Silverman (2005) suggests that it is worthwhile to combine quantitative and qualitative approaches wherever appropriate. Generally, the quantitative approach will enable the researcher to capture the ‘representation’ of a realistic situation in terms of statistical figures. In other words, it provides answers to ‘what’ for the situation but not ‘how’. By combining qualitative methods such as interviewing, the researcher can observe and become immersed in the field to get the benefit of both worlds (Silverman, 2005). Therefore, the writer used a naturalistic approach which allowed the researcher some autonomy or a preference to capture the ‘what’ of reality at the expense of ‘how’; together with the two parties, the student participants as well as Discipline Teachers to jointly construct meaning to a situation.

This kind of pragmatic approach reduces the tension between ‘reality’ and ‘representation’ (Gubrium and Holstein, 1997 cited in Silverman, 2005). Thus the figure of the ‘insider’, typical of naturalism, can be regarded as a representative reality. Naturalism is a model of research which seeks to minimize presuppositions in order to witness subjects’ world in the eyes of the researcher.

According to Cohen et al. (2007) mixed methods in social sciences not only help to triangulate the validity but explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint. They critique the single method approach saying that it provides only a limited view of the complexity of human behaviour and situations where human beings interact. Research methods act as filters through which the environment is selectively experienced and they are never theoretical or neutral in representing the world of experience. Exclusive reliance on one method, therefore, may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated. The more the methods contrast with one another, the greater the researcher's confidence (Lin, 1976 in Cohen et al., 2007). Thus the use of triangular techniques will help to overcome the problem of 'method boundedness' (Gorard and Taylor, 2004).

In adding further support, Berg (1989) says that all data are basically qualitative. Researchers simply attach either words or numbers to denote a raw experience. Cambell (1994) remarks that all research ultimately has to have a qualitative grounding or ending. As Kaplan (1973), (in Miles and Huberman, 1994) puts it, 'Quantities are of qualities, and a measured quality has just the magnitude expressed in its measure' (pg.207). Sieber (1992) indicates that, blending quantitative and qualitative methods can be very useful in designing a study to find the representative sample and locating deviant cases. In other words this strategy can be helpful during the data collection by supplying background data, getting overlooked information, and helping to avoid 'elite biases' (high status respondents). In the context of data analysis, information gathered via quantitative

methods can help or lead, by showing the generality of specific observations and thereby correcting monolithic judgments of a case (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Adopting a mixed method strategy may constitute a strategy in its own right or it may be subsumed within another research strategy (Brannen, 2005). Supporting the growing research trend that uses mixed mode strategy, Brannen points out some of the recent events and conferences (e.g. Sheffield, November 2004; London, March, 2005) in the UK that have popularized this methodology. According to Brannen (2005) the mixed method research presents an opportunity for skills enhancement and provides opportunity for lifelong learning. Mixed methods research he claims is an opportunity that deflects attention away from theoretical work that is often specific to particular disciplines. Thus it may encourage ‘thinking outside the box’, a practice welcomed by Brannen and others of like mind. Researchers working within this frame work must speak at least two languages which make research results simple to communicate and its message easy to understand. Thus in writing up research, words become as important as numbers and research that uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches has the advantage of allowing both. Mixed method research offers creative possibilities for addressing research questions in terms of a range of methods.

In light of the above, quantitative research is often criticized for being overly simplistic, de-contextualized and reductionist in terms of its generalizations, thus failing to capture the meanings that people give to their lives and circumstances. Most text books argue that, methodological practice should match and be appropriate to the research questions (Creswell, 2005; Mason, 2002 De Vaus,

2001). A piece of research however is likely to comprise a complex of research questions. Thus there is a tendency that some research question or questions may be underpinned by interpretive assumptions, for example concerning how people make sense of their actions. Researchers using quantitative approaches typically study people's behaviour via self reports of behaviour. Researchers of both quantitative and qualitative persuasions may assume that reports of behaviour have some close semblance to actual behaviour.

In consideration of the above ideas the present study looked for student perceptions via a quantitative survey, followed by qualitative interviews with selected student respondents and Discipline Teachers. As far as this study is concerned, the writer feels that it is pointless to simply know that students have negative perceptions about their teachers. Since negative perceptions hold the potential to shape attitudes and behaviour (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1992) it is equally important to unearth the meanings behind student behaviour. The research would be incomplete and deemed superficial if it does not reveal concrete reasons for students' perceptions of teacher characteristics. Thus, the results of the study cannot serve any purpose in terms of policy changes or seeking appropriate solutions for student behaviour problems, especially in identifying internal factors such as teacher behaviour in resolving student disciplinary problems.

The quantitative questionnaire administered to 120 students was merely an initiator that showed some insights or signals on the phenomenon of teacher behaviour. On the other hand, the qualitative interviews paved the way for further

exploration and an empirically based description of the realities of the phenomenon.

As Silverman (2005) suggests, sole dependency on quantitative methods may deprive the social and cultural construction of a given situation. Furthermore the writer had all the time and opportunity to gain more insight into the situation during the study. Hence the collective use of quantitative and qualitative methods is juxtaposed in the present study to generate complementary insights that together create a 'bigger picture'.

As suggested by Brannen (2005), if the logic of inquiry and the nature of the research questions recommend the usefulness of a mixed method approach; researchers need to consider the ordering of their methods. Brannen says the ratio of combination can be in any order, depending on the emphasis the researcher wants to place on each method. In this respect, the present research begins with a quantitative enquiry, aimed to help generate representative samples from which sub groups are selected for further intensive study using qualitative interviews. An attempt was made in the study to show how initial representation was obtained via the quantitative questionnaire before the conduct of the interviews with the students and Discipline Teachers. In the ratio combination a greater emphasis was placed on the qualitative aspects. The findings of both approaches were presented as separate reports via two different chapters.

### **6.03 The Purpose of this Study:**

In this study, the writer wanted to seek evidence of whether students' perceptions of negative characteristics on the part of teachers can possibly influence student behaviour and hence complicate the overall discipline machinery in Malaysian secondary schools. The study involved students from four sample schools. It is the contention of the writer that the results obtained via this study would serve as a basic indicator for the conduct of future larger-scale studies that might explore the influence of teacher characteristics upon student behaviour. As such, the results of the present study are intended mainly to strengthen earlier theories and to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Gall et al., 2003) by providing empirical evidence in the Malaysian setting.

### **6.04 How the Research Questions are informed by the Literature Review?**

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), research questions must be underpinned by the theoretical perspectives in the literature and must be able to address the gap(s) in knowledge identified. Research questions are logical statements of the goal of the study, that provide the link between the known and the unknown, or what is believed to be true (as determined by the literature review) but requires validation. In the present study, research which examined negative aspects of teacher behaviour (referred to in the thesis as *teacher characteristics*) identified in the literature review is reflective of lack of teacher competency and thus a clear indication of the violation of teacher professionalism, seen or perceived in the context of teachers' pedagogical, ethical, inter-personal and of teachers' disciplining styles. The research questions for the present study were formulated

by coining some of the key findings in the literature and the theoretical perspectives on student perceptions of teacher characteristics.

The literature investigated student perceptions of teacher characteristics in various settings that were culturally different. The review also presented models of teachers' disciplining styles (Daniel, 1998) and how teachers might turn out to be 'bullies' (Twemlow et al., 2006) in their interactions with students. The review also revealed the probable existence of groups of teachers who might be 'problematic' and that they posed challenge to students and administrators in schools (e.g. Yariv, 2004). Findings highlighted how teachers' ways of thinking influence their own behaviours and habits (e.g. Parsons, 2005; Yero, 2002). Literature also noted how students perceive their teachers' negative characteristics as violations of student rights (Whendall, 1992). However there is little or no empirical evidence in the literature that examines the relationship between student perceptions, teacher characteristics and the behavioural responses of students. Nevertheless literature in this area cautions that such teacher characteristics do have the potential to influence student behaviour (e.g. Craig and Pepler, 2007; Yero, 2002).

Based on the theoretical premise, teaching is basically the result of pre-planned behaviours and that the single most important factor in determining the learning environment is teacher behaviour (Levin and Nolan, 2007). This study endeavoured to fill the gap in the literature by investigating the consequences of student perceptions of the infringement of teacher professionalism on subsequent student behaviour.



In a broader spectrum and in simple term the thematic concern of the study is to identify school or teacher-related factors that influence student discipline and how this in turn brings implications to behavioural management. In the pursuit of addressing the pervasive problem of student discipline in Malaysian schools, this study formulated a hypothesis that negatively perceived (by students) teacher characteristics could be a contributory factor in student indiscipline. In turn this may bring implications for behavioural management at both classroom and school level. As negative behaviour of any kind is deemed a violation of teacher professionalism (e.g. Whitty, 1996) this study attempted to identify, via the perceptions of students, the possible association between teacher related factors and student indiscipline. In the light of this endeavour, the following aims (sub-themes) were considered to strengthen the purpose of the present study:

- a) Examine the association between factors such as student motivation, liking for school, student behaviour and student engagement.
- b) Build a theoretical perspective that shows the link between student behaviour and that of negatively perceived teacher behaviour using a sample of Malaysian students.
- c) Provide guidelines for teacher reflections for the effective practice of behavioural management, that might help address or minimize student discipline problems in Malaysia.

The above aims were considered with regard to the following research questions in particular:

- a) What pedagogical characteristics of teachers affect student motivation, student liking for schools and how might these influence student behaviour?
- b) What ethical or moral characteristics of teachers affect student motivation, student liking for schools and how might these influence student behaviour?
- c) What inter-personal character traits of teachers are associated with student motivation, student liking for school and how might these influence student behaviour?
- d) What disciplining styles of teachers might motivate students or provoke them to exhibit unwanted behaviour?
- e) What behavioural outcomes are noted for each of the above categories?
- f) What implications followed for behavioural management in schools?

### **6.05 Sampling:**

As humans we tend to make judgments about people, places and about many other things surrounding our lives, on the basis of fragmentary evidence (Gall et al., 2003). Sampling is the process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that they represent the larger group from which they were selected. According to Gay and Airasian (2000) the purpose of sampling is to gain information about the population by using the sample. The degree to which the selected sample represents the population is the degree to which the research results are generalisable to the population.

### **6.06 Non-probability Sampling Versus Representative Sampling:**

Sampling considerations cut across all forms of enquiry and the stress in experimentation is on internal validity, rather than the demonstration of causal relationships (Robson, 2002). Some readers may not see the point and regard a survey invalid, or purposeless if the survey concerned is deemed non-representative. The exigencies of carrying out real world studies can mean that the requirements for representative sampling are indeed very difficult, if not impossible as sampling frames may be difficult to obtain. In other words the so called 'eligibles' may not get into the frame. This slippage, what Robson (2002) argues, 'between what we have and what we want' causes problems with representativeness and thereby possibly lowers the sample size.

However, in this study the writer chose to adhere to non-probability sampling due to some of the ethical guidelines set by the ministry with regard to research on teachers in Malaysia (MOEM, 1996). According to various research, (Robson, 2002; Gay and Airasian, 2000; Cohen and Manion, 1998), this form of sampling is usually less complicated and acceptable when there is no intention or need to make a statistical generalisation to any population beyond the sample surveyed. They (non-probability samples) typically involve the researcher using his/her judgment to achieve a particular purpose, and for this reason are sometimes referred to as purposive samples (Robson, 2002; Patton, 2001).

### **6.07 The Sample Schools:**

Four secondary schools representing the four zones in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur were randomly chosen for the purpose of the study. The schools

concerned shared similarities in the following aspects: All four were urban schools with almost equal number of students (an average of 1500) and with almost the same ethnic and gender ratio. It was also found that the schools even showed some similarity in terms of socio economic status (middle income group). Similarities were also observed in teacher numbers (about 70 each). The schools did not practice streaming and students were generally placed in mixed ability groupings. In terms of discipline and academic status, all the four sample schools were regarded average by the State Education Department (SDE). All the four principals were females (two Chinese and two Malay) and were very obliging and supportive of the conduct of this study.

For the purpose of anonymity, the schools concerned were named as school A, B, C and D. Though the sample schools showed similarities in many aspects in terms of locality, enrolment, teacher numbers, student ethnic background and socio economic status, there were sharp variations in the ethnic ratio of the actual students who participated in the study. This was due to the assigning of designated classes approved for the study by the principals concerned. The Heads of Discipline in the respective schools who acted as coordinators for the present study understood the writer's plight to see that there was some form of racial balance among the participating respondents. However, it was almost impossible to get an ideal sample due to the existing class set up in the respective schools. This scenario was in line with Robson's (2002) statement on the occurrence of problems between what we have and what is desired in achieving representative samples.

As mentioned earlier, the sample schools did not practice streaming of students on the basis of academic ability and the Form Four students (Year 10) who became the subjects of the study were all from mixed ability classes. According to the present Malaysian school structure only Form Four students are not subjected to any public examinations at the upper secondary level. These students became the choice as schools will not allow students from examination classes to participate in any study as stipulated in the ministry's ruling (MOEM, 2004). On the other hand in the writer's contention, the Form Four students would be in a better position to serve as respondents as they might be mature enough to voice out their feelings in a rational manner compared to students in the lower forms. Care was also taken to ensure that the samples constituted the various ethnic groups in the country which included the two targeted groups for the study, the prefects and the non-prefects.

#### **6.08 Constraints in Sampling:**

Four sample schools were identified, each representing one of the four zones in the Federal Territory. The choice of the schools was made based on the level of discipline problems they faced as documented by the State Education Department. The 'Special Officer in-Charge of School Discipline' from the State Education Department officially identified some of the schools for the conduct of this research. However, the choice of schools was changed for a number of reasons. Some of the schools were busy having their mid-term examinations at the time of the research. Though with official permission, some of the school heads showed reluctance in permitting the research. However, as a member of the association for Heads of Discipline in the Federal Territory, the writer was assisted by Discipline

Heads in gaining support from the respective sample schools. The data collection in the four schools, a process which was conducted over a period of approximately four months, included the administering of questionnaires and interviews.

The purpose of the study and the selection method for the respondents was explained to the principals and the respective Discipline Teachers in the four schools. Though there were some initial hitches and sceptical views in the process (Robson, 2002), the principals readily gave the green light after having seen the authorization letter. Then, they requested their respective Discipline Teachers to help the writer in providing the venue for administering the questionnaire and interviews. Hence, the researcher was able to deal directly with the students in all the four sample schools. Administration of questionnaires and the interviews were held in the quiet atmosphere of the Discipline Rooms. The entire process was a lot easier than expected and the writer had the opportunity to brief the respondents and explain the technicalities involved in the questionnaire. The students took an average time of about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaires.

According to Gall et al. (2007) a small sample size is used in qualitative studies because the purpose is ‘to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon being studied’ (p.178). The writer was fortunate to get enough students in each of the four sample schools who were happy to be interviewed. The students concerned were issued with letters for their parental consent to participate in the interviews (ref. appendix). Parents who were in any doubt about the purpose and possible implications of their children’s participation were given the option to call

the principals of the respective schools for clarification. The students were given a week for submitting their parents' consent forms. Fortunately, there were no queries on the part of parents in the four schools. With one exception, the respondents were willing to stay back after school for the interviews. On most occasions, the interviews were conducted during the time meant for their extracurricular activities. The students were interviewed both as groups and as individuals.

As Robson (2002) and Bell (1999) both note, despite careful planning, delays in data collection might be inevitable. In this respect the writer had to make several trips to each of the schools due to time constraints and other unexpected reasons like student or teacher absence. Delays were also caused, as the writer himself was unable to keep up with his own appointment due to unexpected events like emergency meetings and unresolved student discipline problems in the writer's own institution.

#### **6.09 The Respondents:**

A total of 120 students from the four sample schools ( $N = 4 \times 30 = 120$ ) participated in the study. They were all from Arts streams that included students who represented the 'prefects' and those with some form of behavioural problems (among the non-prefects). However the participants were not pre-identified in terms of their discipline status prior to the study. As mentioned, the students from the four different schools had their parental consent for participation and the students expressed their willingness to permit the writer to obtain their discipline records from their school authorities. The Principals and Discipline Teachers from

the respective schools were helpful in securing the parental consent in a formal manner. This reduced much of the writer's anxiety on the ethics of data collection and research procedures.

In the questionnaire and qualitative interviews, participants were asked to reflect on general teacher characteristics in their schools. However, the respondents (30 students) in each school only constituted a small number of the total enrolment in their representative schools. It was the assumption of the writer that, apart from facing them as class or subject teachers, students do have the opportunity to meet and interact with every teacher in other school-wide contexts and experiences such as co-curricular activities. However there might be also a possibility of lesser or no interaction between the students and teachers due to the large size of the schools. This is because in larger schools different teachers are assigned to look after different groups of students. As such the chances are that student perspectives of teachers in the present study could have been limited to only teachers who entered their classes. Obviously participants might not necessarily be in a position to throw their perceptions on every teacher in their schools. Even if they could, it would not encompass characteristics of teachers in all the aspects that this study had intended to explore. Hence it must be reiterated that, the perspectives of students who acted as respondents in the study could have been limited or confined to only a small number of teachers from the four sample schools.

Varying or selecting respondents from different classes (other than the ones allocated for the study) on the basis of gender and racial balance could have



distorted the frequency of teacher-student interactions. The data could have been deemed invalid as the respondents would have given their perspectives on their very own teachers, (who might have varied from class to class and who might turn out to be very good or otherwise) thereby making it difficult to generalize the findings according to individual schools. Moreover the perspectives obtained from students might be true or crucial for evaluation of teachers only in the context of teaching and classroom management and may not necessarily be on every aspect that concerns school life. As such, it must be emphasized that by virtue of the sample size, the perceptions of the students in the study may not necessarily be representative of the entire teaching community from the four respective schools.

#### **6.10 Methods:**

In endeavouring to study student perceptions of teacher characteristics, the writer employed two separate research methods in the present study. The first one being a self reporting questionnaire with ten different headings which targeted all the 120 students. The second method of data collection was using qualitative interviews with selected students ( $8 \times 4 = 32$ ) and eight Discipline Teachers ( $2 \times 4 = 8$ ) from each of the four sample schools. A copy of the quantitative questionnaire and the interview questions are attached as appendices.

#### **6.11 Quantitative Survey:**

Survey research is defined as the gathering of information about people's beliefs, opinions, perceptions, attitude and behaviour (Gall et al., 2003). Surveys elicits equivalent and straightforward information from an identical population and the

responses are merely indicative findings that are more concrete and are used frequently as a 'springboard' for a more detailed study of the issue (Johnson, 1994) as in the direction of the present study. According to Fogelman (2002) the flexibility and versatility of survey research makes it a suitable research method in education. From this respect, questionnaires are a popular mode of collecting data on educational issues involving situations, which cannot be observed, such as feelings, opinions and experiences (Gall et al., 2003).

#### **6.12 The Quantitative Instrument:**

In light of the above, the first part of the study involved a quantitative survey in the form of questionnaire which studied the nature of teacher characteristics. In this regard, a quantitative measure is favoured as it involved a reasonably large sample (N=120) (Bell, 1999). When the writer was administering the questionnaires to students he noticed that some of the sections in the questionnaires were not answered. In each of the sample schools there were a handful of students who could hardly read or did not have the patience to complete the questionnaires. Hence the writer had to re-administer the questionnaires individually explaining the meaning behind every item and the possible responses. In other words the students concerned were given the clarification on the purpose of the questions. However, the writer ensured that these did not pose any danger of 'leading' the students and possible bias. Though it was time consuming, this strategy opened opportunities for responses that are deemed valid. As Schweigert (1994) suggests, clear, specified and honest answers can only be obtained from a respondent when the researcher makes sure that all the questions are fully answered.

The first section of the questionnaire asked for students' demographic variables such as gender, ethnicity, student status (prefects/non-prefects) and the number of years spent in the school. The second section of the instrument was divided into nine sub sections **A- N**.

Sections **A- D** requested perceptions on students' liking for their schools, teachers, subjects taught in the schools and the discipline status of the respective schools. Sections **E-G** were perceptions of students, in terms of their self rating of their own behaviour, peer evaluation and how they fared in their teachers' views. Sections **H-I** sought perceptions of students on the nature of discipline problems found in their schools, the possible causes and how they could be curtailed in the views of the students. Section **J** requested acknowledgement on students' actual involvement in disciplinary problems in their respective schools. In other words, this section mentions if the students had any discipline referrals. Section **N** was the most crucial aspect of the study as it requested perceptions on teacher characteristics that contributed student disciplinary problems in schools.

To some extent this section of the questionnaire (section **N**) shows resemblance to that of Miller et al. (2000) on 'What do pupils see as the causes of misbehaviour in schools?' This portion of the questionnaire items were presented as a four point Likert-type scale (Figure 3) which were divided into four sub-columns read as; sometimes some teachers, sometimes most teachers, all the time some teachers and all the time most teachers.

Perceived characteristics	Sometimes some teachers	Sometimes most teachers	All the time some teachers	All the time most teachers	Bring implications for behaviour management
e.g. Teachers not in class	√				√

**Fig.4 Extract of Quantitative Questionnaire on Teacher Characteristics**

The ‘specifications’ of the columns in the agreed section were intended to add some nuance to the data. As not all negative teacher characteristics may be translated as student discipline problems this section also carried a special column for the participants to acknowledge if the perceived teacher characteristics contributed to discipline problems in their respective schools. In summary, the first five columns were meant for acknowledgement of the existence of negative teacher characteristics in schools and the last column ensured if the said or corresponding teacher characteristics brought implications to behavioural management. Section **L**, of the questionnaire constituted items that explored the nature of teacher characteristics students desired or really wanted to see in their teachers.

### **6.13 The Development of Instrument for the Quantitative Study:**

At this juncture it is important to explain how the theme for the study and input of items for the questionnaire were obtained. The items for the questionnaire which depicted teachers’ negative characteristics were obtained during an actual student forum where students were given the opportunity to voice out their views on school factors that caused them dissatisfaction and alienation.

The Federal Territory Education Department (FTED) organizes regular programs and in-service courses to upgrade professionalism among Discipline Teachers every year. Likewise, it also conducts regular motivational and leadership programs for selected students like prefects (student leaders) who play an important role in helping teachers to monitor student discipline in schools and for those students who have serious discipline problems.

As one of the strategies to minimize discipline problems, two years ago the FTED had asked all the schools in the state to send at least one ‘disengaged’ student to participate in a week-long motivation session held in a special resort village. Simultaneously it also organised a separate motivation- cum- leadership camp for prefects who represented the 96 secondary schools in the state. The writer, by virtue of being the Head of Discipline and with long experience in handling student matters was chosen to be one of the facilitators for the program.

As suggested in Gabriele and Montecinos (2001), this programme helped the writer to collaborate with his skilled counterparts (Heads of Discipline) from other schools, in exchanging views and to reflect some of the research problems. During one of the forums, the ‘disengaged’ students were asked for reasons that caused them to exhibit their undesirable behaviours. It was a written exercise and the individual listings by the two groups of students were done in confidence to protect their identities. The lists were then cast into a ballot box. The objective of this program was to get feedback to identify strategies for the FTED to help curb student indiscipline in the state.

The writer, together with several other facilitators obtained a long list of factors that purportedly caused stress and dissatisfaction among the students. Among them were factors such as family neglect, peer pressure and their general academic ability (Kohn, 1996) and dissatisfaction with schooling and teachers. This had given the writer an opportunity to single out the factors relating to teacher characteristics (Bru et al., 2002) by making an in-depth study on it. This is because the other possible factors were beyond the ability of the schools to address (Arends, 2001). During the next session the writer focussed only on the issue of teacher characteristics and asked the 'disengaged' students to list teacher characteristics they were not happy with. For this purpose, they were given a sheet of paper each to record their views. Some students worked individually and some worked in groups as they were unable to express their feelings in words, possibly due to their poor writing ability and/or poor vocabulary. For ethical reasons and to avoid possible bias, the writer and his colleagues did not discuss the matter with students or guide them in any way as to what to write. Peshkin (1988) warns that, the human element has shortcomings and biases that might have an impact on the study, providing the basis for researchers making a distinctive contribution, one that results from unique configuration of their personal qualities joined to the data they have collected'(p.18).

Similarly during a motivation session, the prefects were asked to list school factors which caused stress or were perceived as problems in helping Discipline Teachers monitor or control student misbehaviour. The writer also obtained a considerable number of teacher-related factors that caused student disrespect for teachers. The writer compared both the lists from the two categories of students

and considered only the ones that showed similarity. In fact, there were more than one hundred perceived characteristics listed by both groups of students. These ranged from irrelevant or petty matters such as ‘male teachers not wearing socks’ (such responses were discarded) to some serious issues like ‘being scolded with words that carried racial and sensitive elements’. Initial investigations revealed that there was about forty percent similarity in the factors stated by the two groups concerned. The writer deleted some of the items that were overlapping in terms of similarity in meaning as well.

However, he had to make some minor adjustments on items like ‘Teachers making racial remarks’ by changing them into ‘derogatory remarks’. In the opinion of the writer such items might cause distress or anxiety among students who answered the questionnaire. Apart from that, the Ministry might not approve the inclusion of such sensitive elements in a questionnaire that might possibly instigate racial emotions. This aspect has been stipulated in the terms and conditions for doing research in multi-racial Malaysia (MOEM, 2004).

The writer, with the help of other facilitators listed or itemised the remarks given by the two categories of students, prefects and ‘disengaged’. In the search for literature on this issue, the writer noted that the questionnaire draft showed some resemblance to that of Miller et al. (2000). However the instrument and sampling for the present study differs in many aspects compared to Miller et al. (2000). In the first place, it was meant for secondary school students (aged 16 years) instead of primary students by Miller. Unlike the previous study, the questionnaire items for the present study were the product of two sets of students; the prefects who

represent the good student category and the other; students who have been identified as ‘disengaged’. In the opinion of the writer this form of questionnaire preparation will form a good balance in terms of minimizing the element of subjectivity, enhancing validity by avoiding possible bias on the part of the researcher (Peshkin, 1988).

It was pre-ascertained that the ‘disengaged’ students were unlikely to admit the truth about their own behaviour and likely to blame it on teachers (Friedal et al., 2002). Likewise, it was also presumed that the prefects who represent the good category were also unlikely to show negative perceptions of their teacher behaviour. As such, the final list of questionnaire items was based on ‘similarities’ from both sides which might be deemed more valid.

Thus the questionnaire used in the study takes a neutral stand as the items listed were entirely from the perceptions of students and indeed can be regarded as one of the strengths of the study. The writer preferred not to use any inventories or instruments taken from other studies as they might not depict the cultural situation in Malaysia

#### **6.14 Qualitative Research:**

Qualitative research often seeks answers to questions that stress how social experience was created (Merriam, 2002; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Crotty, 1998). Besides providing evidence on the social milieu in schools the qualitative interviews served the dual purpose of triangulation and validation of the quantitative survey (Gall et al., 2007; Gay and Airasian, 2000). It



was an attempt to identify and reassure the participants' perceptions of teacher characteristics and of school discipline.

As Patton (1985, p.1) explains, qualitative research 'is an effort to understand situation in their uniqueness as part of a particular context and the interactions there. This understanding is an end in itself, so that it is not attempting to predict what may happen in the future necessarily, but to understand the setting as it is'. With regard to the present study, the above notions hold a lot of truth and relevance. School classroom situations are not static and may vary from time to time with different sets of students or teachers, or even with different sets of administrators and policy makers.

In the view of Mason (2002) qualitative research operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual, and therefore the job of the interview is to ensure that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge is produced. The ontological position of the writer suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which the research questions are designed to explore. Exploring perceptions constitutes a humanistic approach (Plummer, 2001) and applying a qualitative approach, as in the direction of the present study, is purposeful in capturing the situation at a particular point of time.

### **6.15 Qualitative Interviews:**

Interviews are extensively used in qualitative research and are an effective method for collecting in-depth information of an issue (Partington, 2001). Interviews are human interactions that create transaction between the person who is seeking information and the one who is supplying the information (Cohen and Manion, 1998). As much information is generated interviews are regarded effective tools in social research. According to Bell (1999), interviews are powerful tools for gathering information because they are flexible, or rather adaptable ways of finding things out. An interview approach has the advantage of providing 'reasonably standard data across respondents' (p.246).

In the words of Robson (2002), asking people directly about what is going on or what they feel about something is obviously the most rational thing to do in seeking answers to research questions. Subjective aspects such as perceptions, attitudes and values and matters pertaining to human relationships are better explored using the interview method (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998) i.e. matters which are hardly possible via alternative methods. As phenomenological studies, such as the one on student disciplinary issues, in the present study, may raise an inherent element of subjectivity (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

For this purpose, open ended interviews were conducted because they allowed for maximum use of ideas, thoughts and memories in the participants' own words rather than the words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992). As Bell (1999) claims, one of the major advantages of an interview is its adaptability. The interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings which a

questionnaire can never do. The way in which a response is made (the tone of the voice, facial expressions, hesitations, etc.) can provide information that a written response might conceal (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995; Bell, 1999). Questionnaire responses are normally taken at face value but a response in an interview can be developed and classified. As Bell (1999) concludes, in spite of the odds, inconveniences and sometimes complex nature, interviews can often put flesh on the bones of questionnaire responses. In the present study both students and teachers related anecdotes of experiences that were very useful for the purpose of this study.

#### **6.16 Unstructured Interviews:**

According to Gall et al. (2003) and Patton (2001), the order of wording can be altered as the interview progresses. In the case of the present study, if the information sought was sensitive in nature and the interview is unstructured, the individual cadence and stories of the participants lead the questions and conversations. For the purpose of the study, the writer also used unstructured interviews (sometimes known as ethnographic, non-standardized and open-ended and in-depth interviews). This is an ideal method to understand the complex behaviour of people (Punch, 2000) without imposing any prior categorisation which might set limitation on the field of inquiry. These involved the following consideration, (suggested by Fontana and Frey, 1994) on the part of the writer: assessing the setting, understanding the language and culture of the respondents, deciding on how to present oneself, locating an informant, gaining trust, establishing rapport and collecting the empirical materials. In the data collection process most students opted for group interviews.

### **6.17 Group Interviews:**

Group interview is a general term, where the researcher works with several people simultaneously, rather than just one. Since different type of interviews serve different purposes, the type to be used in a particular research situation depends on the context and the research purposes. Fontana and Frey (1994) and Morgan (1988) tabulate the characteristics of different types of group interviews, along with their purposes, strength and weaknesses. The role of the researcher changes in a group interview, functioning more as a facilitator, and less as an interviewer. Morgan points out that the ‘hallmark’ of the focus groups is the explicit use of group interaction to produce data and less the insights that would be accessible without the interaction found in the group. This kind of interviews can stimulate people in making explicit their views, perceptions, motives and reasons. This also makes group interviews an attractive option when the researcher is trying to probe aspects of people’s behaviour. They are inexpensive, data-rich, flexible, stimulating, recall-aiding, cumulative and elaborative. However, there may be problems associated with group culture and dynamics as well as achieving a balance in the group interaction (Fontana and Frey, 1994). The writer also found that some of the students, who were very slow in answering the questionnaires, were surprisingly good at talking and expressing their feelings.

As stated, the study constituted qualitative interviews with 32 selected students who had participated in the questionnaire and eight Discipline Teachers from the four schools. As per the objectives of the study, students from the four schools were selected from mixed ability classes with prefects and non-prefects and they included students who had discipline referrals. The students were interviewed as

groups and on an individual basis as per the preference of the students. The interviews with Discipline Teachers were held separately.

#### **6.18 Procedure (Piloting):**

The writer piloted the questionnaire, first in his own institution and later in another school using ten mixed ability students. The purpose was to test the validity and comprehensiveness of the questionnaire design. This allows room for problems to be identified and solved before the conduct of the actual study (Robson, 2002; Gall et al., 2003). In this respect, the writer had some discussion with his principal and she was given the assurance that, the results be kept confidential.

Twenty students were involved in the pilot study and comprised of boys and girls of mixed ability. This study helped the researcher to reword some of the items in the questionnaire. For example, in the section on teacher characteristics that held the potential to trigger student indiscipline, the original items were listed in rather general terms such as ‘teachers not entering their classes in time’. It happened that some students interpreted it as ‘a general condition or situation that might cause students to take advantage’. In other words they did not see it or understand it as a situation reflective about the realities of their own school. Hence they selected answers that were supportive of teachers’ negative characteristics. When interrogated, the students’ views were contradictory and did not match with their choice of answers. As such the writer had to add preconditions to the items such as ‘**teachers in my school** do not enter their classes in time’.

The initial results also indicated a strong view on ‘teacher weakness’ that purportedly caused a substantial amount of disciplinary problems in the school. This was a motivating factor for the writer to explore the situation in other schools. Combining ideas given by his supervisor on points of view on questionnaire formulation and comparing similar instruments used in past studies (e.g. Miller et al., 2000) the writer constructed the instrument for the present study. This process took several weeks before the development of the final version of the questionnaire.

Questions selected for interviews with students were also piloted in the writers’ institution. Students of varying academic ability were asked if they understood the meaning behind the questions. The interview schedule for Discipline Teachers was piloted with Assistant Discipline Teachers (in the same school) to iron out problems of interpretation and to prepare possible follow up questions.

It must be emphasised here that, both the questionnaire and the interview questions were prepared or in other words translated in the Malay language. The wordings were scrutinized to detect elements of cultural sensitivity, a problem that often occurs in translation. According to Gall et al. (2003) understanding the language and culture of the respondents is of high priority to enhance meaningful human interaction. Sometimes the use of direct words (from English to Malay) may pose cultural conflicts. For example the word ‘You’ or ‘I’ simply cannot be used in the Malay language, in the direct context, to avoid being rude or impolite.

### **6.19 Analysis:**

According to Glesne (1999), data analysis involves organising what we have seen, heard and read, so that we can make sense of what we have learned. Working with the data, we describe, create explanation, pose hypotheses, develop theories and link our story to other stories (p.130). Reflective analysis can also be used to analyse the data. This type of analysis, according to Glesne (1999) relies on the intuition, experience and judgment of the researcher, thus linking the stories. In the words of Gall et al. (2007) this type of research is ideally suited for ‘generating thick description but can also lead to the discovery of constructs, themes and patterns (p.472).

The data analysis for the present study was conducted in two separate stages: one for the quantitative aspect (survey data) and the other for the qualitative aspect (interview data). For the quantitative aspect, data was computed and analyzed via SPSS version 15.

Exploratory factor analysis, with principal component as the method of extraction was used to identify the underlying domains, i.e. factors indicating or representing teacher characteristics. Factor analysis is an interdependence technique which has a primary purpose to define the underlying structure among the variables in the analysis (Cohen et al., 2007). It is appropriate in research where investigators aim to impose an ‘orderly simplification’ (Child, 1970 in Cohen et al., 2007) upon a number of interrelated measures. In the second, stepwise logistic regression analysis was used to explore the combined and separate effects of teacher characteristics on student behaviour.

Adequacy of data reduction procedure was tested using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and percentage explained variation. A KMO value of 0.6 and above was set to accept the items. Interpretive adjectives for the KMO measure of sampling adequacy are: 0.90 as **marvellous**, in the 0.80's as **meritorious**, in the 0.70's as **middling**, in the 0.60's as **mediocre**, in the 0.50's as **miserable** and below 0.50 as **unacceptable**. For the purpose of the present study, a minimum value for KMO was set at 0.6 and a minimum value for percentage explained variation was set at 50%. The values of KMO measure of the sampling adequacy for the present set of variables were well above 0.80 for each of the sub-sections.

In some cases the biographic factors such as student gender, ethnicity, student status and years of school experience were tested to identify the significant differences (for the contributing items) by performing the multi-nominal regression analysis. For significant predictors, further analysis was done using cross-tabulation and chi-square tests. The differences were expressed in terms of simple percentage variations. As the study is mainly qualitative, only significant findings were highlighted. The data from the four schools was analysed collectively and the individual differences between the schools were not emphasised.

Kappa statistics was used for the section that measured the interrelationship between student perceptions of self discipline and how they were rated by their peers and teachers. This form of inter-rater reliability is a measure to examine the agreement between two or more groups of people (raters/observers) (Sim and Wright, 2005; Landis and Koch, 1977).



In some of the sub sections in the questionnaire, items were similar to a four point Likert-type responses read as agree, strongly agree, disagree and strongly disagree. However, the responses were merged as agree and disagree in order to facilitate data reduction.

For the section that studied student perceptions of teacher characteristics that contributed to behavioural problems in schools, the options were marked as a) sometimes some teachers b) sometimes most teachers c) all the time some teachers and d) all the time most teachers, to add some nuance to the data. In this respect, the option of ‘sometimes some teachers’ was regarded as less severe while ‘all the time most teachers’ was deemed most severe. Only items with strong p-values were considered. Teacher characteristics that were perceived to have contributed to student discipline problems were clustered under the four domains of competency in the context of teacher professionalism. For this purpose, the total percentage of all the nuances, which were above fifty were considered.

Likewise, data from the qualitative aspect was content-analysed within the relevant theoretical frameworks and emergent theme from the interviews that validated the correlation between teacher characteristics and resultant student behaviour. Analysis of interview data was conducted following via Miles and Huberman’s (1994) framework which involved the three processes of data reduction, data display and drawing and verifying conclusions. In the initial stage it involved editing, segmenting and summarising. In the middle or intermediary stage of the analysis, it involved generating natural units of meaning, coding, memo-ing and associated activities such as finding themes, clusters and patterns.

The purpose was to reduce the data without significant loss of information. The final stage involved conceptualisation and explanation and using informed intuition to reach conclusions (Cohen et al., 2007).

For this purpose, the ‘voices’ of the students and those of the Discipline Teachers were constantly compared and matched with each other to elicit the similarities and differences in meanings (Boeije, 2002). In addition, the non verbal behaviour and body language of the participants were also taken into consideration before arriving at the meaning (Bell, 1999). Details of the findings and discussions are presented in the following chapters.

#### **6.20 Self Reporting:**

The present study is aimed at seeking student perceptions of their teachers’ behaviour. Subjective aspects such as attitudes and feelings are better dealt with by self reporting compared to interpretation by a third party. Katz and Westler (1994) suggest that the subject’s own description of his/her psychological state or attitudinal set is a crucial vantage point for the assessment of human behaviour. ‘He or she has unique access to his or her internal feelings, states which outside observers can only infer’ (pg, 375). The subject is presumed to know his or her feelings better than anyone else. While the information obtained may be subject to various biases, it is also the most truly ‘phenomenological’ of all vantages (p.375). It conveys how the subject views his or her psychological state. Self-report measures have a tendency to enhance the criteria for validity and reliability (Gall et al., 2003). As perceptions are underpinned by attitudes and emotions, it is the writer’s contention that self reporting strategies might be appropriate in

eliciting perceptions on behaviour and discipline. For example, in the context of a disciplinary situation involving a teacher (an adult) and a student (teenager), the age gap or cultural gap may be a problem in understanding each others' views and analysing the situation in a more appropriate manner. As Katz and Westler (1994) suggest, self reporting measures must be included in any kind of comprehensive assessment approach. According to Polkinghorne (2005), the experiential life of people, is the area qualitative research methods are designed to study (p.139). He describes experience as 'vertical in-depth' and suggests that to study experience, data must come from the participants' self reports of the experience. Data collection must 'take into account the particular characteristics of the human experience' (p.139). Glesne (1999) states that 'qualitative research seeks to make sense of personal stories and the ways they intersect' (p.1). 'Qualitative research attempts not only to understand the world, but also to understand it through the eyes of the participants whose world it is' (Wilson, 1998: p.3).

#### **6.21 Lesson from an Earlier Study:**

The writer undertook a similar study on student perceptions of teachers for a paper presented in an international educational conference held in Athens, Greece in May 2007. One of the main objectives of the study was to identify the association between student behaviour and their perception of teacher behaviour (Seloamoney, 2007). In this previous Malaysian study, the writer used two groups of equal numbers of students who were pre-identified as well-behaved and 'problematic' and how these two groups perceived their teacher characteristics. The first category of participants were the prefects (student leaders) who are

normally selected on the basis of their academic ability, good behaviour and leadership ability. The second category of participants were regarded as ‘problematic’ in the sense that they had a string of discipline records and referrals as ‘identified’ by the Discipline Teachers in their respective schools.

The results of the quantitative study showed that the ‘problematic’ students were generally negative while the ‘good’ students were generally positive with regard to their teacher behaviour and there were significant differences between the two groups. This method of segregating the participants was omitted in the present study for ethical reasons that are obvious i.e. branding and prejudging participants (Gall et al., 2003) as good and bad. Apart from problems of ethics, this method of identifying respondents also raised questions on the potential elements of bias. As such, care was taken in the present study to ensure participants were not pre-identified according to their behaviour status.

#### **6.22 Authenticity:**

Authenticity is the process where the findings are substantiated, the quality assessed and the research approach and methodology determined. According to Coleman and Briggs (2002), it is an elusive target and in a situation where there is no perfect truth, reliability, validity and triangulation contribute to an acceptable level of authenticity, sufficient to satisfy both researcher and reader that the study is meaningful and worthwhile (p.71).

The nature of the writer’s research question meant that the choice methods used to collect data was relatively straightforward. The use of quantitative questionnaires

and interviews with selected participants has a long tradition within the field of sub-cultural theory and research. Triangulating quantitative findings with qualitative interviews gave a 'voice' to the participants. To honour the participants' contribution to the study, students and discipline teachers were asked to read and respond to their stories and reflect to ensure authenticity.

### **6.23 Ethical Issues:**

A key criterion for a good research study is that it has been conducted in an ethical manner. Researchers often run into ethical dilemmas that emerge with regard to the collection of data and in the dissemination of findings (Merriam, 2002; Punch 1994). This was the case for the present study as well. In the endeavour to collect data for this thesis, the writer faced a number of problems pertaining to some ethical issues.

As one of the criteria of ethics, permission was sought from the relevant authorities before the conduct of the study (Gall et al., 2003; Robson, 2002), a process which ran into several months. The writer had to attend some personal interviews with officers at the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department in the Administrative Capital before a formal application was made online. A thesis proposal had to be attached for the review and scrutinised by a panel of academics from some of the renowned local public universities who represented the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education approved the thesis giving a strong recommendation for the conduct of the study. The letter of authorization was very supportive and indeed a motivating factor in its own right for the writer. It said the need for the research was high

priority and timely in view of the worsening student indiscipline in Malaysian secondary schools. A special pass and a letter of authorization were also issued for gaining access into schools.

According to Yariv (2004), compared to other aspects of educational management, relatively little attention has been paid to the research area on teacher characteristics and its implications. In Yariv's research, he points out teacher characteristics in the context of teacher incompetence and those of poorly performing teachers. The major problem in this kind of research he claims, were that there are no clear guidelines or agreed procedures that can specify what teacher incompetence actually means. As the concept of teacher competence holds a lot of subjectivity, it would lead to serious resentment on the part of people who might interpret it differently. Thus Wragg et al. (2000) caution that this subject by virtue of a lack in fundamental evidence is regarded as a taboo subject for systematic inquiry.

Moreover moral, ethical and practical constraints may restrict the use of certain research methods such as survey, observation, audio or video recording of teacher student interactions in classroom or school settings. As Dawson and Billingsley (2000), claim government and educational regulators hesitate to set clear guidelines or laws that can help measure teacher competence and other performance levels. Even if such measures were to take shape, it might raise a multitude of ethical issues such as legislations on teacher standards, being perceived as intervening in labour and industrial relations, and strong oppositions from teacher unions are also likely (Dawson and Billingsley, 2000).

As for the participation of students, it was necessary for the writer to obtain prior consent from their parents in written form. Administering questionnaires on students and involving them in interviews on rather sensitive matters was supposedly an ethical issue which may result in them undergoing emotional problems (Gall et al., 2003). As such, it was necessary on the part of the researcher to prepare the participants both socially and emotionally. The writer had to visit the schools several times in order to get to know the students (Gall et al., 2003), to instil confidence that they were not talking to a stranger, and their participation and perspectives was not going to affect them in anyway. The principals were given the assurance that, the school names would not be disclosed and the purpose of this study was purely for academic purpose.

#### **6.24 Participant Researcher:**

Researcher bias and subjectivity are commonly understood within a qualitative research framework as both inevitable and relevant to the production of knowledge (Murtagh, 2007). On the other hand this does not always sit comfortably with the notion that meaningful knowledge can be constructed in a way that provides room for personal and subjective ways of looking at the world (Cohen, et al., 2007). Researchers who are more familiar with the positivist traditions of knowledge construction, where objectivity and value-neutrality are considered important criteria for evaluating research, (and this might describe the position of many novice researchers) may not be entirely comfortable with research that does not set out to be as far as possible ‘value-neutral’. In particular, the role of the participant researcher and the issues this raises with respect to the

relationship between the researcher and the researched is something which requires careful consideration for those engaged in research where these boundaries are blurred.

In this section, the role of the writer as a participant researcher, and some of the challenges this presented is considered. These challenges include adherence to the concept of neutrality, addressing the potential of bias, questions of ethics and objectivity. They also include issues of validity and reliability of the interpretation of the data collected. The first part of this section presents the challenges the writer encountered (as a participant researcher) and the second part discusses how those challenges were dealt with.

According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2004) all social research takes the form of participant observation and researchers can see the close relationship between research methodology and their activities as informal educators. Educational research is a subset of participant observation, where the participants (typically practitioners, such as teachers in a school setting) are involved in some focussed change effort (e.g. to improve some organisational function or self-reflect on their experiences in order to improve practice for themselves or the organisation). Berthoff (1987) describes the teacher researcher as one who works to improve curriculum and instruction through dialogue with other teachers to generate theories grounded in practice. The recent interest in the teacher research movement marks a paradigmatic shift by presenting "a different view of the teacher - as knower and thinker" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 15). In light of



this notion, the objective of this research endeavour was to enable the writer to think and reflect on his action as a qualitative researcher, and in that process explore ways to improve his practice. Such research involves participating in the social world, in whatever role, and reflecting on the products of that participation.

In the case of the present investigation, the writer was studying problems surrounding the issue of student discipline via the perspectives of students and discipline teachers. The purpose was to identify some of the (school or teacher related) problems in student discipline so that strategies for improving teacher competencies (in the context of teacher professionalism) may be formulated. In this respect the writer sees his role not just as a discipline teacher, but also as a teacher-researcher interested in learning by systematically reflecting on his practice (Wolf, 2002) and producing a narrative of such reflection.

Participant research takes time and commitment. It offers the chance to generate new understandings and to build theories. Yet with it comes various problems - of ethics, of power, of bias of interpretation and of objectivity (Michael, 2002; Russell, 2002). Researchers are responsible for participating in, narrating, and analysing the interactions that occur within a particular social space or subculture, in a manner that is sensitive to the meanings created by the participants. Adding to this complexity is the researcher's embodied self, (as both an insider and outsider), which may affect all stages of the research processes (Tisdell, 2002). The following sections present the challenges and dilemma experienced by the writer in managing the two roles. Some of the issues reflected below 'appeared' to

threaten its validity and objectivity of outcomes. However, equipped with the knowledge of research methodology the writer managed to avoid many pitfalls and deceptions in the process.

**\*Gaining Access:**

The writer went through proper procedures and followed all the formalities and ethical guidelines stipulated by the relevant authorities and agencies in gaining permission to conduct the research. As mentioned in the earlier sections, permission letters had to be obtained from the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) of the Prime Minister's Department, and the relevant State Educational Departments (SED). Nevertheless, there were problems encountered in the process at the school level despite permission to conduct research (Buchanan et al., 1988) from higher level authorities.

In the words of Whyte (1984) 'Getting in', 'staying in' and 'getting out' are key moments in a participant observation study. 'Getting in' is gaining access to the research setting. 'Staying in' refers to the quality of the relationships that we develop with the research participants. 'Getting out' involves us leaving the research site, or abandoning our role as researcher, hopefully with the participants feeling positive about their involvement in the study.

In light of the above, two issues appeared to be prominent in the 'getting in' stage. One is the 'sensitivity' attached to the research which questions the ethics and noble aspects of the teaching profession (Fuhr, 1993), and the other, a Discipline Teacher doing research in the area pertaining to his profession. In the pursuit of

data collection in the four sample schools the writer faced a number of challenges in convincing the school authorities that the research was strictly for an academic purpose. The writer's dilemma of being 'an insider' (Head of Discipline) in the research brought challenges from two groups, mainly the 'gatekeepers' (principals) and the student participants. However, the Discipline Teachers who also acted as participants did not seem to mind the idea (at least in principle).

**\*Sensitivity attached to the Research:**

The ethical committee which granted permission for the study did not dispute the idea of a Discipline Teacher doing research about student behaviour. However, some of the principals in the school settings seemed to be sceptical and expressed their concern over such an idea. According to one of the principals, the issue of student discipline is the same in all schools and the writer could have done his research in his own institution. Another principal was curious to know other schools had been 'recommended' for the study. At least one principal asked the writer if it was possible to have a look at the 'outcome of the study'. The chances are that the principals were obviously concerned about their school image.

According to one of the principals, highlighting teacher's negative characteristics is like adding insult to injury because the teaching profession in Malaysia is already ailing and coming under severe criticism due to continuing students' notorious behaviour. The rest of the Principals and the Heads of Discipline interviewed also expressed their concern that using students, especially those with behavioural problems, might further deteriorate the discipline situation in schools. Prior to the conduct of the study, it was anticipated that in the first place

principals and administrators might show serious resentment and might not agree with the fact that teachers with 'negative qualities' exist in their schools. Even if they agreed to such research, the outcome may not reflect the true picture as they (the principals and administrators) might hide the shortcomings of the teachers concerned. This is especially true when the school authorities themselves turn out to be the participants of the research (Fuhr, 1993: p.23). Fortunately, the study did not involve the principals from the four schools.

With reference to the above, the writer had to switch one of the schools from his initial list. The principal concerned only allowed the writer to administer the questionnaire but disliked the idea of interviewing the students or teachers. She expressed her dislike by apologising for her stance in this matter. She said she was happy that the writer chose her school as one of the samples but declined to comment as to why there should be no interviews. Having been left with no choice, the writer used the school to pilot the questionnaire further by using ten more randomly selected students from the school. The school concerned had a good proportion of student ethnic ratio, gender balance and the 'prevalence' of a variety of student behavioural problems that provided some valuable input in simplifying and rewording some of the items in the questionnaire.

**\*Insider/Outsider Research:**

It might be difficult to discard the notion that, 'we cannot see the picture when we are inside the frame'. The interpretation of its meaning in this context is that, the researcher who is trying to study or analyse an issue as an 'insider' might not be able to perceive things the way there are or could do it with a proper perspective.

In other words, one would not be able to see, evaluate or judge the true picture of a situation when he/she is deemed part of the issue that is at stake (Tisdell, 2002).

As participants in the social world as Hammersley and Atkinson (2004) claim, researchers are able, at least in anticipation or retrospect, to observe their activities 'from outside' as objects in the world. In the context of the present study the writer's role was 'an insider' in a sense that, he was doing research in an area which directly concerns the everyday aspect of his professional life. However, his role was also deemed as 'an outsider' because he conducted research in school settings other than his own work culture.

As Bruce (1998) points out, personal involvement or engagement is the interpretive study of issues in which the researcher himself is central to the sense that is made. Perhaps it might be important to state here that in reality the detached, unobtrusive and objective research strategies that sociologists advocate are rarely accomplished (Krenske, 2002). This is because a researcher's personal bias may somehow intrude into the conduct of the research and thereby corrupt the results of the investigation. As there is always a tendency for the researcher to 'find' what he/she is looking for, in an insider perspective the researcher is likely to abdicate or relinquish his/her authoritarian role in the investigation. Hence in the context of objectivity, this form of approach is more humanistic than scientific but may help to achieve the desired social change (Ewald and Wallace, 1994).

The writer's position as a Head of Discipline in a secondary school and who was doing research on his 'own work' posed a further challenge. Harris (1994)

believes that there could be biases in evaluating a person's personality, performance and competent biases that can lead to flawed information gathering strategies that might be self fulfilling. According to Merton (1948 in Harris, 1994), a self 'fulfilling prophecy' may lead to incorrect perception, belief or definition of a set of circumstances. As such, researchers may be disillusioned and may 'evoke' behaviour that makes their incorrect perceptions or beliefs come true. Thompson (1998) cautions that the self perceptions of the researcher's own role may shape the findings and interpretations which are reported as knowledge.

**\*Secrecy and Deception:**

The writer could have hidden his identity (at least with the student participants) in the four sample schools. However, an important ethical issue concerning the question of working covertly is secrecy and deception. In secret research there is little option but to take up one of the roles that is acceptable in the situation or excludes oneself from interaction. A researcher or an educator may have some choice about the matter. Whatever its advantages, as Schatzman and Strauss (1973, p. 62 in Mac and Ghail, 1996) argue, participant observation with a hidden identity raises ethical problems that are not easily resolved. It may be argued that if in adopting this research tactic the researcher gains new insights, then 'the end justifies the means'. However, the ethical problem of recording individuals without their knowledge remains. On the other hand, the moral dilemma is not necessarily overcome by making one's presence known as a researcher to those who are the subjects of the study (Mac and Ghail, 1996).

Researchers have to weigh up the pros and cons of accepting a particular role in the research process. However, one key question here is whether taking on a familiar or known role in the situation provide the researcher with the opportunity to gain useful material - or could it act to limit the usefulness of material. As Hargreaves (1967 in Mac and Ghail, 1996) points out, a certain amount of deception is inevitable in participant observation. For example, in Hargreaves study it was when the teachers appeared to treat him as a friend rather than a researcher that the most significant things were said.

There are various ways of describing or characterizing the roles that researchers take in situations. In the context of the present study, the researcher's role was more or less 'a complete observer' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983) meaning that the writer has no contact or 'actual relationship' with those he or she was observing or interacting. Before conducting the research, the writer assured himself that he was going to work in a strange culture and that none of the students were known to him. Even in the case of Discipline Teachers, the writer did not know them personally. The researcher's identity as a teacher and of Head of Discipline was revealed to the students for ethical purposes; in gaining access to the institutions; in gaining support of the parents'; and in gaining access to the students' discipline record. Students' knowledge of the researcher's background was helpful in gaining confidence with them, but at the same time it kept them at a distance.

### **\*Maintaining Distance:**

A third set of questions arises around maintaining distance. As a 'complete participant' the researcher may get a better sense of how 'insiders' experience situations - but at the same time there is the danger that the researcher may simply become part of the situation, if he/she gets too close. By joining in, researchers may not be able to 'see the wood for the trees' (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2004).

As practitioners, researchers have to learn to stand back from situations and try to keep some distance between themselves and those he/she works with. That distance is necessary so that the researchers have 'space' to think about the situation. As Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, p. 103) insist, there must always remain some part held back, some social and intellectual 'distance'. For it is in the 'space' created by this distance that the analytical work of the participant researcher gets done. Without that distance, without such analytical space, the research might turn out to be little more than the autobiographical account of a personal conversation. Yet, at the same time, if that distance is experienced as being too great researchers can prejudice their ability to act.

In this respect, the writer had to create some rapport with the students initially to gain their confidence, trust and to ease their tension. However, he managed to avoid situations tactfully when the participants literally were trying to get close. For example some of the student participants were requesting the writer's contact details such as e-mail ID and H/P numbers. In a similar manner, nearly all the



Discipline Teachers in the study were 'trying to get close with the writer by 'interviewing' him about his experience as a Head of Discipline and how he perceived the behaviour of his superiors, subordinates, colleagues and students.

**\*Power Relationship:**

Williams (1988, p.136) cautions about of the possible paternalism entailed in participant research, and 'the arrogance of the researcher invading another group's world to get information in order to relay it to the outside world'. Williams is referring here to the question of power relations within the research arena. In other words, respondents may not have or show the confidence in a researcher, due to the imbalance of power arising from factors such as gender, age difference or other familiar or unfamiliar identities of the researcher. For example, Wolpe (1988, p.160) notes in her study of schooling and sexuality that 'the type of information boys would give a female researcher is likely to differ from that given to a male researcher'. Likewise, in his study of white girls, Meyenn (1979, quoted in Wolpe, 1988) found that private areas of the girls' lives were not discussed with him. In this respect the writer's image as a Head of Discipline in another similar setting presented some problems at the initial stage (before the conduct of the research). The writer was aware of possible difficulties in gaining confidence from some of the student respondents. Indeed, some of them expressed their concern that the information provided might 'hit them back' in some way or other. The power relationship between the writer and the student participants could have restricted the disclosure of some of their views as they 'knew' the researcher's professional identity. The writer had to assure the participants that

the 'disclosed' information would be treated confidentially and the fact that he was about to retire from the teaching profession seemed to have 'consoled or relieved' the participants.

This was further evident during the 'getting in' stage, when the students were very 'interrogative' of the writer in all the four institutions prior to the conduct of the research. The respondents were in fact trying to learn about the 'sociability' of the writer and eager to know whether he was supportive of the students. According to Becker (1967 in Mac and Ghail, 1996), this is another key aspect of the power relations which operate within the research arena. Becker found that observing and participating with both teachers and students created tensions through identifying with groups who were hostile to each other. Becker argues nevertheless that it was productive for an understanding of what was really going on in the classroom. Equally productive in the present study was the conflict of the teacher-researcher role of the writer. For example during an interview session, when voicing their opinion on teachers, some students 'interrogated' the writer by asking questions such as: 'What should we do with such teachers?'; 'What would you do if you were in our place?' This was indeed a moral dilemma for the writer, as the problem that remained throughout the research was the feeling of 'short-changing' the students. This raises an associated issue of what participants are getting out of taking part in the research (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2004).

In this context and in the course of remaining objective, on most occasions the writer refrained himself from making in-depth meaning or interpretations or

judgment of the voices of the students and Discipline Teachers. Instead he merely highlighted ‘their voices’ and chose to illuminate or report them in order to stay neutral. Researchers should not expect respondents to describe their experiences or life-situations honestly or objectively. However, according to Shaw (1966 in Taylor and Bogdan, 1998), rationalisations, fabrications, prejudices and exaggerations are as valuable as objective descriptions, provided such reactions are properly identified and classified.

As Taylor and Bogdan (1998) report, the issue of truth in qualitative studies is a complicated one. What respondents say or do may not necessarily be the truth or reflective of their inner-self. Having said this, what most qualitative researchers are interested in is not truth per se, but rather their perspectives (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998, p.109) and this was the position of the writer in conducting the present study. What was important, however, was not that student perspectives were reflections of ‘real life’ (for example whether or not a teacher had treated them unfairly, but they were the students’ ‘real’ perspectives (i.e. this is what they actually believed). This is because the study was concerned with how these perspectives influenced subsequent behaviour.

**\*Objectivity:**

Participant research is a form of investment of time, energy and self, and as such it raises obvious questions of possible bias. However, defenders of participant observation find greater bias in allegedly neutral instruments such as survey questionnaires. These, they say, involve the imposition of an externally conceived

"scientific" measuring device (the questionnaire) on individuals who do not perceive reality according to that external conception (Bruyn, 1966 in Smith, 1997). In this sense, there is no such thing as absolute objectivity in social science research. Where researchers do seek to be objective, they must therefore take whatever steps they can to minimise subjective bias in order for the findings of the research to be credible.

Doheny-Farina (1993) argues that authority and credibility rest on the researcher's ability to be ethical about the role of the researcher, the manipulation and /or interpretation of data, and the construction of the research report. When researchers observe groups they must be aware of the influence they personally have on the group and the context. With regard to interpretation and presentation of the research, Doheny-Farina (1993) argues that 'the problems come only when the claims that researchers make do not match the approach that they took in conducting the study' (p.257). An ethical study is also a valid study, in that the claims refer to what the researcher set out to measure.

As noted earlier, the writer's role as a Discipline Head and as one who was studying issues surrounding discipline raised issues relating to objectivity. These were addressed by taking due account throughout each stage of the research process of the following research principles:

\*Punch (1986) details cases that illustrate how the researcher, in negotiating a position when becoming participant-observer in a group, necessarily becomes a part of the research that will have an effect on the outcome and the data (p. 12). Punch says that in their presentations, researchers "should come clean not only on

the nature of the data, how and where it was collected, how reliable and valid he/she thinks it is, and what successive interpretations he or she had placed on it, but also on the nature of his or her relationship with the field setting and with the 'subjects' of the inquiry" (p. 15).

\*Bruyn (1966) in Smith (1997) outlined four elements which emphasis inter-subjective understanding and empathy. First of all, the researcher must be aware that his or her presence in the setting is short or temporary and hence cannot make absolute judgment of the milieu. He/she must be aware of the relations of people to their physical environment as they perceive it, not as the researcher conceptualises or even experiences it. It is important to consider the experiences of people under contrasting social circumstances; and meanings cannot be assessed under one set of circumstances because they are relative to the setting. He/she must record the changes in meaning as the participant observer is admitted into narrower social regions, transitioning from stranger, to member, to insider. Determining vocabulary concepts (in respondents' language) is a major focus of participant observation, i.e. seeking to illuminate the inter-subjective meanings of critical terms.

**\*The Hawthorne effect:**

This is a form of reactivity whereby participants change an aspect of their behaviour in response to the fact that they are being studied, and/ or through 'guessing the purpose of the study and responding accordingly' (Jones, 1997; Adair, 1984). This may have been evident when the analysis of the teachers' views showed no acknowledgement of self weaknesses. The Discipline Teachers behaved in a manner that they were trying to do a very good job by pointing out

the weaknesses of their fellow colleagues and administrators. However, the fact that they were supportive of the students' voices was what merits the study.

According to Jones (1997) and Adair (1984) manipulation checks and cross-checks are important in social science experiments. One advantage in the present study was that the writer was granted prior permission (by the school authorities, student participants and their parents) to have access to the students' discipline records in the four schools. Most of the perspectives of the students matched the perspectives of the Discipline Teachers with regard to perceived teacher behaviour in many areas such as teacher punctuality, adherence to school rules, teaching and of disciplining styles. Furthermore, records of student discipline (viewed by the writer) provided some form of 'cause and effect' relationships that matched the perceived teacher behaviour with that of student deviant behaviour in the four sample schools. As such, the writer had reasonable grounds or good reasons to believe the perspectives of the students who participated in the research.

In summary, experienced researchers and experts in the field of qualitative research see self-discovery as essential to learning about qualitative research (Brown, 1996). Simmons (1988, as cited in Brown, 1996, p. 20) regards awareness of one's "biases, blind spots, and cognitive limitations ... as high a priority as theoretical knowledge". Qualitative research (participant research) realises its potential when researchers immerse themselves in a setting and struggle to figure out the best way to understand it. As such there is no substitute for actually engaging in a qualitative study, whether learning to collect better data through being authentic or having to handle the unanticipated in the field

(Merriam, 2002). Despite the challenges encountered, the research endeavour was indeed a valuable experience to the writer.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **Quantitative Report**

#### **7.00 Introduction:**

As mentioned in the previous chapter (methodology) Brannen (2005) suggests, researchers are privileged to decide between the ratio combination (of quantitative and qualitative aspects) and where to place a greater emphasis. In respect to this the quantitative findings represent the ratio combination which is 1:4 of the methodological design (Quantitative < Qualitative) of the present study, which is mainly qualitative. The purpose of incorporating a quantitative approach for this study was to get some initial idea about the background and discipline status of the four sample schools. As Brannen (2005) argues, the combination of quantitative and qualitative strategies helps to explore what people think about a particular social phenomenon and how those perceptions link to other perspectives and informant characteristics. Apart from its significance in the methodological triangulation (Cohen et al., 2007) the quantitative questionnaire provided the grounds for eliciting secondary information via the qualitative interviews. According to Kirk and Miller (1986 in Cohen et al., 2007), this form of simultaneous data gathering process in cross-sectional studies is known as ‘synchronic reliability’, which seeks similarity in data gathered at the same time.

#### **7.01 The Quantitative Study:**

To recap, a total of 120 (Year 10) students from four secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur participated in the study. The sample schools were selected on the basis of geographical location, school enrolment, similarities



in ratios in terms of student gender and ethnicity, socio-economic status and above all the willingness of the principals to open their doors for the research.

### **7.02 Chapter Outline:**

The questionnaire was divided into a number of sub sections which covered areas such as student liking for their schools and teachers, perceptions of their school discipline status and of their own discipline, how they (students) perceived teacher characteristics, and the type of characteristics they wished to see in their teachers.

The first part of the chapter studied the demographic variables such as student gender, ethnicity, student status (prefects or non-prefects) and years of school experience, which were crucial to the objectives of the study. The second part threw light on some of the significant findings on student dislike for schools, teachers and subject taught in schools. This is followed by student perceptions of their school discipline and their self reported discipline.

The crux of the questionnaire is a section that studied student perceptions of the acknowledgement of ‘negative teacher characteristics’ and their perceived contribution to student indiscipline. This chapter however merely reports the outcome of the quantitative findings. The implications are discussed in light of the literature, along with the findings of the qualitative interviews in the chapter on discussion.

### 7.03 Analysis:

#### \*Liking for School and Teachers:

The first part of the subsection in the questionnaire studied student perceptions on school and teacher liking. There were three other items on school related factors that might attract students to schools such as friends, facilities and interesting activities.

**Table 4** **Liking for school**

Item	Description	Agree	Disagree
A1	I like my school	80(66.7%)	40(33.3%)
A2	Teachers in school are good	74(61.7%)	46(38.3%)
A3	School facilities are good	52(43.3%)	68(56.7%)
A4	Have many friends in school	91(75.8%)	29(24.2%)
A5	Many interesting activities in school	49(41.2%)	70(58.8%)

As presented in the table, overall results for the four schools showed that 33% of students did not like their school and about 38% did not agree that the teachers were good. A multi-nominal regression analysis was performed to identify the contributing factors using the four demographic variables of student gender, ethnicity, status (prefects/non-prefects) and student experience. A significant difference was noted in terms of student ethnicity with regard to the four items related to liking for schools. A further analysis indicated that students of Chinese origin showed significant disagreement (dislike for schools and teachers) compared to the Malays and Indians.

**Table 5 Race \* A1 Cross-tabulation (liking for school)**

School	A1: I like my school		Total
	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Malay	51 79.7%	13 20.3%	64 100.0%
Chinese	13 37.1%	22 62.9%	35 100.0%
Indian	16 80.0%	4 20.0%	20 100.0%
Total	80 67.2%	39 32.8%	119 100.0%

Among Malays and Indians about 20% of the students disagree that they like the school compared to Chinese students who constitute 63%.

**Table 6**

**Race \* A2 Cross-tabulation (evaluation of teachers by ethnicity)**

School	A2: Teachers in school are good		Total
	Agree	Disagree	Agree
Malay	45 70.3%	19 29.7%	64 100.0%
Chinese	15 42.9%	20 57.1%	35 100.0%
Indian	14 70.0%	6 30.0%	20 100.0%
Total	74 62.2%	45 37.8%	119 100.0%

Among Malays and Indians about 30% of the students disagree that the teachers in school are good compared to a higher percentage (about 57%) among the Chinese students.

**Table 7** **Liking for Teachers**

Teachers	Frequency	Percent
1. I like all teachers	28	23.3
2. I like some teachers	87	72.5
3. I do not like all teachers	5	4.2
Total	120	100.0

As shown in table 7, only about 23% of students liked all their teachers. A more realistic case is that about 72% of students liked only some teachers and the case on the extreme end is that 5% of students expressed total dislike for all teachers. Again the results of the multinomial regression analysis revealed that the Chinese students recorded the highest percentage in this category for teacher dislike.

**Table 8** **Race \* B Cross-tabulation (liking for teachers)**

Race	Teacher liking			Total
	All 1	Some 2	None 3	1
Malay	20 31.3%	44 68.8%	0 .0%	64 100.0%
Chinese	3 8.6%	29 82.9%	3 8.6%	35 100.0%
Indian	5 25.0%	14 70.0%	1 5.0%	20 100.0%
Total	28 23.5%	87 73.1%	4 3.4%	119 100.0%

Only about 9% of the Chinese students like all teachers compared to about 31% among the Malay and 25% among the Indian students. About 9% of the Chinese and 5% of the Indian students expressed total dislike for all teachers.

**\*Liking for Subjects:**

When it comes to liking for subjects, a higher percentage of students claimed that they only liked some subjects and a small number indicated that they were not interested in any subjects.

Table 9                                      Liking for subjects

Subjects	Frequency	Percent
1. I like all subjects	33	27.5
2. I like some subjects	78	65.0
3. I do not like any subjects	9	7.5
Total	120	100.0

Based on Table 9, only about 28% of the students indicated that they like all subjects. Further analysis was done to identify factors that contribute to subject liking. The multinomial logistic regression analysis was performed to identify the significant factors. The results of this analysis showed that race and status make a difference. The Chinese students and non-prefects indicated the least liking for subjects.

**\*Student Perception of School Discipline:**

**Table 10 Perception of School Discipline**

School discipline status	Frequency	Percent
Good	31	25.8
Average	67	55.8
Poor	22	18.3
Total	120	100.0

As shown in table 10, about 18% of the students felt that their school discipline was poor. This represents almost 1/5<sup>th</sup> of the total sample and is a cause of concern for further inquiry. The results of the multinomial regression analysis noted that a higher percentage of Chinese students rated their school discipline as poor compared to the other two ethnic groups, Malays and Indians.

**Table 11**

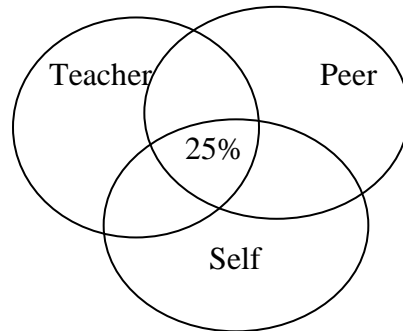
**Race \* C Cross-tabulation (School Discipline Status)**

Race	School discipline status			Total
	Good	Average	Poor	1
Malay	19	35	10	64
	29.7%	54.7%	15.6%	100.0%
Chinese	5	19	11	35
	14.3%	54.3%	31.4%	100.0%
Indian	7	13	0	20
	35.0%	65.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total	31	67	21	119
	26.1%	56.3%	17.6%	100.0%

About 14% of the Chinese rated the school discipline as good compared to about 30% among Malays and 35% among Indian students. About 31% of the Chinese rated the school discipline as poor. In general students attributed their school disciplinary problems to the influence of peers and the media.

### **\*Students Self- Reported Discipline:**

Students were asked to rate their self discipline, and how they were rated by their peers and teachers in their opinion. As indicated in figure 3, the results showed about 25% agreement in terms of self, peer and teacher rating with regard to student behaviour.



**Fig.5 Interrelationship in Teacher, Peer and Self Reported Discipline**

$$n=29 (25\%) \quad n (\text{self} \cap \text{peer} \cap \text{teacher})$$

**Table 12**

### **Self Rated Personal Discipline**

Self rating	Frequency	Percent
Good	52	43.3
Average	64	53.3
Poor	4	3.3
Total	120	100.0

Based on Table 12, about 3% of the students considered themselves to be poor in discipline. The multinomial regression analysis revealed that student status was a contributory factor in making the difference.

**Table 13****Status \* D Cross-tabulation**

Status	Self rated discipline status			Total
	Good	Average	Poor	1
Prefect	18 64.3%	10 35.7%	0 .0%	28 100.0%
Non-prefect	34 37.0%	54 58.7%	4 4.3%	92 100.0%
Total	52 43.3%	64 53.3%	4 3.3%	120 100.0%

In terms of personal evaluation, the prefects' self rating on discipline was noted to be higher (better) than the non-prefects. Only 37% of the non-prefects rated their self discipline as good compared to about 64% among the prefects. About 4% of the non-prefects rated their self discipline as poor.

**\* Students' Self Reported Misbehaviour:**

With regard to the nature of disciplinary problems experienced among the four sample schools; problems like truancy, avoiding classes and punctuality featured the highest with slight variations among the schools.

In a section on strategies for minimizing disciplinary problems and encouraging good behaviour, there was strong agreement among the students that teacher leadership could be better and teachers should show more concern and care in student disciplinary matters. Despite the differences in ethnicity, gender and status; students agreed that school rules must be tightened. However, teachers must exercise flexibility with rules and understand student needs. Among the students' desired teacher characteristics were: valuing students' individual ability, understanding students' feelings and willingness to listen to their plights, having



good teaching and pedagogical skills, being knowledgeable in subject matters and being intelligent. The girls registered a higher percentage for all the characteristics compared to the boys.

**Table 14**

**Discipline Problems According to Ethnic Groups**

<b>Discipline Problem</b>	<b>Malay</b>	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Indian</b>
Punctuality	79.7%	74.3%	45.0%
Truancy	42.0%	54.3%	35.0%
Class Disruption	37.5%	48.6%	45.0%
Fights	31.3%	31.4%	35.0%
Conflicts(Teachers)	12.5%	37.1%	15.0%
Vandalism	15.6%	25.7%	1.0%
Graffiti	18.8%	12.0%	20.0%
Others	20.5%	18.0%	16.2%

Student punctuality appeared to be most prominent discipline problem with Malay students with the highest percentage (about 80%). This is also a significant problem among the Chinese and Indian students in comparison with their other discipline problems. In terms of truancy, the Chinese featured the highest with 54% and they had more conflicts (about 37%) with their teachers. In the earlier section on school and teacher dislike, it was noted that the Chinese students represented a higher percentage.

**Table 15****Discipline Problems According to Gender**

Discipline Problem	Male	Female
Punctuality	49.2%	38.2%
Truancy	73.8%	69.1%
Class Disruption	52.3%	29.1%
Fights	40.0%	21.8%
Conflicts(Teachers)	23.1%	16.4%
Vandalism	23.1%	9.1%
Graffiti	26.2%	20.0%
Others	24.6%	5.5%

In terms of gender, more males were involved in disciplinary problems compared to the females in every category. However, in terms of truancy the percentage of female students was almost in par with that of the males. In summary, based on the above, there were evidences to show that students of all races had their share of discipline problems in spite of their gender differences. There was also substantial evidence from the perception of prefects and non-prefects that teacher behaviour contributed to discipline problems. When analysed further, there were nine categories of teacher characteristics that were perceived as contributing to discipline problems.

**7.04 Teacher Behaviour as a Cause of Discipline Problems:**

In the subsection on teacher characteristics that had the potential to cause or instigate student discipline problems, 20 characteristics were studied with nuances such as a) sometimes some teachers (b) sometimes most teachers (c) all the time some teachers and (d) all the time most teachers. Out of the 20 characteristics,

only five (with a significant difference) held the potential to trigger indiscipline.

The five teacher characteristics are presented according to the nuances.

**a) Late/absent:**

This item studied whether teachers being late, absent or leaving the class early contributed to student indiscipline. Two categories of teacher nuances (all the time some and sometimes some) appeared to be prominent for the selection of this item.

**Table 16**

**Teachers not in class/absent late/leave early**

Item	Response	Does this cause disciplinary problems?		Total	P-value
		No	Yes		
N.1  Teachers not in class/absent/late/leave early	All the time some	5 21.7%	18 78.3%	23 100%	0.011
	<b>Sometimes some</b>	26 30.2%	60 69.8%	86 100%	<0.001
	Sometimes most	1 20.0%	4 80.0%	5 100%	0.375
	All the time most	4 80.0%	1 20.0%	5 100%	0.375
	Total	36 30.3%	83 69.7%	119 100%	<0.001

Overall a significantly higher percentage of the students responded to this item.

About 70% of the students perceived that this was a cause of disciplinary problem. That is to say, the response ‘sometimes some teachers’ turned out to be significant.

**b) Boring lessons:**

**Table 17**

**Lessons are Monotonous/ Boring**

Item	Response	Does this cause disciplinary problems?		Total	P-value
		No	Yes		
N.3  Lessons are monotonous/ Boring	All the time some	7 21.9%	25 78.1%	32 100%	0.002
	Sometimes some	14 30.4%	32 69.6%	46 100%	0.011
	Sometimes most	5 41.7%	7 58.3%	12 100%	0.774
	<b>All the time most</b>	4 13.8%	25 86.2%	29 100%	<0.001
	Total	30 25.2%	89 74.8%	119 100%	<0.001

This item studied if lessons that were boring or monotonous were a cause of student indiscipline. A significantly higher percentage of the students, (about 86%) with the nuance ‘all the time most’ was perceived as a cause of disciplinary problem.

**c) Teachers not good at class control:**

This item studied if teachers’ inability to maintain class control caused discipline problems.

**Table 18**

**Teachers not Good at Class Control**

Item	Response	Does this cause disciplinary problems?		Total	P-value
		No	Yes		
N.8  Teachers are not good at class control	All the time some	7 33.3%	14 66.7%	21 100%	0.189
	<b>Sometimes some</b>	13 21.0%	49 79.0%	62 100%	<0.001
	Sometimes most	3 16.7%	15 83.3%	18 100%	0.008
	All the time most	4 28.6%	10 71.4%	14 100%	0.180
	Total	27 23.5%	88 76.5%	115 100%	<0.001

Students' choice of the nuance 'sometimes some teachers' indicated that this was a cause of discipline problems. About 80% of the students agreed on this nuance.

**Table 19**

**Teachers Taking Their Anger Out on Students**

Item	Response	Does this cause disciplinary problems?		Total	P-value
		No	Yes		
N.11  Teachers shout unnecessarily/ take their anger out on students	<b>All the time some</b>	2 8.3%	22 91.7%	24 100%	<0.001
	<b>Sometimes some</b>	10 19.6%	41 80.4%	51 100%	<0.001
	Sometimes most	3 33.3%	6 66.7%	9 100%	0.508
	All the time most	11 50.0%	11 50.0%	22 100%	1.000
	Total	26 24.5%	80 75.5%	106 100%	<0.001

For the item teachers shouting unnecessarily or taking their anger out on students, student responses were prominent in two of the nuances, 'all the time some' (91%) and 'sometimes some' (about 80%).

**Table 20**

**Teachers not Following Dress Code**

Item	Response	Does this cause disciplinary problems?		Total	P-value
		No	Yes		
N.19  Teachers shabbily dressed/never follow dress code	<b>All the time some</b>	5 12.5%	35 87.5%	40 100%	<0.001
	<b>Sometimes some</b>	4 10.3%	35 89.7%	39 100%	<0.001
	Sometimes most	2 18.2%	9 81.8%	11 100%	0.065
	Always most	11 44.0%	14 56.0%	25 100%	0.690
	Total	22 19.1%	93 80.9%	115 100%	<0.001

For the item on teachers not following the dress code, student responses were prominent in two of the nuances, ‘all the time some’ (about 86%) and ‘sometimes some’ (about 90%).

Overall, students from the four schools identified at least nine teacher characteristics (portrayed as negative) that were perceived as having the potential to influence or aggravate disciplinary problems in schools. For the purpose of generalisation and simplifications, nine items with more than 50% responses were chosen by merging the total percentage of the nuances. The nine characteristics were grouped again into three domains of investigation, namely pedagogical, ethical, and disciplining style. Teachers’ interpersonal characteristics did not appear to be prominent.

**Pedagogical:**

boring lessons/monotonous teaching	74.8%
punctuality/ teacher absence	69.7%
not doing any teaching	54.2%

**Ethical:**

tease/ make fun/ put down students	80.9%
discrimination	68.1%
derogatory and insensitive remarks	62.6%
unnecessary scolding all the time	54.2%

**Discipline style:**

unable to control /manage class	76.5%
scolding /insult/challenge/swear	75.5%

**7.05 Concluding Comments:**

Literature suggests that, in a mixed mode approach, researchers are allowed flexibility to have the desired combination on the proportion of each methodological approach. In this respect, the quantitative aspect for this study merely served the purpose of setting the tone and capturing the overall view of the entire respondents. That is to say, how the students generally perceived their school discipline and teacher behaviour in comparison with that of their own behaviour. This in turn ‘paved the way’ for the writer to explore the issue further by carrying out qualitative interviews.

In summary, the first part emphasised the aspects such as student liking for their schools, teachers, subjects and facilities in school. Via cross-tabulations the chapter also showed the differences for these likings in terms of student biographic variables such as gender, ethnicity and student status. In the second stage, this chapter identified three aspects pertinent for further investigation and discussion, namely, student acknowledgement of involvement in disciplinary cases and the perceived teacher behaviours that instigated or aggravated student discipline problems.

Though the survey was conducted in four different schools, for ethical reasons the data was interpreted collectively. The items were overlapping and it was hard to distinguish or categorise the characteristics. For example, in items such as N11 (Scolding/shouting at students), N12 (Using derogatory/sensitive words) and N19 (putting down/ridiculing students) it might be difficult to assume whether the teachers concerned displayed those characteristics by virtue of their personal nature, poor inter-personal relationships with students or whether they were regarded as teachers' disciplining styles. As such, there was a clear need for qualitative investigations to determine the circumstances that led to such teacher characteristics. In one of the schools, there were at least four students who wrote their teachers' names alongside the columns for teacher characteristics in their questionnaire. Some even used vulgar words/signs to express their dissatisfaction over some of the teachers. These were some of the choice morsels of information (Keats, 1993 in Partington, 2001) that needed investigation.



## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **Qualitative Data**

#### **8.00 Introduction:**

This chapter is presented with data obtained via qualitative interviews with students and Discipline Teachers in the four sample schools. The purpose of this approach is to triangulate and validate the data from the previous chapter on quantitative analysis. The preliminary analysis of the interview data on teacher characteristics was conducted under the four domains of teacher professionalism chosen in the order: pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal, and disciplining style to match the data presentation in the quantitative aspect.

The causes of student discipline problems in schools are rather complex and it is difficult to attribute them to any one particular source. Though none of the participants in the study said (or were willing to say) directly that some of the disciplinary problems in their schools were caused by teacher behaviour, through analysis of their perceptions and their manner of expression such meanings were implicit.

As mentioned, to facilitate systematic and comprehensive analysis, the perceived teacher characteristics were clustered under four domains; pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal and disciplining style. Teacher weaknesses were noted in these domains and most importantly there is substantial evidence to suggest that, these negative characteristics were among the causes that either induced or aggravated student indiscipline in all the four sample schools. From the perspective of the

Discipline Teachers, the number of teachers who exhibited the perceived negative characteristics in each school were comparatively few (an average of 5% for each of the listings). Nevertheless such negative perceptions brought serious implications in the management of student behaviour, in much the same way that a minority of students have been found to disrupt school and classroom life disproportionately to their number (Wearmouth et al., 2004)

### **8.01 The Structure of Presentation:**

For ethical reasons and to protect the identities of the participants, the schools were named as **A, B, C** and **D**. The chapter highlights some of the key issues raised by the students and views of Discipline Teachers which were used to mediate the validity of student perceptions of teacher characteristics. The descriptions for every domain of teacher characteristics given below comprised perceptions of both students and Discipline Teachers from all the four sample schools. For the convenience of the reader, the characteristics identified are cited at the end of every domain.

### **8.02 Pedagogical Domain :**

#### **a) Teachers Walking in Late:**

Teachers were expected to be in their respective classes on or before the start of the lesson. The early presence of the teacher would enable him/her to settle down the students and get them ready for the lesson. This might also provide opportunity for teachers to take the attendance register and sort out occasional problems like arrangement of furniture and fixing the audio-visual aids, etc. However, when teachers were late, preparations were delayed and teachers faced

difficulty and were not able to deliver their lessons within the stipulated time frame.

According to students interviewed, this situation prevailed in all the four schools where sometimes teachers had failed to turn up, were late or left the classes before their lessons were over, providing opportunities for students to indulge in inappropriate behaviour. With regard to this a prefect (female) in school **A** said:

*Oh yes..!. Some students take advantage to leave the class., visit their friends in other classes... they know some teachers walk in late. During this time students quarrel with one another., play 'catching' or do arm wrestling and things like that. So somehow the class would become noisy. But... when teachers see the class in a bad condition, they will get mad and scold everyone in the class. So they start their teaching with an angry tone. Some lady teachers get emotionally upset and leave the class early, making the situation worsen.*

One of the aspects of professionalism is 'practicing what we preach'. For example, if teachers berate students for coming to class late, they have to be seen arriving punctually themselves. In answering a question on teacher punctuality a boy from **School C** related a similar situation in his school whereby teachers showed reluctance when entering low ability classes. He said:

*Our class is not good. Students are not smart. So some subject teachers never enter our class. They either do not enter or... walk in when the lesson is about to finish only to sign the class control sheet to show proof that they were in the class...*

Teacher attitude to punctuality was perceived as stressful by prefects and class monitors, who often found it difficult to keep the peace and order of the class. Prefects and class monitors were expected to keep the class under control during teacher absence. Their frequent inability to do so often earned them bad names and unwanted remarks. In this respect a female student (class monitor) from **School D** narrated her experience:

*One day the class was unusually very noisy and some students from the neighbouring classes had also joined in to make the situation worse...When the headmistress noticed that the class was very noisy she warned the students not to make noise... and told me to go and look for the teacher. I looked for him all over... Then I found him at the canteen relaxingly chatting with another teacher. When I explained what had happened he became very furious and scolded me for not keeping the class quiet. He said I was not fit to be the class monitor...!*

According to all the four Heads of Discipline interviewed, most of the school-wide discipline problems occurred during the transition period, when teachers moved from one class to another. For whatever reasons, some teachers do not get to their respective classes in time. As to the consequences of teacher absence, a Discipline teacher from **School B** said:

*... when teachers are not in the class, there is a natural tendency on the part of students to be playful, get noisy or do something mischievous. It is understood, "When the cat is away the mice will play!"*

In adding to the above notion another Discipline Teacher from **School D** expressed his view in the following manner:

*Students who are bored sitting in the class, become talkative and noisy. Sometimes, even good students join in the fun taking advantage to run away from classes, go out to meet their friends in other classes; pick fights with other students and it is a big headache for the discipline teachers to calm down the situation. The class monitors normally run to us saying the class is very noisy and ask us to help!*

However in the general view of the Discipline Teachers, teachers who taught good classes rarely entered their classes late and students in those classes seldom took the opportunity to misbehave. These students were seen to be self motivated and made use of the teacher's absence or transition period to indulge in their own study. Thus the problem of aggravated discipline almost always only occurred in classes with poor or mixed ability students. With such students teachers who entered those classes normally showed an indifferent attitude. In this respect a Discipline Teacher from **School A** commented:

*Even if teachers happen to be late due to some legitimate reason, the students are aware that they will be reprimanded by the teacher concerned if caught misbehaving during the teacher's absence.*

In articulating his view on how serious the problem of teacher absence may become, a Discipline Teacher from **School B** said:

*What the Discipline Teachers are concerned with is that the noisy classes (with teacher absence) will disturb the neighbouring classes. Student safety will become a problem when teachers are*

*not around. Students running around and chasing one another can cause accidents. The worrying part is that, sometimes students run away from the classes leaving the school compound, and we are not aware of it. We often experience such problems and we..., Discipline Teachers are answerable to the parents if anything happens to the students concerned.*

Teachers often moved slowly in their own time, taking opportunity to go to the toilets or picking up conversation with other teachers along the way. This transition period, varied from one teacher to another, some even taking as much as twenty minutes. This is to say the students have already ‘studied’ the nature of the teacher and his/her attitude towards student indiscipline and the commitment they showed towards moulding student behaviour. According to all eight Discipline Teachers, teachers concerned about student misbehaviour were normally punctual, were concerned about the students’ well being and were aware of the consequences they might face. Students in the four schools were also reported to be aware of the ‘psychological presence’ of some teachers in their respective schools. In the view of one student from **School C**:

*...With some teachers, due to their relaxing and not bothered attitude, students continue to misbehave even when the teachers had already stepped into the class. This is because students are well aware of what they can get away with these groups of teachers. However with teachers like Mr. S they know they cannot play the fool!*

When asked if it was true that some teachers left the students on their own, the Discipline teacher in **School A** smiled, looked around and whispered:

*...The PE teachers in my school are the worst in this category. Whenever there is a PE lesson, only some students will come down to the field or the game court. Many will not come down with an excuse that they forgot to bring along their PE attire. So those who are not in the field will hang around the different blocks indulging in their own clandestine activities. While some students will be playing on their own without supervision, the teacher concerned will be doing his own work sitting elsewhere. I have caught students from other classes, who are bored with their lessons often joining those who are supposed to be playing. Sometimes some students will not return to their classes after their PE lessons but continue playing. The PE teacher concerned is either unaware or not bothered if the students have returned. When accidents happen or when students involve themselves in a fight, who is going to be responsible?*

According to one student in **School C**, there were teachers in his school they really liked due to the courtesy and respect they showed towards the students. Students were reportedly well behaved during the absence of such teachers or when they were late. She said:

*... teachers like (X and Y) apologize ...say sorry and give a reason when late.... We like these teachers, we respect them and we listen to them.*

**b) Students having to move from one place to other:**

Sometimes students moved from one place to another for their lessons in different learning stations such as the language labs, computer labs, science labs, life-skills classes etc. During this time students in the four schools allegedly exhibited a

number of disciplinary problems. In this respect a Discipline Teacher from **School**

**B** said:

*The principal says it is the duty of the subject teacher to line up the students in the corridor and lead them to the respective subject rooms like language lab, science labs or the library. This is to prevent students from sneaking out, or causing problems to the other students or disturbing other classes while walking along the corridors. Normally, when students go to other designated classes they do not move in an orderly manner. They are often noisy, playful and tend to arrive late, stop by to hang around and things like that, usually following their own group of friends...*

Another Discipline teacher in **School C** shared a similar view with respect to the allegations of students not being led by teachers to their respective stations. She said:

*...you see teachers are lazy and they expect the students to come to the respective stations on their own. The problem with this is, sometimes students from several classes will be moving from one station to another. So they take advantage to meet their friends or hang around, shout, push one another, bully weaker students, make funny faces or even use vulgar language to instigate or create commotion. When the situation gets very chaotic it is difficult to identify the exact student or students who were misbehaving. If subject teachers take the initiative to come up to the class in time to fetch the students, he or she can get them to line up and lead them to their stations in an orderly manner.*



Class monitors and prefects encountered problems in controlling student misbehaviour when students moved between the stations. With regard to this aspect, two Discipline Teachers from **School D** expressed their grievances:

*The other consequence of teachers not coming up to their classes to lead them to their stations is this: often class monitors are not responsible enough to lock up the classrooms when students leave. When students from other classes walk along the corridor, they tend to barge in the empty classes and steal things. Almost every other day there are students complaining their things are either lost or vandalized. This is a very big discipline problem in our school as there are no teachers to supervise the movement of students or their behaviour when walking along the corridor.*

Students especially the prefects in all the four schools acknowledged the prevalence of this behaviour which they could do nothing about. A prefect from **School B** said:

*Sometimes when students are allowed to come to the stations on their own they often break their line to enter the toilet and spend time hanging around or chatting with their friends. Students even get to the canteen to get some food or drink before they join the rest of their classmates. Who is to be blamed for this?*

One prefect from **School B** pointed out that teachers ignore (*buat tak tahu*-pretending that nothing is happening) such behaviours while walking along the corridor moving from one class to the other. Some students reportedly take the opportunity to enter unauthorised premises, causing vandalism and ransacking bags and belongings of students in other vacant classes. This, according to the Discipline Teachers in the school is a serious problem, as they cannot identify the students concerned. The other well behaved students do not come forward to

report or stand as witnesses for the fear of possible consequences or revenge by the perpetrators. With regard to this aspect a Discipline Teacher in **School D** said:

*Teachers must show some responsibility in guiding students to the respective stations and monitor them along the way. Teachers don't bother to do this and choose to remain in their respective classrooms. Sometimes we hear cases where the whole class never comes to the learning stations and the teachers concerned never bother. They assume that it is neither their fault nor responsibility.*

Students, especially the prefects in all the four schools, acknowledged the prevalence of student undesirable behaviour which they could do nothing about. A prefect from **School B** said students often showed aggression when the prefects intervened. According to him, Discipline Teachers are 'powerless', as they fear it might bring about problems in their inter-teacher relationships if they ask teachers to cooperate in this matter. He said:

*We cannot stop or report students who spend time hanging around or chatting with their friends in the toilet. If we did, the students concerned will come after us. Teachers are aware of these problems and yet they never want to help! So why should we worry when teachers themselves are not bothered!*

A Senior Discipline Head from **School A** remarked that:

*Once I remember once one of the teachers complaining to me that: "This principal is crazy (expletive deleted). How can she expect the teachers to go to the class to organize the students and lead them to the library. They are not kindergarten students but grown up (expletive deleted). Why should we go and lead them? I hate working in this school".*

Teachers are supposed to mark attendance each time they entered their classes. They have to make sure the number tallies with the attendance during the start of the day. Each teacher has to do ‘head counting’, record the attendance in the class control sheet and report the discrepancies immediately to the Discipline Teacher. However teachers seldom showed seriousness in this aspect with their ‘take-it-easy attitude’ as described by the Discipline Teachers in the four schools. With regard to this, one Discipline Teacher in **School A** said:

*Many teachers find this unnecessary and never bother to do it.. Either they repeat the earlier attendance or ask the monitors to do the job for them. This makes things difficult when students are caught or accused of bunking classes. The students would claim that they were in the class but the teacher in-charge was unable to ascertain their presence.*

Even in the presence of teachers, students have been noted to exhibit a wide range of discipline problems. He continued:

*When I am on my rounds, I normally notice students in the poor classes sitting in small groups chatting away; playing with hand phones sending SMS to their friends; watching funny or pornographic pictures they have downloaded; playing arm wrestling; walking in and out of the classrooms and sometimes entering other classes; or students from other classes walking in to join the fun. The amazing thing is that, the teacher in the class will be sitting comfortably doing his/her own work not disturbed by the noise level.*

According to another Discipline Teacher in **School B**, a similar situation prevailed in his school where in spite of the noise level some teachers carried on with their teaching. He said:

*...the subject teacher would be teaching a small group of interested students, while the majority of the class will be indulging in their own clandestine activities. I often wonder how they can teach in an environment like that!*

With regard to teachers' professional characteristics such as teaching styles, some of the student participants expressed their dissatisfaction. In commenting on how some of the teachers behaved during their teaching sessions, a student from **School C** said:

*.... The favourite words of some teachers, when they walk into our class: 'Do your own work quietly.'*

Another student from the same school commented on the poor and monotonous teaching styles of some teachers which made some students misbehave in class. According to her the students, especially the boys in her class often misbehaved during Mrs. Y's lessons (e.g. walking in and out of the class unnecessarily, shouting, singing and teasing one another). She said:

*We often wonder if teacher Y is qualified to teach us. She never teaches...she makes us copy notes all the time. Some of us do not want to copy notes because the notes come directly from reference books... You may ask what's wrong with copying notes from the reference books. Everyone in the class has a reference book each. So what is the point of copying? ...this sounds ridiculous...but I can't tell the teacher.*

With reference to the same issue another student from **School D** voiced her opinion in a rather critical manner. She said:

*Some teachers in my school do not know how to teach well. They are not bothered if we have understood the lesson. I think they are*

*just teaching for the sake of teaching. They never make the lesson interesting...*

In expressing her view on teacher support, another female student from **School C** commented:

*When we ask questions, some teachers say they are busy and tell us to ask our friends who have understood the lesson. But when we ask other students, they accuse us of being talkative and noisy!*

When asked if it was true teachers never bothered to explain or respond when students asked questions, many students in the four schools said ....*cikgu tidak layan* (teachers never entertain). However a student from **School D** gave a rather different view, which might support some of her teachers' stand and actions in this regard. She said:

*We cannot blame the teachers alone for this. Some students purposely irritate teachers by asking silly questions or questions that have nothing to do with our lessons.*

Nearly all the eight student participants from **School B** claimed that one of the subject teachers in their school was famous for sending referrals for disciplinary action on students. According to the students, the teacher was very irresponsible and as a result, always had conflicts with students. On commenting his dislike for the teacher concerned one of the students uttered:

*Teacher X is very clumsy. He always loses our assignments and workbooks. You can ask anyone in the class. He will ask us to buy new workbooks every time he loses our books and we have to repeat the assignments and projects. When we tell him we have already passed up the assignment, he will disagree and scold us saying my friends and I are lazy... good at telling lies... ill-*

*mannered... and he will write referrals to the Discipline Teacher about us.*

However, the students from the school also praised a number of teachers who did a good job in teaching their classes. One female student from the school said:

*My history teacher for example, tells us lots of stories from real life experiences that are related to the lesson. He makes the lessons interesting and knows how to keep the class lively; he makes sure everybody participates in the lesson.*

Three students from **School A** showed agreement about the attitude of their maths teacher. According to the students, the teacher concerned taught the class at an ‘express speed’, covering two or three chapters in a week and most of the students experienced difficulty following her lessons. Commenting about this teacher, one female student said:

*whenever we ask something that we do not know, she will say it is our duty to find out and learn things on our own...every time she says, ‘no teachers helped her during her school days’...She asks us to attend private tuition classes... !*

Another student in the same school said:

*....When we ask questions, some teachers will say shut up! Don’t try to be smart...!*

One student from **School C** said she was unhappy and dissatisfied with her science teacher. According to her, the teacher concerned was inconsiderate of the students’ learning ability in her class. She commented:

*....this teacher says he is always busy and seldom comes to the class... but, in the monthly test or exam he asks questions we never learnt...!*

Two students from **School D** commented about the level of homework given by some teachers. In this regard, one of the students said:

*Some teachers give us lots of homework. In the beginning we did the tasks. However, we realized that... teachers never bothered to mark them... so we also never bothered to do them... What is the point of doing homework when teachers are not marking them and giving us no feedback (laughter). When we don't do homework our names go to the Discipline Teacher.*

At this point another student intervened and said:

*Some teachers mark our work... but they never seriously mark...they simply put a tick here and there overlooking all the mistakes...so people like me just do work for the sake of doing it...*

Students were reported to be behaving badly during the presence of teachers who relieved classes. The students claimed sometimes the relief teachers never entered the classes. Some entered late but sat down to do their own work. According to the students, teachers never set work for students during their absence. With regard to teaching and teaching styles of some of the teachers, the Discipline Teachers declined to comment. According to some students, even the Discipline Teachers shared the same weakness in teaching. However, all the eight Discipline Teachers claimed they never faced any discipline problems when they were in class. This could be partially due to their image as Discipline Teachers and their empowerment to act against unruly students almost instantly.

**a) Summary of Findings on the Pedagogical Domain:**

From the perceptions of the students, it was noted that teachers were absent/late and sometimes they left the classes unattended. According to the Discipline Teachers, teachers showed reluctance in following directives given (in leading students to different learning stations). Teachers were reported as showing a ‘take it easy’ attitude in marking attendance and in student safety. Teachers also came under strong criticism because they seldom set work for students during their absence and when they were away for official reasons. While lessons of some teachers were encouraging and consoling, there were teachers perceived as ‘failures’ in this respect. Students claimed that some of their teachers’ lessons were boring and monotonous. Some teachers were seen as de-motivating because they ran their entire lessons by making students copy notes from the board. Students alleged that no teaching was done when other teachers relieved their classes. Students alleged that some teachers never understood the difficulty students faced in following their lessons. While some teachers were alleged for not showing seriousness in marking students’ homework or assignments, some were negligent in safeguarding students’ assignments. Some teachers were also reported as not showing integrity in setting questions for school assessment.

**\*Implications for Behaviour Management:**

Students reportedly moved around unnecessarily in class, paid no attention and were disruptive; some students, who were vulnerable, took the opportunity to misbehave in class during teacher absence. Reported cases of students moving around, walking in and out and disturbing the neighbouring classes were frequent. Discipline Teachers claimed that there were cases of increased noise level, petty



quarrels and sometimes serious fights and vandalism when some classes were left unattended. Class monitors and prefects ‘felt victimized’ and experienced conflicts with their teachers which led to poor student-teacher relationships.

### **8.03 Ethical Domain:**

From the voices of the students, some teachers in the four schools were perceived to have infringed their professional ethics that in turn provoked students’ inner feelings and emotions. The following section gives a brief account of how some teachers were perceived to have behaved unethically in their classrooms.

Some students from **School B** viewed the attitudes of some of their teachers as ‘discriminatory’. These teachers allegedly taught students in their ‘mother tongue’ during some of the lessons. With regard to this, two male students expressed their dissatisfaction. One of them said:

*Our class students are generally weak in almost every subject. But some teachers (of Chinese origin) are only concerned about their own race. They explain the lesson to the Chinese students in their mother tongue. Students of other races who do not understand Chinese are at a disadvantage. So we get bored and tend to talk or play.*

Some of the students in **School B** (non-Chinese) admitted that they ‘fought back’ against such teachers (uttering vulgar words in Chinese, which they had picked up from their Chinese friends) to show their dissatisfaction to their teachers. The students admitted that it was wrong to have behaved that way. However, their names were ‘blacklisted’ in the school discipline record for disruptive behaviour.

One student from **School A** (prefect) claimed that some of the teachers lacked integrity in awarding marks and grades for the subjects they taught. He said:

*Sometimes teachers are careless and make a lot of mistakes in marking our answer sheets e.g. correct answers are marked wrong. When we look for them for redemption of marks, they scold us, saying the marks have been sent to the office already and it is too late to do any alteration...*

Another student from the same school interrupted to give his remarks. He said:

*...When we demand our marks, he/she would threaten to give us a fail grade. The marks are very important for us. It is a matter of pride and our parents would never understand what is going on.*

With regard to the ethics of integrity and honesty of teachers, one student from **School D** expressed his plight in the following manner:

*...there are one or two teachers who are very lazy. They do not mark our exam papers, assignments and our exercises in time. Sometimes we truly wonder if they ever mark our answer sheets at all. We suspect this because they never return our answer sheets. When the time is due for sending the marks to the class teacher (to be included in the progressive report book). I think they simply fill in the name sheets with some random marks.*

Some of the student participants in the interviews, especially those who admitted to have caused discipline problems expressed their dislike for their schools. According to them, this dislike was mostly due to some of the behaviour of teachers which were perceived as ‘weird’ and unethical. In their words, those teachers were termed as ‘*cikgu yang tak betul*’ (unfit to be in the profession). One student from **School A** said:

*I do not like most teachers in the school. They think we are a nuisance in the school. They always scold us, saying the school would be better off without us...wonder why they are paid for...*

Another student from the same school added:

*My maths teacher thinks that my class-mates and me are good for nothing and no one on earth can teach us. When we genuinely ask her for any explanation she would immediately scold us... thinking that we are making fun of her.*

Some of the students (who also admitted their involvement in disciplinary problems in their schools) attributed their behaviour to what they claimed were ‘unbearable teacher remarks’. However, according to some of the Discipline Teachers, such remarks could be the result of teacher frustration or anger e.g. when students failed to finish their projects which were graded externally. They said teachers who fail to collect the project work meant for the examination classes would be summoned by the administrators for their ‘irresponsibility’. The projects had bearing on the overall academic achievement of the schools, and above all it affected the personal image of the teachers concerned. The Discipline Teachers often help other teachers in ‘chasing after’ students who never finished their project work.

According to some students there were cases of teachers who act ‘weirdly’ in classrooms due to their personal nature or psychological weaknesses. With regard to this, a student from **School D** said:

*Some teachers scold us to the extent of which we are deeply hurt. For instance, they condemn our parents for not bringing us up properly... they say our parents are only good at giving birth.*

Another female student from the same school expressed her emotion, citing one of her recent encounters with a teacher in her school. This student apparently did not hand in her assignment in time.

*The teacher said I have only biological growth and the only wise thing for me to do is to get married and settle down in life, instead of coming to school and wasting teachers' time. I felt very embarrassed and hurt because some of the boys were laughing at her remark. I know the teacher would be in trouble if I were to report this to my parents.*

With regard to teachers' perceived morality, a female student from **School C** related a somewhat similar incident in her school that happened sometime ago. According to her:

*..... the teacher scolded a girl in my class to 'sell' herself to earn some money instead of coming to school. But later I came to know, she apologized to the girl. But that was the last day we heard of the girl.*

With regard to teachers' occasionally using 'sensitive words' another female student in **School B** said:

*Once a lady teacher saw me talking with a boy from another class. She shouted at me saying, I was 'gatal' (itchy). This is a very bad word to be used by a teacher especially against girl students. [The cultural meaning in Malay refers to one who longs for sex]*

During two separate interview sessions in two schools, some students reported that they were 'brave enough' to point out teachers who used inappropriate language during instruction and in their interaction with students. These students

claimed they held no respect for such teachers. When asked if teachers used inappropriate language in class, a prefect from **School D** said:

*...One of the teachers addresses us as 'donkeys'. When marking attendance he asks the class how many male and how many female donkeys are not in the class today. Though he says it in a joking manner to amuse and attract attention from the students, I think it is not right for a teacher to address students as donkeys. He also addresses some naughty students as 'skunks'. He would say the class is 'not stinking' (i.e. not noisy) because some of the 'skunks' are not in the class.*

Another student in the same school related her experience of reporting a case against a teacher. However, she said the reporting turned out to be to her disadvantage. According to the student, the teacher concerned started hating her after the incident and she felt a sense of alienation each time she came to school.

She voiced her grievance in the following manner:

*One day my father came to school to report to the headmistress why the teacher had to use abusive language against me. From that day onwards the teacher did not pay attention to me and ignored my presence in the class. I came to know from my friends, that he is telling other teachers not to bother me with....*

According to two female students in **School C**, teachers turned 'a blind eye' to problems like peer bullying in classrooms or schools. One student related her personal experience as:

*There is a student in my class (male) who always bullies me; calling me (using) nicknames. Sometimes he knocks me on the head, pulls my hair and pinches me. I couldn't stand it anymore and one day I reported it to my class teacher, who at that point of*

*time was busy doing report cards. Feeling disturbed and irritated by my complaint, she shouted at me saying I must get married to the boy in order to end the problem. Everyone in the class laughed and I felt very embarrassed... the boy was grimacing at me and dancing away happily.*

The other student from **School D** related her story as:

*..... a bully in my class called me 'a hooker'. When I complained to the teacher, he said there is nothing wrong in being a hooker and one can earn a lucrative income. He said it jokingly and all the students started laughing and it was very embarrassing and humiliating....*

#### **b) Summary of Findings on Ethical Domain:**

Some of the teacher characteristics reported under this category may overlap with professional characteristics such as dishonesty in correcting student assignments, and lack of trustworthiness in awarding grades etc. However, some of the characteristics alleged by the students, especially with regard to teacher treatment of students may clearly amount to questioning teacher morality. While some teachers were reported to be judgmental of student ability and behaviour, some others allegedly exercised racial and religious discrimination. Students claimed that some teachers hurt their feelings, provoked their emotions and induced stress. Such allegations (if they happen to be true) are deemed to be a breach of professional ethics and the trustworthiness stipulated in the ministry's guidelines (MOEM, 1994).

### **\*Implications for Behaviour Management:**

According to the Discipline Teachers, students who were ‘bullied or victimized’ in the above allegations became rebellious and violent. While some students were reported as causing vandalism to school and teachers’ properties and indulging in graffiti, some others resorted to maladaptive behaviours such as avoiding classes, entering classes late or playing truant. Affected students reportedly had conflicts with the teachers concerned, which in turn led to disagreements and rifts in the school-parent relationship.

### **8.04 Interpersonal Domain:**

Students learn a lot of values from adults they grow up with, as well as their teachers in their school settings. However, they get confused when values are being infringed by teachers. One student in **School B** said:

*We are reminded regularly in the assembly to show respect for teachers. For example, we students must greet them whenever we walk pass them. But some teachers when we wish them, “good morning” or “good afternoon”, never respond and pretend to ignore us.*

In this respect a student from **School D** (prefect) praised his English teacher whom he described as exemplary. According to him the teacher concerned (lady) responded to students’ greetings by mentioning their names. The student said:

*Every time I greet my English teacher, she will wish me back “good morning” or “good afternoon Eddie”...she often also asks, “how are you today?” I feel very proud each time the teacher mentions my name...*

Another student in the same school said:

*Some teachers never talk to us, never bother to get to know us or even listen to us. They always keep themselves at a distance. This makes us reluctant to approach them for anything. We also see them never talking to the other teachers.*

In describing some of the interpersonal behaviour of their teachers, a student from

**School C** commented:

*Some teachers are very friendly with some students. They always have 'pets' in the class. But I think the teachers are friendly, so that they can make use of the students to get their work done. I see students doing work like marking test papers (multiple choice answer sheets), entering marks in the progressive files etc. This is supposed to be teachers' work. How can they trust students?*

Another student from School B said:

*Sometimes some teachers do not like us, if we are friendly or help other teachers (their colleagues) whom they do not like.*

Teachers may 'forget' the fact that they are in the school and students are constantly observing their behaviour. In this regard a student from **School B** narrated her teacher's way of reacting to a situation. She said:

*...you know... one day do you know what happened, teacher X was very angry. He was telling another teacher. I know the "bitch complained about me to HM".., and you know we were all sitting in the canteen ....he was shouting like mad...!.*

According to the Discipline Teachers, students often developed conflicts and experienced strained relationship with some teachers. They claimed this sometimes led them to develop hostile attitudes towards such teachers.



Responding to a question on student-teacher relationship in his school, a Discipline Teacher from **School A** jokingly said:

*If you want to know how the student-teacher relationship and how the students feel about the teachers, go and have a look at the graphic work (graffiti) of our students in the boys' toilets. You will get a clear picture of what is going on!*

While this was a case in some schools, some of the students in **School C** said they did not like to befriend their teachers or look forward to expressing their problems or grievances to their teachers. They said teachers acted in a silly and funny way at times and this had made them show disrespect. Students often referred to their teachers by nick names. In this respect one female student in **School B** said:

*You don't get angry OK! These names are our secret codes for our teachers. We use names like 'bangkai' (carcass), Zombie, and we call our Discipline Teacher 'the ring master' but the boys call him 'the watch dog!'*

With regard to teacher behaviour, students in **School C** said, they often made fun of their teachers by mimicking their voices. They talked about their teachers not only in the classrooms but in their homes in front of their parents and family members.

### **c) Summary of Findings on the Interpersonal Domain:**

According to students interviewed, some teachers showed no respect for them. There were allegations of teachers exhibiting negative behaviours such as slandering/backbiting, while ignoring the presence of students. While some teachers were reported as showing an indifferent attitude and did not respond to student greetings, there were teachers who set exemplary behaviours by

responding to student greetings in a courteous manner. Students also claimed that they did not like the idea of teachers having ‘pets’ or ‘favourites’ in the class (Miller et al., 2000).

**\*Implications for Behaviour Management:**

According to the Discipline Teachers, students showed disrespect for teachers who were not exemplary in setting good model behaviours. Students often cited teacher behaviour to support or defend their own behaviour when they were reprimanded for their inappropriate behaviour. Teachers who had ‘pets’ in their classes were seen as ‘impartial’ or ‘discriminatory’. Some teachers delegated duties to students (marking multiple-choice answer sheets and entering marks in student report files) and this questioned teacher honesty and ethics. Students developed ‘nick names’ for teachers whom they did not like and they reportedly experienced strained relationships with them.

**8.05 Disciplining Domain:**

With regard to teachers’ disciplining styles, students from three of the schools said, overall their teachers never got involved or showed interest in discipline matters. There was a unanimous agreement that teachers were dependant on Discipline Teachers for this purpose. Some claimed teachers regularly ignored students who misbehaved in front of them, and students rarely made complaints about disciplinary matters to teachers other than Discipline Teachers. Students in **School B and C** took opportunities to describe some of their teachers’ disciplining styles. One student said:

*Most teachers write about our wrong doings in the class control book; they complain that we are noisy or never do work; the teacher writes 'so and so' never does work , sleeps in the class, goes out without permission and... things like that...*

When asked what happens after that, one student said:

*Sometimes the Discipline Teacher calls us out in the assembly and we get punished. He never asks what was the reason and who was responsible!*

In response to a question on what kind of punishment they normally received, three students (boys) answered as a chorus:

*What else! We get one or two strokes of Rotan (cane) on our buttocks. The teacher will then record it in the book and after that we go back to class.*

In adding to this comment, one student said:

*Sometimes when the teacher is in good mood, he will yell at us...and after that give us a lecture ... "never do things like this again!" No Rotan ... heh! heh!*

Students from all the four schools raised a number of issues with regard to their teacher behaviours. For example, one of the female students in **School A** was unhappy with her school rules pertaining to the use of mobile phones. According to her, she understood the importance of this ruling but wondered why teachers were exempted. She expressed her dissatisfaction on the consequences of some teachers abusing this privilege. She said:

*Students are not allowed to bring mobile phones to school. But many teachers are using mobile phones during teaching hours. Whenever they receive phone calls they walk out of the class to the corridor. Sometimes they get carried away and talk for a long time without realizing time is passing. So the class could become very noisy and some students will take advantage of the situation to walk out or play in the classroom.*

Another student from **School B** expressed his feelings about how students might get into discipline problems and get victimized, due to no fault of their own. He said:

*We never get the things which we pay for. For example, I paid the teacher for my name tag. It is almost six months finished already. I never got my name tag. Every time when there is a spot-check, I pay a penalty of RM 1 and they write in the discipline book. When we explain to the Discipline Teacher, he will say it is not his problem....says he need to do his duty,...he will ask us to go see the teacher concerned to get explanation.*

A female student (prefect) from the same school raised a question on the dress code for teachers. She said:

*Some lady teachers do not know how to dress like a teacher. I know some of the boys in the class always talk about the teachers' ways of dressing, making jokes and fun. How do you expect students to follow her teaching when they are themselves distracting the class?*

With regard to disciplining styles one Senior Discipline Teacher from **School B** said:

*Teachers are supposed to do a 'head count' when they enter their respective classes and record attendance in their class control sheet. They are supposed to write remarks about students who are absent, who are not in the class for some good reason and students who have bunked off classes. Some teachers do not bother to do this and pass it on to the Class Monitor, to fill in the columns in the control book.*

Another Discipline Teacher from **School D** expressed his dissatisfaction saying:

*Whenever a teacher is asked to provide evidence on a certain discipline matter, that has occurred during his or her presence, they are often unable to say anything ...this is because they are not teaching or monitoring students but busy doing their own work in the class.*

In the opinion of a Discipline Teacher in **School C**, some teachers in her school had no concern for student discipline. She was unhappy about how teachers selected students who represented the school for outside activities. She said:

*Students who have discipline problems such as having long hair, are untidy or shabbily attired, are picked to represent the school in games simply because they are good at sports. I think it is OK to give them a chance. But teachers must be responsible enough to advice the students to follow school rules when they attend any outing. Teachers do not bother about the image such students portray when they represent the school. Some of these students feel that 'they are supported by some teachers'. So they become very defiant and aggressive towards others who reprimand them.*

It is the duty of the class teachers to maintain proper records of student particulars such as their address, contact numbers and so on, in their class register. According to the Discipline Teachers, teachers are often briefed about the importance of these records. However, some teachers were reported as negligent in discharging this responsibility. With regard to this, a Discipline Teacher from **School D** expressed his dissatisfaction in the following manner:

*These are the basic duties of class teachers. They don't use their common sense. Student home particulars are subject to change and teachers are supposed to update them from to time. What happens is that students sometimes lie about their background details. Teachers never bother to ask for copies of documents such as their Birth Certificate or Identity Cards...When students are taken to the police stations (for serious misbehaviour) or the hospital (when students are hurt in a fight or accident) the Discipline Teachers become a laughing stock, unable to furnish the authorities with the proper particulars. Records are important for students' safety and the maintenance of discipline.*

In one case a student 'accused' one of the female teachers (apparently one of the school administrators), saying that she was 'a racist' and that many students never liked her. The student related his experience in the following manner:

*One day the teacher was not in and there was a fight in the class. A boy punched me on my nose and my shirt was torn. That day the Discipline Teacher was not around and we were taken to this lady's room. Straight away she issued me with a warning letter and suspended me for three days. Maybe I was wrong, but why, were the other culprits, who belong to the teacher's race, let off! That's why I shouted at the teacher and kicked her table....!*

Some of the Discipline Teachers did not want to comment on the ‘racial issue’ but admitted that, some of the disciplinary actions against misbehaving students are not transparent.

**d) Summary of Findings on Disciplining- Styles Domain:**

It was learnt from the voices of the students, that some teachers used sensitive remarks when they dealt with student discipline. It was reported that some teachers never had respect for student dignity; as they put down or embarrassed students in front of others. According to the Discipline Teachers, misbehaving students were often sent to them and the teachers concerned insisted on punishment. At times, students reportedly became victims of teachers’ racial attitudes. Discipline Teachers claimed that, class teachers’ negligence in maintaining student records earned them embarrassment when they had to deal with external authorities.

**\*Implication for Behaviour Management:**

According to the Discipline Teachers, some students showed no respect for teachers and ignored their commands when teachers resorted to negative disciplining strategies. However, students were on the receiving end or even victimized when some students acted violently or retaliated in response to teachers’ negative disciplining styles. The Discipline Teachers claimed that they had a difficult time mediating student-teacher conflicts and providing justice for those students who were ‘picked-on’ by teachers. It was also noted that the ‘racial’ attitude of some teachers caused students to show aggressive behaviour on the part of students.

### **8.06 Concluding Comments:**

This chapter presented views of students (prefects and non-prefects) from the four sample schools in the order of teachers' pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal and disciplining styles of teachers. The chapter also highlighted the views of Discipline Teachers on school discipline matters and the attitude of some teachers in the four sample schools. The views offer some insight into situations where teachers might be regarded as 'perpetrators', 'instigators' or where they might be perceived as 'bullies' themselves. Students develop their own ways of showing disrespect for their teachers via graffiti and creating 'nick-names' for their teachers to counter the 'imbalance of power' in schools. These sometimes manifest into discipline problems and thereby bring implications to the management of behaviour.



## **CHAPTER NINE**

### **DISCUSSION**

#### **9.00 Introduction:**

The present study investigated student perceptions of teacher characteristics and the implications of these for behaviour management in schools. These perceptions were examined in the four case schools through responses to a student survey and through interviews with both students and Discipline Teachers.

#### **9.01 Chapter Outline:**

The first part of the chapter brings together the findings from chapter seven (quantitative reports) and chapter eight (qualitative interviews). In light of the literature, the quantitative summary signals some of the initial findings, relating it to the purpose of the present study; while the qualitative report provided further evidence. that showed the correlation between perceptions of teacher behaviour by students and the implications on behaviour management in the sample schools. The final section of this chapter provides a holistic view of the themes which emerged in the study, that question teachers' understanding of the purpose of student discipline with regard to teachers' professional, social, psychological and moral aspects. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key issues raised by the study in terms of implications for policy and practice.

## **9.02 Quantitative Summary:**

It was noted in chapter seven that, a substantial number of students in the study had expressed dislike for their schools. A good proportion of students also had indicated that they only liked some teachers and some subjects. To compound this issue further, a small proportion of students showed total dislike for their teachers and subjects taught in schools. A considerable number claimed that their self, and peer and teacher rated discipline was poor and their perception of school discipline was unsatisfactory. Despite gender and ethnic differences, many students admitted their involvement in a number of disciplinary cases ranging from class disruptions to more serious ones such as fighting. The male students, especially those belonging to the non-prefect category, recorded a higher percentage for misbehaviours. A small proportion of students supported the view that school disciplinary matters might be rooted in school or teacher related factors.

An important outcome of the survey is that a considerable number of students disliked their schools, teachers and school subjects. These are points of information that underpinned the purpose of the present study. Liking for schools and having positive attitudes to teachers are signs of school engagement. Literature in this area tells us that if students are not engaged in their school work and activities, they are likely to exhibit disciplinary problems (Nelson-Smith, 2008; Immersion et al., 2006; Sinclair et al., 2003). In many educational settings, student disengagement is regarded as a cause for disciplinary problems (Anderman, 2003; Osterman, 2000).

For many of the findings, differences were noted among demographic variables such as student ethnicity, gender and student status. Literature, mostly in the American and European settings has found that ethnic factors have a considerable influence over student achievement and behaviour (Skiba et al., 2000). In this regard, students of Chinese origin appeared to be contributing to the differences in many aspects of school and teacher dislike. To some extent, this was in controversy with the findings of Lewis et al. (2005) on the cultural differences of student perceptions of teachers in Australia, China and Israel. In the said study, the authors had found that Chinese students showed more liking and respect for their teachers due to the cultural norms in China. However, in the context of the present study, this may be different for the Malaysian Chinese.

The prefects indicated more positive attitudes towards their school and teachers, compared to the non-prefects. By virtue of their responsible position as prefects, it might be natural that they exhibit high self esteem and enjoyed better relationship with their teachers. Furthermore, their selection to the prefect board is often based on their interest in school and their inclination towards academic aspects. Both boys and girls experienced discipline problems in schools. However, the boys registered a higher percentage of disciplinary problems compared to the girls. Smith and McVie (2003) suggest that girls may indeed be more disruptive than teachers believe, but their behaviour is felt as less challenging than the same behaviour in boys. Although boys are more often challenged by teachers for their misbehaviour (Younger and Warrington, 2000), in the behavioural context, girls are often taken lightly and their voices are unheard when they state their

problems. As such, it could provoke the girls towards disruptive behaviours or withdrawal (Cruddas and Haddock, 2003: p.71).

The majority of the students attributed student misbehaviour in schools to factors such as peer pressure and students' individual characteristics. Only a small proportion of students attributed student misbehaviour in schools to teachers and school related factors. This matched the findings of Croll and Moses (1993) which accounted for more factors outside school and only about 4% for teachers and school factors for student disciplinary problems. Literature argues that only a small proportion of students are usually featured in student discipline matters (Wearmouth, 2004; Rogers, 2002). However, this small proportion has the potential to proliferate and set the tone of the classroom or school ambience. Thereby taking away the valuable time of teachers and administrators in dealing with the perpetrators.

With regard to the nature of disciplinary problems experienced among the four sample schools, problems like truancy, avoiding classes and punctuality featured the highest with slight variations among the schools. The results were identical to the reporting by the ministry on common discipline problems in Malaysian schools (MOEM, 2004). These findings also matched the studies by Hyman et al. (2003) and Goldstein (2003) which claimed that negative perceptions of schools and teacher dislike may contribute to student discipline problems like absenteeism and truancy.

In a section on strategies for minimizing disciplinary problems and encouraging good behaviour, there was strong agreement among the students that teacher leadership could be better and teachers should show more concern and care in student disciplinary matters. Despite the differences in ethnicity, gender and status, there was a higher percentage of agreement that school rules should be tightened. However, it was the concern of the majority of the respondents, that teachers exercised flexibility with rules, showing understanding and care for student needs. Among the students' desired teacher characteristics were: valuing students' individual ability, understanding students' feelings, listening to their plights, teachers having good pedagogical skills, and being knowledgeable in subject matters and intelligent. These aspects were in line with the findings of Teven (2007) and Jennings (2003), which emphasised that teachers' roles in terms of positive attitudes and caring relationships with students is a significant factor in resolving student discipline matters.

In spite of the differences in ethnicity, gender and status, a considerable number of students indicated that disciplinary problems in schools could be partially attributed to teacher related factors. The characteristics identified were mostly in the pedagogical, ethical and disciplining styles of teachers. This will be discussed in the later part of the chapter.

### **9.03 Qualitative Summary:**

The interviews with selected students showed a positive link between student behaviour and that of teacher behaviour. 32 students who consisted of prefects and non-prefects participated in the interviews. Their selection was based on a

voluntary basis and the respondents were willing to admit their discipline problems. Students mostly from the non-prefect category admitted that they had some records of discipline problems in the schools for which they have been punished or were awaiting punishment. One of the students had been suspended for a week and three admitted that they had been caned before. While most of the discipline violations were associated with boys, two girls admitted that, they had been issued with warning letters for not showing respect to their teachers. In this respect even two of the prefects admitted that they had violated school rules and even played truant, but teachers were either unaware or did not take notice of these misdemeanours. The most common behaviours acknowledged by the students were truancy, occasionally failing to attend classes, deliberate late arrival at schools, vandalism, graffiti and showing disrespect for teachers.

Students admitted that they deliberately played truant, were absent and were late for their classes. Some of the students openly admitted that they did this to 'show their disrespect and hatred' for some of the teachers. Some admitted to using maladaptive behaviours (for example disregarding homework and ignoring extra classes), in coping with teachers' classroom behaviours that they disliked. They also indicated how the behaviours of some of their friends or others whom they knew had been influenced or affected by teachers' negative behaviour.

The teacher characteristic that they disliked most was some of the teachers' ways of disciplining students. Teachers often shouted at the students, criticised parents for their upbringing and the alleged 'discrimination' they showed in handling disciplinary cases. According to some students, some teachers openly practiced

favouritism to their own kind and there was no sense of fairness as students belonging to certain ethnic groups were often let off. They said announcements about disciplinary actions and punishments at the school assemblies only featured students belonging to certain ethnicity. The Discipline Teachers, in their views on the influence of teacher characteristics, had also vaguely indicated that disciplinary actions involving some student groups were not transparent. All this might be part of the schools' subculture and micro level politics which are beyond the scope of this thesis to address. As Joseph (2004) claims, the Malaysian school system is heavily politicised due to the educational policies that favour the indigenous group.

Discussion with the Discipline Teachers and 'a look into' student discipline records confirmed students' self reported behaviours. However in two of the schools there were clear discrepancies in the students' discipline records and class control books. There were cases of misbehaviour admitted by students but that were not recorded. In another case, there were records of at least three discipline cases in two schools but the students concerned denied the allegations saying they had no knowledge or were unaware of it.

Some of the teachers' perceived inabilities to teach and articulate their pedagogical skills well were signalled by students' reports of not receiving appropriate explanation, instruction or feedback. Lessons of some teachers were perceived to be boring and monotonous, and attracted little or no interest from the majority of the students in their classes. Some students were allegedly ridiculed when they resorted to asking for teachers' help in understanding their lessons.

Some teachers were reported to have low expectations for students, while others were said to exhibit discrimination towards some students. A number of students were disappointed for not getting feedback for their assignments and were doubtful about teachers' trustworthiness on grades they obtained for their tests and assignments.

The evidence for the perceived allegations of teacher behaviour were seen via the students' self-reporting disobedience and reluctance to engage in classroom activities. Some students were reported as walking in and out of the classrooms, or indulging in a multitude of disruptive behaviours during lessons. When the classrooms became noisy and disruptive it affected not only the teaching process but the peace of the schools and it became an added burden to Discipline Teachers. Though the situations were reported to be a norm in some classes in the four sample schools, a noteworthy point is that, such situations were 'particularly extreme' during the presence of certain teachers.

Interviews with Discipline Teachers provided validation of many of the claims made by the students about how their behaviours were influenced by - and responses to- their perceptions of their teacher characteristics (Rice, 2002; Halstead and Taylor, 2000). According to the reports of Discipline Teachers, most students who find themselves in such positions nevertheless learnt to accept the teachers' style and even learnt to live with the psychological or emotional consequences of their teachers' behaviours towards them (Munn et al., 2000). However, it was also clear that for some students, negative perceptions of teacher characteristics were causal factors in their misbehaviour and disciplinary



problems (Hyman et al., 2003; Goldstein, 2003). Interviews with Discipline Teachers noted that some students retaliate when provoked and exhibit aggressive behaviour towards their teachers.

The findings of the interviews with selected students and Discipline Teachers were analysed and reported under the four domains of teacher professionalism. While the first three domains are discussed in the context of student perspectives, the domain on teachers' disciplining style is mostly about the views of the Discipline Teachers.

**\* Pedagogical Domain:**

Among the perceived characteristics that fell under the pedagogical domain are how teachers behaved during their interaction with students during instruction and in adhering to curricular directives from the school administration. In the context of instruction, the characteristics that featured the most were teachers' pedagogical skills, knowledge and content delivery. Following curricular directives include teacher punctuality, seriousness in taking attendance, maintenance of the class control book and the reluctance to accompany students to their respective learning stations. In total, they focused on teachers' image as an effective instructor and their role as disciplinarians.

Earlier in the survey, it was noted that the majority of student respondents in the four schools only liked some teachers and were interested only in some subjects. While this may not necessarily be an unanticipated finding, this may nonetheless be an important point for consideration in associating teacher behaviour with that

of student indiscipline. There are several possible interpretations that could be derived from these findings. One might be **poor pedagogical skills**, i.e. such teachers did not know how to structure lessons that were comprehensive, suitable for student ability and interesting enough to motivate or retain attention (Carr, 2005). Literature claims that good discipline is the product of good teaching (Glewwe and Kremer, 2006; Carr, 2005, Kyriacou, 2002; Rogers, 2002). Thus teachers' pedagogical skills and ability to impart their knowledge effectively holds the potential for student engagement in the learning process. Significant association has been demonstrated between student perceptions of their teachers' pedagogical skills and students' academic achievement (Adediwura and Bada Tayo, 2007). Likewise, association between teacher liking and subject liking has also been pointed out by researchers like Furlong et al. (2000).

Further scrutiny may reveal that it is not only teacher efficacy and their efficiency to impart knowledge and learning skills that affect teaching but most importantly **teacher attitudes** towards their profession and commitment to students who have been placed under their care. An alternative explanation may be that while they had the requisite pedagogical skills, the teachers had simply 'given up hope' on these groups of students, and thus lacked the motivation to try to engage them.

In light of the above, another important argument which relates to the present study is the relationship between teachers' pedagogical skills and **teacher caring**. The evidence of this study suggests that good teaching might be (at least in part) an expression of teacher caring, and caring teachers often excelled in their teaching ability (Teven, 2007). Participants in the interviews, claimed that

teachers did not care or showed enough caring to students during the lessons. In this respect, they admitted their misbehaviour or challenging behaviours they showed towards their teachers. While such behaviours call for serious repercussions in discipline, they might be interpreted or seen as signs of teachers' lack of care or concern for the students concerned. An example to this might be teachers' continuous disregard for students' requests for help and teachers letting students copy notes that are not explained. The behaviour patterns of teachers in turn affect those of students (Wittrock, 1986). Teven (2007) suggests that teachers communicate a caring attitude towards students in order to preserve their credibility and affect in the classrooms. In this regard, it may be necessary to consider the fact that verbally communicated caring helps students to perceive their teachers as trustworthy and competent. Conversely teachers' negative attitudes and inappropriate behaviours such as shouting, challenging, swearing and ridiculing were perceived as less caring and less competent (Teven and Hanson, 2004).

**\*Ethical Domain:**

Ethical dimensions of teachers' work generally include; taking one's own profession seriously, reliability, genuineness, trustworthiness, exemplariness, sense of fairness and justice, caring, as well as assumption of responsibility for one's own actions and commitment in one's professional work (Aurin and Maurer, 1993). Some of the incidents reported by students and in some cases confirmed by Discipline Teachers were clear violations of teacher ethics and the principles of teacher professionalism. According to the students, most of these perceived infringements took place during classroom instruction.

In the perceptions of students who lodged complaints, some teachers never showed seriousness in their teaching. Students could sense that teachers were unprepared or lacked the knowledge in the subjects they taught. Teachers did not teach but simply browsed the curriculum. They were not concerned if students actually understood the subject matter. There were also unwillingness on the part of the teachers to explain the lessons well or answer students' questions. Teachers threw unwanted remarks to put down or ridicule students who asked questions. The words and the analogy they used had the potential to inflict emotional injury or incite anger among students. Some of these perceived allegations were identical to those of the findings reported in Vacek and Lasek (2006).

There were also alleged racial slurring and ethnic biases in the way teachers treated students, especially in their disciplining styles and teachers' request for student attention in class. However, students could hardly defend themselves and were mostly on the receiving end. Some students admitted showing their anger and hatred by avoiding classes and indulging in vandalism and graffiti. These were indications of resistance to power imbalance and authoritarian teacher behaviour whereby students never had the opportunity to communicate with teachers. Understanding students' perceptions of discrimination has important consequences, regardless of whether the students perceive the discrimination. At the theoretical level, perceiving oneself to be the target of discrimination is likely to affect an individual's identity formulation, peer relations, academic achievement, occupational goals and mental and physical wellbeing (Lee and Canter, 1993; Whendall, 1992).

Some of the perceived behaviour on the part of some teachers questions their self concepts of morality and of their own moral behaviour. Likewise, issues of alleged discrimination, teacher biasness, judgmental views and their preconceived notions about students' ability (on the part of some teachers) were noted via students' perceived notions of their teachers' ethical and moral characteristics. The teachers concerned were perceived to have associated student ability and behaviour with that of ethnicity (Skiba et al., 2000) and their sense of humour also turned out to be unethical.

In the context of caring, teachers paid less or no attention to student complaints. Teachers paid little or no attention especially when students were bullied or subjected to harassment by other students. Besides that, teachers were also perceived to add insult to injury by criticising the victims and by making a mockery out of student complaints. Such unethical practices caused students to suffer from emotional injuries and show resilience and maladaptive behaviours. These in turn, were interpreted as disciplinary problems by some teachers and they insisted that the students concerned be punished. Such teacher behaviours matched Delfabbro et al's (2006) statement of teachers being perpetrators in school bullying.

Teachers were judgmental in their thinking that students with discipline problems, or those who have been transferred from other schools due to disciplinary actions, were not worthy to be educated or could not be taught altogether. Though literature in this area does confirm the fact that students with discipline problems

are often less engaged in schooling and perform poorly (Arends, 2001), teachers should not use this as an excuse for escapism.

**\*Interpersonal Domain:**

The findings of the survey did not provide sufficient evidence on the interpersonal domain affecting student behaviour. However, interviews with students proved otherwise. In the views of some students, there were a number of teachers perceived as not showing exemplary behaviours in their mannerisms. For example, some teachers never bothered to respond when students greeted them, while some others kept students at arms distance. Some teachers were perceived to be moody and unpredictable and were reportedly channelling their anger and frustration on students. Some were reported as shouting or yelling at students unnecessarily. They used harsh or impolite words to express their anger or dissatisfaction on students' academic work or classroom behaviour. In many cases teachers' interpersonal behaviours were embedded in their other professional aspects such as pedagogical, ethical or disciplining styles. As such, it was hard to distinguish those behaviours and they could only be analysed on a contextual basis.

Some teachers were perceived to be over friendly with some students. Such teachers were extreme in the interest they showed to some students which aroused questions on the morality of the teachers concerned. Students did not like the idea of teachers having 'pets' in the class (Miller et al., 2000) and teachers delegating their duties that are confidential.

Elements of discrimination and bias were evident in their perceived interpersonal behaviour as well. According to some students, teachers never ‘practiced what they preached’. Students claimed that, teachers often professed that despite the multicultural differences all students and teachers are regarded ‘Malaysians’. However, they purportedly used racial elements to motivate some of their ‘pet’ students to excel in their studies. At times, some teachers were perceived to create racial polarisation and antagonism among students. Students also alleged that some teachers showed racial bias in imposing punishments. For example, some students realised that they were in the wrong in some disciplinary matters, readily admitted their mistakes and did not mind the punishment. However, they expressed dissatisfaction as to why only students of a particular ethnicity often received punishment while those belonging to ‘some other ethnic groups’ were let off ‘scot free’. The findings are rather identical to the claims made by Skiba et al. (2000) on the marginalization of Black students in school disciplinary matters in American settings.

Students used ‘nick names’ for the teachers (Crozier, 2002) and some of the teachers’ names featured more often than others in the ‘schools’ graffiti’ in the toilets and hidden walls of the school premises. Some students, including the prefects, admitted that they talked, joked and made fun of their teachers and about their behaviours regularly at their schools and at their dinner tables, in their homes in front of their parents and siblings. Martineau (1972 -in Crozier, 2002) had proposed that jokes that are shared by a group have an external target function to increase solidarity within the group but promote hostile attitude toward the out-group.

### **\*Disciplining Style:**

According to the Discipline Teachers and in the views of some prefects, some teachers had difficulty in the management of classroom behaviour and were unable to control their classes. Teachers often sent referrals to the Discipline Teachers and summoned them to intervene when classroom behaviour went out of control. These claims matched the findings of the writer's earlier studies (Seloamoney, 2007; 2004) and that of Loh (1995). Such teachers often lost control of themselves and shouted and used hurtful remarks when they were dissatisfied with students' work or behaviour.

Some teachers never kept records of student behaviour and were unable to relate it whenever a disciplinary issue was brought against a student. According to the Discipline Teachers, some teachers never understood the concept and purpose of discipline (Roger, 2002). These teachers never understood the procedural due process and insisted on suspending or expelling students. They expected the Discipline Teachers to be punitive and they regarded themselves as more important than the welfare of the students.

In other words, such teachers did not know how to differentiate an actual discipline problem, with that of students' maladaptive behaviours. Teachers reportedly had sent frequent referrals about students who failed to submit assignments or projects on time. However, according to the students, they were unable to complete the projects as they had never been briefed on the purpose, its importance and had no clear guidelines on the structure and design of the assignments or projects. Lack of student understanding about a project or



assignment is clearly attributed to teachers' pedagogical incompetence and cannot be regarded as a disciplinary problem. Students were repeatedly sent to the Discipline Teachers for trivial matters and these evoked further disciplinary problems and resentment on the part of the affected students. Students who have been receiving referrals showed their retaliation by playing truant, avoiding classes, and showing aggression against teachers. Discipline Teachers claimed that dissatisfaction and antagonism on the part of students often 'paved the way' for more destructive behaviour such as graffiti and vandalism of school or teachers' properties.

In some schools it was the duty of the subject teachers to guide students to their respective learning stations. Students were found to be disorderly when they moved between the classes. Furthermore, they took opportunity to 'bunk off' classes, and cases of serious misbehaviour such as fighting and bullying were reported during this time. However, teachers reportedly showed indifferent attitude to this directive. They allegedly walked in late as they knew it would take a considerable amount of time for students to get to the classes. Failure on the part of teachers to adhere to school directives (such as punctuality) indirectly affected the teaching and learning process, in terms of delay and time wastage. Delays in lesson were also reported when students deliberately turned up late for their classes.

According to the Discipline Teachers and prefects, much of these problems could be curtailed if teachers had followed the directives to supervise students. Respecting guidelines and obeying directives is an important constituent of a

good work culture (INTAN, 1994; MGO, 1993). In the context of school discipline, it is also a sign of responsibility and teacher caring (MSDG, 2004).

It was noted in the study that teachers often turned a 'blind eye' when students misbehaved. They were also perceived as 'not bothered' when students became victims of bullying. According to the Discipline Teachers these were indications of irresponsibility, and an uncaring teacher attitude towards students and a clear infringement of the ministry's appeal in extending their role to act as Discipline Teachers (MOEM, 2004). With respect to ignoring student misbehaviour such as bullying, teachers might be equally regarded as perpetrators (Delfabbro et al., 2006). In this respect, some of the characteristics bear resemblance to Daniel's (1998) classification of teachers' attitudes to student discipline.

Discipline Teachers suggested that solutions for much of the discipline problems were within the capacity of subject teachers. Students who never understood lessons or those who could not finish their work in time (slow learners) were regarded as uncooperative by some teachers. Disciplining of such students, without seeking to understand the underlying cause of the lack of engagement (Carr, 2005; Rogers, 2002; Arends, 2001) resulted in retaliation on the part of some students. In the opinion of some Discipline Teachers, the education system exacerbates this problem. Students who had failed to make the minimal grade in public examinations are being allowed to pursue their further schooling (MOEM, 1990) but with the same curriculum meant for students with good grades. So teachers are caught in a dilemma as to how to structure or simplify the curriculum, as all students would be sitting for the same public examinations.

Hence, students who could not cope with their studies and experienced boredom, exhibited misbehaviour or caused disciplinary problems and teachers simply shifted the problem to the Discipline Teachers.

It is alleged that some class teachers do not take the trouble to maintain or update particulars such as students' home address and their parents' contact numbers. According to the Discipline Teachers, this might be the weakness of the administrators in obtaining the relevant student details during the time of registration. As long as students held admission letters from the relevant Education Departments they were given a place and their background was seldom investigated. In the views of the Discipline Teachers, the 'problematic students' who get transferred from other schools often lied and simply furnished incorrect or fake addresses and contact numbers to avoid discipline consequences. Most often this is an administrative problem transferred to the class teachers who in turn tend to follow the available data. As the Discipline Teachers claim, it is only when the student concerned gets caught in a discipline case that the problem of fake details surface and the teachers point fingers at one another for the mistake committed.

In the event of a student being involving in a serious discipline case of criminal nature, (e.g. gang fights, causing injury to fellow students) the student concerned might be taken to the police station (MOEM, 1993). This is when the Discipline Teachers faced embarrassment at being unable to provide student addresses or contact details to the authorities. Likewise, Discipline Teachers also experienced difficult situations when students were taken to hospitals for treatment of injuries

resulting from accidents or fights. They were unable to report cases of indiscipline to the parents in time or seek their presence for a conference to find an amicable solution. Discipline Teachers often found themselves in a dilemma as they were caught in between providing justice to students and rendering support for their colleagues.

In this regard, the Discipline Teachers had indicated that teachers themselves were the greatest hurdle in curbing student indiscipline in schools. It is noted that some teachers were reported to exhibit bias and uncaring attitude to students. The Discipline Teachers and students related some of the teachers' perceived uncaring attitude to several areas of duties where teachers often fell short. For example, teachers were not serious in marking attendance and carrying out a 'headcount' when they entered their classes. Student misbehaviour and other related aspects of discipline were not recorded accordingly in the class control book. This allowed opportunities for some students, especially those who may be vulnerable to misbehaviour. In the study some students claimed to have behaved in 'a certain manner' because they had already 'studied' the nature of some teachers.

#### **9.04 Summary of Discussion:**

Via the two methodological approaches of quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, an attempt was made to unravel the possible correlation between student perceptions of teacher characteristics and student behaviour in the four sample schools. From the findings of the quantitative data, it was noted that students in the sample schools showed considerably high levels of perceived dissatisfaction in some aspects of their school lives. The degree of perceptions

varied within the four domains of teacher professionalism considered for analysis of this study. However, there were no clear evidences in the quantitative data that students' perceived notions of teacher characteristics translated into student disciplinary problems. On the other hand, the findings of the qualitative interviews (with selected student respondents and Discipline Teachers) from the four schools showed the correlation to some extent. The themes that emerged from the 'voices' of qualitative interviews with students and Discipline Teachers shed some light on the attitude and behaviour of some teachers in the four schools that had the potential to contribute to student disciplinary problems.

In the context of the present study, students expressed their desire to protect their sense of self-worth in school related matters. They were able to relate and describe characteristics of their teachers, classroom and school contexts that were perceived to be threatening to their sense of self-worth and continuous school engagement.

Social power and influence play a crucial role in determining the quality of relationships at the interpersonal and the intergroup levels. In educational settings, where conflicts between teachers and students are inevitable, understanding the means used by teachers for gaining compliance has implications for both the success of the learning enterprise and the nature of their relationships (Schwarzwald et al., 2005).

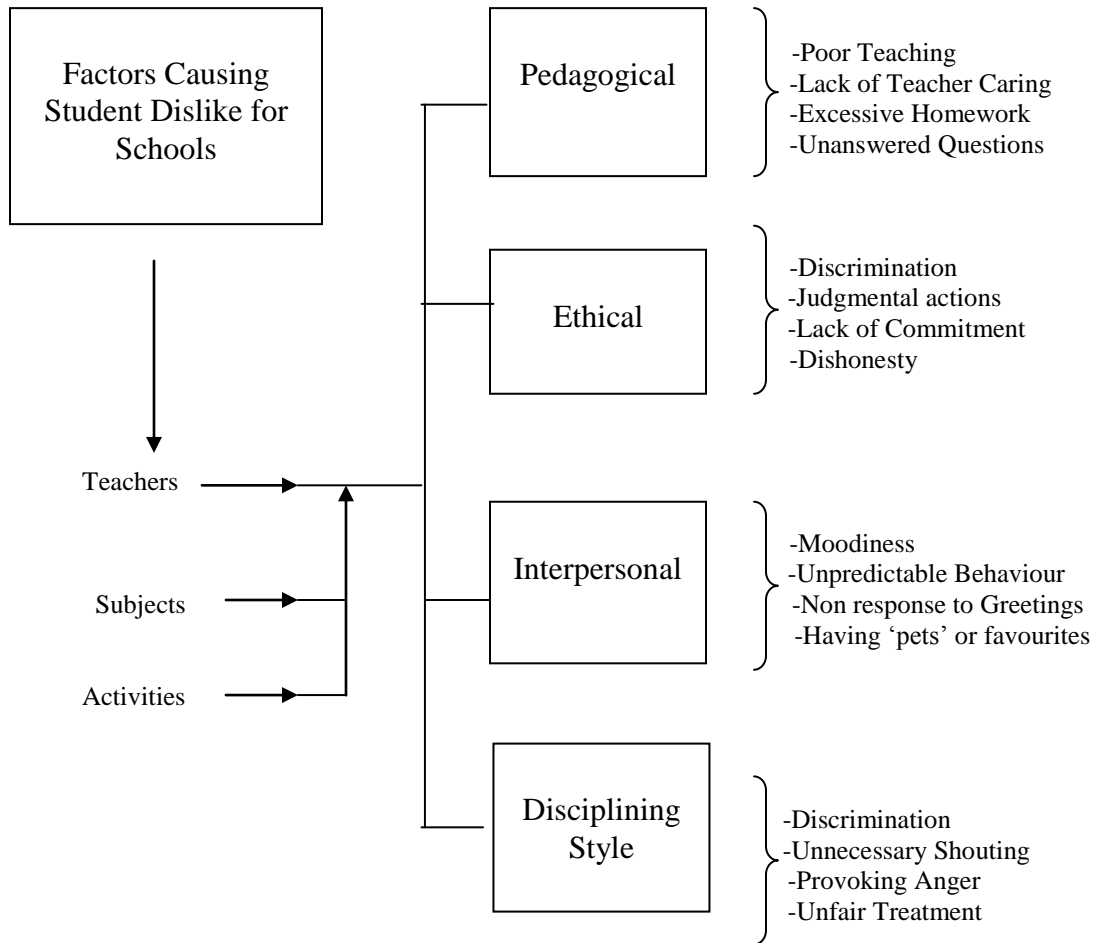
The incidents quoted by the students might be an indication of the existence of a power relationship between students and teachers (Soto and Chatterjee, 2007), as

well as the prevailing systems in schools. The issue is not so much on whether or not the alleged incidents happened, but whether students perceive that justice may be forthcoming when teachers are perceived or reported to have acted unprofessionally.

An implication for educators and administrators that emerges from this study is the significance of behavioural control systems on schools. Students from the four schools expressed concerns about the behavioural control systems that operated within schools and how teachers in their respective schools responded to the system. Students repeatedly mentioned the negative influences of the system and how it affected their self worth, sense of belonging, academic engagement and eventually their behaviour. Generally, student behavioural problems resulted in penalties and punishment. **Students believed** that some teachers abused their power in imposing disciplinary sanctions and those sanctions turned out to be at the discretion of individual teachers. **Students claimed** they had little or no say in school disciplinary matters and they had no platform to voice their perceived grievances. According to some of the boys interviewed in particular, at times they were forced to ‘admit their mistakes’ with little or no investigation.

The Discipline Teachers claimed school counsellors did little (Melati, 1999; Atan Long, 1981) to reduce students’ tension and were not available in schools most of the time. **Students believed** some of them had the potential to be altered through positive teacher behaviour and contextual modifications. Among their perceived aspirations include concern about behavioural control and desire for supportive

teacher behaviour. The findings of the study are summarised via the following illustrations.



**Fig.6 Teacher behaviour under the four domains affecting student dislike for schools and created a manifestation of unwanted behaviours in students.**

### 9.05 Concluding Comments:

In the context of this discussion it is reiterated that schools identify their internal problems that underpin reasons for student disengagement and thereby work out appropriate solutions for the resultant behavioural problems. Without recognising the underlying problems, as to why students are misbehaving, the disciplinary

actions taken by schools might only be deemed reactive and not proactive. In this respect, the views of students continue to be marginalised despite their centrality to this debate and their ability to provide a unique set of perspectives (McCluskey, 2008).

This study has clear implications for teacher reflection of professionalism in the context of behavioural management in Malaysian schools. Too often in recent years, decisions on the management of education have little to do with the realities of students' lives. Likewise, too often the interest shown in the performance of teachers, or in the improvement of curriculum has not been balanced by an interest in how students respond to either. Schools claim to recognize the individual student's basic human rights and his/her right to an educational opportunity but with or without intention end up violating those rights.

School leadership, tends to focus on instructional efficacy, curriculum design and the rhetoric process of school improvement. Schools compete with one another in boosting their academic image via the annual records of passes in the public examinations. Competing for excellence in academic endeavours may not be inappropriate, if due attention is also to be paid to factors that underpin the success of those efforts. Amidst an era emphasizing 'standards and accountability' in education it might be important to recognize the interplay between socio-emotional and behavioural aspects, as they tend to exert influence over students' academic success and learning (Quinn, 2005). Schools cannot ensure success without creating a conducive learning environment that is free of



student disciplinary problems (Wearmouth, 2004). One way of addressing this issue in schools is to ensure students emotional wellbeing and the fulfilment of their basic needs and expectations. As Quinn (2005) puts it, in almost every case, the things that make a difference happen at the level of people relating to people.

The conclusion that the above discussion leads to, is that student perceptions of their teachers' professional characteristics are strongly related to their responses to teachers and their engagement in learning. School engagement and the holistic improvement of the individuals, are intertwined and are an important influence on developmental trajectories and educational success. The argument in this discussion is based on the conviction that students as children or teenagers are not fundamentally different from adults and teachers can understand themselves better by their insight into the nature of students. The study of student behaviour and the understanding that comes from self-knowledge may be too important to be left to obscurity.

In light of the above, the research presented in this thesis is an investigation of contextual issues related to the increasing number of student referrals for behaviour problems in Malaysian schools. An attempt was made to capture some of the relational dynamics that contribute to behavioural problems in an environment where achievement often transcends humanity as a measure of individual worth.

In the quest of restoring teachers' professional image in the local arena, which has been in question for the past two decades or so (Hamidon, 2001), it is important to

create self awareness and self reflection among the Malaysian teaching community. In some schools teachers behave in an inappropriate manner and in some cases are allowed to 'get away with it' (Yariv, 2004). This raises implications for these schools in terms of infringing the 'no-child left behind' agenda.

A report by the ministry claims that Malaysian teachers were not performing up to expectation and a substantial number of cases of 'mentally ill' teachers (NST, March, 1990) had been reported in the country. In consideration of the fact that teachers suffering from psychosis and neuroses in the country are on the increase, (Hamidon, 2001; Suseela, 1994) any flaws or depersonalisation effects on the part of the teacher factor must be viewed as a prior warning. This is not only to protect the image of teachers and of teacher professionalism in Malaysia but to safeguard the interest of the students.

In the context of this study, the teacher factor is perceived to be only one of the probable causes of student indiscipline. Teachers in this investigation may or may not be aware that their actions or inactions, directly or indirectly contributed to student disciplinary problems. Teachers are reportedly experiencing stress or 'burn out' due to lots of other factors related to school or their work, that are beyond their control to articulate (NUTP, 2004). As such, it might be inevitable that circumstances give rise to situations or interactions with students that sometimes reveal the 'nasty side' of teachers. When teachers exhibit negative qualities, it may not necessarily mean that they are deemed bad teachers all together. However, to ignore or discard it as not serious may be a drastic mistake.

Discipline is needed to maintain order, to the extent that learning and teaching can take place (Emmer et al., 2003). Prior to embarking on a preventive and maintenance program of good behaviour, teachers need to understand the dimensions of discipline, be cognizant of the purposes of discipline and above all be aware of the possible causes of student discipline problems (Irwin and Amobi, 2005). According to Irwin and Nucci (2004), if teachers neglect to base the interpretation of misbehaviour on sound knowledge of the controlling causes of misbehaviour, it could be assumed that they consider the misbehaviour to be an isolated expression of rebelliousness, insubordination or non compliance with acceptable behaviour (p.62). Such assumptions according to Hoover and Kinsvatter (1997), would preclude one from realistically exploring other probable origins of behaviour. Thus, any intervention approach may consequently address symptoms rather than the actual instigators of misbehaviour. As in any other endeavour, identification of the possible causes of student indiscipline is the first step in preventing or stopping its proliferation (Psunder, 2006). The misbehaviour may persist until the root causes are correctly identified and dealt with (Fields and Boesser, 2002). Thus to determine the source of students' behaviour or misbehaviour, schools ought to identify the compelling internal or external stimulators that trigger misbehaviour.

## **CHAPTER TEN**

### **Conclusion**

This final chapter is presented in two parts. The first part gives a brief summary of the study and its implications in the context of behavioural management systems in schools, followed by a range of recommendations that may help to address the situation reported in the study. The second part outlines as to how this study has helped the writer in his professional development and how it might be a contribution to existing knowledge, its limitations and recommendations for practice and future research.

#### **10.00 Introduction:**

The present study was aimed at seeking empirical evidence for the identification of teacher characteristics that had the potential to influence student behaviour in schools. The focus was to show how student perceptions of teacher characteristics influenced student behavioural outcomes and how this phenomenon in turn implicated behavioural management systems in schools. This was in conjunction with the ministry's dire need to minimise the increasing student behavioural problems and to restore the dwindling image of secondary schools in Malaysia.

In the Malaysian context, the alleged involvement of teachers in student disciplinary cases' as perpetrators is on the increase (The Star, August, 2008; NST, April, 2006; Armani, 2005). In conjunction with this, there is a constant reminder by the ministry asking teachers to play a more active and positive role in resolving student disciplinary problems. A scrutiny of the literature review on

student perceptions of teacher characteristics helped to form the theoretical and conceptual framework for the study. The gap in the literature and the frequent debate and media reports in the local arena on the causes of student indiscipline in Malaysian secondary schools were considered for the formulation of research objectives.

The analysis of the quantitative questionnaire, that involved 120 students from four sample schools, indicated negative perceptions about student liking for their schools and teachers. The results provided useful information on significant trends and patterns in student perceptions of teacher characteristics. Capitalising on issues on student dislike for some teachers and of some subjects, qualitative interviews were conducted to triangulate and probe the causes for such aspects of school life. The interviews with selected students and Discipline Teachers confirmed the general findings of the survey and that of earlier studies that perceptions of teacher characteristics have the potential to influence behaviour and that misbehaving students are more likely to appraise teacher behaviour in a more negative way (Ingersoll, 2001; Beresford, 2000). Students are exposed to different kinds of teacher behaviour and the difference in how students are treated by teachers, produces differences in student behaviour within the same class (Bru et al., 2002). Although negative perceptions of teacher behaviour may not necessarily translate into student misbehaviour, the study provided some clear indications and evidences of student disciplinary problems that confirmed such a relationship. Teachers' roles and their share of the contribution to student disciplinary problems were embedded in their characteristics such as pedagogical, ethical, interpersonal and disciplining styles.

Student perceptions of teacher characteristics were influential in student disciplinary aspects such as high referral rates, frequent absenteeism, truancy, deliberate lateness to school, vandalism, graffiti and teacher-student conflicts. This in turn if left unchecked might bring implications for behaviour management in the form of student detention, suspension and expulsion, corporal punishment, police intervention, lawsuits, disagreement and confrontation with parents and media highlight. The results of the study bring about clear implications, not only for the behavioural management systems in schools at the micro level but the recruitment, training, management and supervision of the teaching staff and implementation of policies at the macro level.

#### **10.01 Recommendations:**

According to Walonick (2005) and Anson et al (2000), one of the purposes of an empirical study is that the writer comes up with recommendations for addressing the situation considered for the investigation and it is best that such recommendations emerge from the findings of the study, the literature review and to some extent the writer's own professional judgment. As the theoretical perspectives of the literature review and the findings of the study are analysed in the context of teacher professionalism, the recommendations presented embody the four aspects of teacher competency argued in the investigation:

- It is noted in the study that many students take opportunities to misbehave during teacher absence. If teachers are punctual and can ensure their presence throughout their lesson, keep the students engaged via their well prepared lessons and articulate their pedagogical skills, they could help

minimise unwanted student behaviours. The issue of indiscipline might be inevitable mostly when students are left alone. It might be impossible for students to go 'too far' in the presence of teachers. As teacher punctuality is an important consideration, principals and administrators must ensure that teachers follow school rules and their professional and ethical guidelines (INTAN, 1994).

- Clear guidelines must be developed for teachers who relieve classes. Principals must ensure that such guidelines are effectively communicated to the teachers so that they know what to do. This might avoid situations whereby 'students are left alone', even in the presence of teachers. Teachers who have the right attitude and aptitude can make the difference in the profession. Teachers must be made aware that they are setting exemplary behaviours. As such, principals (via their leadership) must identify teachers who might be 'incompetent' (Yariv, 2004) and provide them with the correct motivation and counselling to improve their behaviour and attitude. It is often impossible for teachers with 'poor work ethics and attitudes' to discipline students.
- Many teachers do not want to be part of the discipline system for fear of facing student retaliation and the intense stress caused by this added responsibility (Hasting et al., 2003). Teachers tend to have a mindset that disciplining students is not their responsibility. Moreover, teachers become targets of criticism when their 'good intentions' and 'care' in imposing discipline strategies are misinterpreted as otherwise. When

things go wrong (e.g. when students develop hostile attitudes towards teachers' disciplining styles or when their parents resort to legal action), teachers rarely get the support of the administrators and fellow colleagues. Principals and administrators via their leadership must constantly reassure their support for teachers via collegiality and teamwork. In this respect, schools may promote strategies like 'buddy systems' for teachers to assist one another in managing student behaviour. By introducing programs like mentor-mentee (where teachers act as foster parents and train them in the process), schools can extend their support services to students in all aspects of their school lives to convey the feeling that they are being cared for. Student disciplinary problems can be greatly reduced if schools can ensure good teacher-student relationships (Carr, 2005).

- As discipline is the basis for a conducive learning environment and teacher behaviour is central to class management (Levin and Nolan, 2007), in-service courses targeted at teachers' professional development must place emphasis on teachers' classroom management practices and understanding student behaviour. Teachers should be given time to engage in conversations about strategies that work, with ample opportunities for peer coaching and refresher courses. Teachers might feel more confident about evolving effective discipline practices when they have access to quality professional development opportunities. These opportunities should emphasize practices in prevention, including attention to equity issues and how to access existing support services. Programs should also include stress management and time management for teachers. Teachers



must understand the purpose and the underlying philosophical contexts of behavioural management so that they do not see punitive strategies as the only means to discipline students. As values are caught and not taught (Carr, 2005), it is important that teachers themselves understand school rules and behavioural policies and set exemplary behaviours for students. The teaching staff should reinforce the same behaviour for all students and follow common discipline practices. Above all there must be commitment among teachers and consistency in the practices of student discipline.

- Schools must provide more opportunities and support for teachers to participate in student discipline matters and teachers must be made to assume accountability for students' behavioural outcomes. In the Malaysian cultural context 'pastoral care' (*loco parentis*) is an important constituent of teacher competency. Unlike many educational settings, teachers in Malaysia are seen as value transmitters both inside and outside schools (Noordin, 1996). The code of ethics that underpins the teaching profession in Malaysia is accepting the blame or responsibility for student behaviour and their academic achievement (even if the students appear to be at fault). A mere claim by the ministry that discipline is everybody's responsibility, but failing to communicate this effectively, brings about a situation whereby it turns out to be nobody's responsibility. As such, the job description for teachers must clearly stipulate their role and accountability in student discipline.

- Teacher collegiality is important in monitoring and reducing student discipline problems. All teachers (irrespective of whether they are part of the discipline committee or not) must be empowered to enforce school rules. Teachers must work on focus groups such as at-risk students and provide effective counselling for students who receive repeated discipline referrals. Effective discipline practices thrive on consistency and teamwork. In line with the ministry's call for every teacher to assume the role of Discipline Teacher, the teaching staff should reinforce the same behaviour for all students and follow common discipline practices. There must be transparency in the discipline procedures carried out to maintain the integrity of the system and shared commitment among teachers and consistency in the practices of student discipline.
- Principals' leadership role and the supervisory role of the administrators are important in the organisational culture of schools. The ministry has made it mandatory that student discipline matters become an agenda in PTA meetings (MOEM, 2004). Likewise, schools must extend these opportunities for all teachers to discuss student discipline problems in curriculum meetings where all teachers are present.
- The relevance of the curriculum becomes an important issue in safeguarding student interests. As all public schools follow a centralised curriculum, the ministry must correctly identify students' expressed needs and that of inferred needs. The discipline aspect must be embodied in the curriculum structure (both implicitly and explicitly) and not treated as a

separate entity (Loh, 1995). As argued by Azlinawaty (2006), the purpose of education in Malaysia is good citizenship and the curriculum must place more emphasis on students' character development. For example, in the case of Moral and Citizenship Education, students must be evaluated on the basis of their actual behaviour rather than merely testing their knowledge on what might be good behaviour.

- Teachers must be convinced of the fact that good behaviour is the result/product of good teaching (Kyriacou, 2002). In the curricular context, teachers must be motivated to update their curricular or subject knowledge and their pedagogical skills to impart their knowledge effectively (Heck, 2008), so that they are perceived as competent by the students. This enhances respect for teachers and greatly reduces boredom and unwanted behaviour in students.
- Teachers must be made aware that their actions, inactions and reactions are constantly under the watchful eyes of the students in schools and the general public outside schools. Teachers must mind their language during their interaction with students. They must be aware of students' cultural and individual sensitivities when disciplining them (Ladson- Billings, 1995). They must indulge in reflective processes (Hoban and Hastings, 2006) and self evaluation at all times. Teachers may also resort to evaluation by their colleagues and students. Teachers must set aside their egoistic nature to come to terms with their students and be ready to accept their positive criticisms. The school system must create opportunities for a

systematic implementation of such evaluations while ensuring that no student or teacher interest is undermined in the process. Again teacher competency in disciplining style must be made an important criterion for teacher appraisal.

- Evaluation should be ongoing and strategies for reducing school disruptions should be assessed continuously for their impact on overall success of the discipline practices and the management of student behaviour. Data should be collected and used to continuously improve current discipline practices and to implement any new procedures. Schools must involve students in decision making wherever and whenever possible (Cook-Sather, 2006).
- Schools must provide platforms for students to voice out their suggestions and grievances via student forums, debates etc. Schools must ensure that students have a say in school matters and their voices are respected. Students must be convinced that schools are taking actions to recognize them and understand their problems and needs. Rewarding students for their good behaviour and positive contributions to the school community is important. Activities, programs and opportunities should be planned to focus on positive behaviours and appropriate actions of the students. To establish positive relationships with students, teachers may resort to learning or behavioural contracts with students. Rewarding students for their good behaviour and positive contribution to the school community is also important.

- There are allegations that student counsellors are rarely present in the schools and are busy involved in departments' programs (SED) and activities (Melati, 1999). It is important that school counsellors work hand in hand with Discipline Teachers as well as other teachers, in monitoring student behavioural problems. They should come up with strategies of their own to perpetuate the caring culture in schools. Based on the fact that every student might be different in their behaviour and outlook, they must be given behavioural support and behaviour modification programs accordingly and individually (Lee and Canter, 1993).
- Schools are often accused of not maintaining communication with parents. School mostly communicate with parents to report student misbehaviour but not when they exhibit positive behaviours or when they achieve excellence in their curricular or co-curricular aspects (Padron et al, 2002; Nieto, 1996). Good communication with parents (a two-way monitoring) might be a good strategy to reduce student misbehaviour. Most often parents are kept in the dark until it comes to a stage where schools have no choice but to impose punitive strategies upon students who misbehave. In this respect it is emphasised that schools maintain student discipline records properly and their home particulars are updated from time to time. Teachers must be made aware of the repercussions and be trained to handle the job. There must be a sound coordination between the administrators (responsible for student registration) and the class teachers (responsible for the maintenance of records) to avoid unwanted situations.

- The ministry must exercise stringent measures in the recruitment and selection of teachers. The training programs must ensure that candidates possess the ‘wholesome quality’ expected of teachers before they are allowed to face students. If necessary the ministry must also consider the option of pre-screening the candidates’ suitability via police records (as in the case of many Western countries). The ministry must also identify teachers who are suffering from mental conditions such as psychosis and neurosis (Hamidon, 2001; Suseela, 1994). Teachers must be given the opportunity to obtain their optional retirement if they feel they are stressed or ‘burn out’, or have lost interest in teaching, upon meeting their basic requirements to do so.
- In curbing discipline problems and educating teachers in this endeavour, the teacher unions could also play a major role. While perpetuating/supporting the rights of the teachers, the unions should also organise teacher education programs on the importance of student discipline. This is because the unions often act (or are forced to act) as defendants in legal suits for teachers caught in student-teacher conflicts (NUTP, 2004).

‘Discipline’ is not an extra dimension to the practice of schools. It is supposedly at the heart of all professional relationships, a matter of interest to all engaged in teaching and learning. Discipline must be made the ‘ethos’ of schools and the entire teaching community must jointly find ways of creating an atmosphere in

schools whereby students do not even think of being aggressive towards their teachers or violating the school rules (Elton Report, 1989. p.11).

In summary, though appropriate school discipline practices involve all stakeholders in their designs, it is teachers who are responsible for carrying out these practices to satisfy the needs and aspirations of all concerned. As reiterated earlier, the discipline practices chosen therefore reflect a shared expectancy, rather than necessarily an obligation to address school problems in real or practical ways. To bolster success, effective practices need to address the root causes of student misconduct. Whatever the design, effective discipline practices should inspire a climate in which students take responsibility for their own behaviour and treat one another with kindness and respect. In order to facilitate this, teachers must exhibit good leadership and exemplary behaviours for students to model. If school leadership could promote such a workplace culture, teachers' subjective levels of stress may be reduced and consequently so may teachers' negative reactivity to students' problem behaviour (Irwin and Amobi, 2005; Irwin and Nucci, 2004; Hyman, et al., 2003; Mills, 1991).

Well-disciplined, effective schools are not the product of chance. They are underpinned by the professional behaviour of teachers who help to shape such a culture. Literature on teacher professionalism has been limited to mostly 'competencies' in teacher's knowledge and pedagogical skills. Teachers' ability to effectively discipline students has never been highlighted as a serious criterion under teacher professionalism. It is the aspiration of this study that existing literature on teacher professionalism be extended to teachers' understanding of

discipline and their ability to effectively articulate their disciplining styles. As schools cannot achieve their academic goals without good discipline, it might be of no exaggeration to suggest that effective disciplining styles be regarded an important aspect of teacher professionalism.

#### **10.02 Contribution to the Writers' Professional Development:**

This study has certainly improved the writer's understanding of student behaviour. The investigations, especially the qualitative interviews with students have educated the writer in developing moral reasoning (Reiman and Peace, 2002; Haviv and Leman, 2002; Myyri and Helkama, 2002) and on the importance of building positive relationships (Murry and Greenberg, 2000) with students. The experience was also very useful in the context of the writers' self reflection (Hoban and Hastings, 2006) on past mistakes in dealing with student behavioural problems. The writer never thought that students' perceived their teacher characteristics to such a deep extent and how much meaning one could elicit from those perceptions.

In the professional experience of the writer, at one stage he believed that the ability or courage to shout at students was one of his 'strength as a Discipline Teacher'. In fact many of his working colleagues were very supportive and always commended him on this 'negative' discipline strategy. The writer also believed that, listening to the students' part of the story would be a waste of time. He inherited such believes from his predecessors who worked as Discipline Teachers in his school. By resorting to the strategies recommended by the school in imposing punitive measures (corporal punishment, suspension and expulsion)



the writer was only able to resolve some of the school's problem but not those of the students (Vulliamy and Webb, 2001). However, after having immersed in the literature on student discipline and having conducted the present research he realised the danger of the fallacy he believed in all the while. It is the sincere hope of the writer that, this research becomes an 'eye opener' for many Discipline Teachers in the country who may be dwelling in this illusion.

As such the writer would personally support the idea of including student voices, especially in the context of devising strategies and policies for behaviour management in schools. With reference to suggestions by Messiau (2004) and Wearmouth (2004) it is the aspiration of the writer that, policies on curricular revamp, teacher recruitment and training and other related aspects on school improvement consider student views before they are organised and implemented.

### **10.03 Contribution to Existing Knowledge:**

It is the contention of the writer that, some of the aspects of the present study be regarded as contributory to new knowledge. The idea of using student voices in educational research is steadily gaining momentum in the West (Osberg et al., 2006; Mitra, 2006; Smyth, 2006; Angus, 2006; Cook-Sather, 2006; Rudduck, 2002; McCallum et al., 2000). However, this idea is comparatively rare and new in Malaysian settings. The study might be regarded as a bold adventure in the Malaysian context, as the thematic concern for this study was teacher related issues in student discipline, an area regarded as culturally sensitive. Few studies that have investigated student perceptions of teacher characteristics both within

and outside Malaysia related the implications of teacher characteristics with that of behavioural management.

The present study has explored the interrelation between two groups of respondents i.e. students and teachers who jointly determined the discipline milieu in schools. In the methodological context, the study used both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the investigation of teacher characteristics.

The items for the quantitative questionnaire used in the study, were derived from the actual experiences of student representatives from all the 96 secondary schools in the Federal Territory of Kuala Lumpur. The writer did not use questionnaire items from previous studies. However, there were a number of key aspects that showed similarities when compared with questionnaires used in other settings, confirming the belief that the basic nature of many student disciplinary problems around the world might be culture free (Turnuklu and Galton, 2001). Finally, student perceptions of teacher characteristics were analysed in the context of teacher professionalism (Whitty, 1996; 2006). The literature on teacher professionalism does not include or emphasise teachers' commitment to student discipline as one of its criteria. The present study suggests that, teachers' knowledge, understanding of discipline and their ability to manage student behaviour effectively be added to the concept of teacher professionalism and the endeavour to professionalize teaching in Malaysia.

#### **10.04 Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research:**

This study showed that student discipline can be improved if teachers have played their role effectively both as individuals, as well as team players. However, by virtue of the small sample size, the findings of the study might not be good enough for generalisation beyond the four sample schools and the actual participants involved in the study. For some ethical reasons and by virtue of the small number of participants the writer did not compare the perceptions of the students and teachers according to different schools. This suggests that further studies in this area (student perceptions of teacher characteristics and its impact on student disciplinary problems) be carried out. Future research should examine this topic with a larger group of participants, possibly involving all the secondary schools in the Federal Territory, in order to substantiate the validity of the findings.

While listening to the voices of excluded students might be useful (McCluskey, 2008; Munn, 2002), further research should also be done to involve or re-interview some of the respondents in this study, to see if their perceptions have changed over time since their participation in this study. Likewise, it might also be appropriate to consider teacher perceptions of student characteristics and teachers understanding of discipline and their justifications of their behaviour. This approach might help to strike a balance in the evaluation of teacher characteristics in the context of student discipline.

## Appendix -1

Letter to Parents:

Dear Sir/ Madam

REF: Consent for participation in a study.

This is to inform you that your son/daughter ..... in Form ..... has consented to participate in a study on school discipline. This involves answering a questionnaire and interviews on perceptions of self and that of teachers in the school. The school authorities and I, (the researcher) promise that this is a confidential operation and the findings are meant for the sole purpose of my doctoral thesis. Your son/daughter's participation is voluntary and his/her identity will not be revealed to anyone. There are no consequences or whatever to this participation. However if you have any objection, your son/daughter may withdraw from participation at any time.  
Thank you for your cooperation.

Seloamoney Palaniandy (Doctoral Candidate)

.....

.....

To:

The Principal

.....

.....

I, the above named as the father/mother/guardian of

..... Form ..... hereby permit my

son/daughter to participate in the study.

Thank you

Yours faithfully

.....

## **Appendix - 2**

### **Interview Guide for Discipline Teachers:**

- In general what do you think about student discipline in secondary schools in the past five years? Has it improved or got worst? What might be the reasons for the change?
- How was student discipline in your school in the last five years and at present after your appointment as the Discipline Teacher?
- Could you give a brief description of the Behavioural Management System in your school?
- In your opinion how the Behavioural Management System is structured? Are there any guidelines? How is it developed?
- Do you have a system that can provide feedback or evaluate the effectiveness of the Behavioural Management System?
- What strategy do you and the rest of the teachers in your school use to record disciplinary cases? To what extent is this helpful and effective?
- Is there any procedural due process like investigating, warnings, counselling sessions etc before imposing disciplinary sanctions on students? Who are the people involved in the process? Do you encounter any problems in this?
- To what extent, if any, do you think that time for teaching the curriculum is hindered because of discipline problems? How?
- Do you encounter any problems in the implementation of rules or imposition of other disciplinary sanctions on students such as parental disagreement?
- Do you believe that punitive strategies like suspension, expulsion or corporal punishment can minimize discipline problems in schools? Are there any guidelines for carrying out these strategies?

- Do you think your teachers are aware of the legal consequences of the discipline strategies that might be punitive? Can they articulate them? If so to what extent?
- What sort of support do you enjoy from your subordinates and higher authorities in the endeavour to improve your school discipline situation?
- What kind of the problems do you face in looking after student discipline?
- In your opinion, what are the reasons for student misbehaviour in schools?
- Do you think caring and supportive strategies can help reduce discipline problems?
- In general how are student and teacher relationships in your school?
- There are many criticisms and allegations about teachers in the media and the decline of discipline in schools. What do you say about this?
- In what way/ways do you think schools can further improve their student discipline?

### **Appendix -3**

#### **Interview Guide for Students (Prefects):**

- ❖ What do you think about your school discipline since you joined this school?
- ❖ Do you like your school? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- ❖ Are you happy being a prefect? If yes why? If no, why not?
- ❖ What kind of behaviour or problems do students pose in your school?  
Why?
- ❖ In your opinion what are the causes of discipline problem in schools?
- ❖ How can bullying be avoided?
- ❖ What can teachers do to change bullying behaviours?
- ❖ What kind of strategies do your teachers take to discipline students? Do you think the strategies are effective? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- ❖ What kind of support do you get from your teachers in helping to control student behaviour in school?
- ❖ How do you think inappropriate discipline behaviour should be handled?
- ❖ To what extent, if any, should you as a student have a say in determining discipline practices?
- ❖ Do you feel that schools need more or fewer practices that address behaviour problems? Why?

## **Appendix- 4**

### **Interview Guide for Students (Non-Prefects):**

- Do you like your school? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Do you like your teachers? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- How do you rate yourself in terms of discipline?
- How do your teachers rate you in discipline?
- How do your friends rate you in discipline?
- What kind of rewards are there for good behaviour?
- What kind of consequences are there for misbehaviour?
- How do you rate yourself in terms of academic ability?
- How do your teachers rate you in terms of academic ability?
- What kind of support do you get from your teachers in your academic performance?
- What kind of support do you get from your teachers should you or your friends get involved in disciplinary problems?
- What are the characteristics you like or expect in your teachers?
- What kind of characteristics do you not like in your teachers?
- Can you relate/recall any incidences whereby teachers were helpful to you or otherwise when you faced problems in school?



**Questionnaire**

This is not a test. The information you provide will be treated in strict confidence.

Please be as honest and frank as possible in your choice of answers.

**Student Demography****Gender:**

Male ☐  
Female ☐

**Race:**

Malay ☐  
Chinese ☐  
Indian ☐  
Others ☐

**Student Leadership:**

Prefect ☐  
Others ☐  
Not-applicable ☐

**Years studied in this school:**

0-1	<input type="checkbox"/>
2-3	<input type="checkbox"/>
4-5	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section A**

Please tick the appropriate box.

<b>Your liking for school:</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
I like my school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Teachers in this school are very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Facilities in this school are very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a lot of friends in this school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
This school organizes a lot of interesting activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section B**

Please tick the appropriate box.

<b>Your liking for teachers:</b>	<b>Please tick the appropriate box.</b>
I like all the teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>
I like some teachers only	<input type="checkbox"/>
I do not like any teachers	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Section C****Please tick the appropriate box.**

<b>Your liking for subjects:</b>	<b>Please tick the appropriate box.</b>
I like all the subjects	
I like some subjects only	
I do not like any subjects	

**Section D****What do you think of current status of your school discipline? Please tick the appropriate box.**

Very good (no complaints)	
Good /satisfactory (improving)	
Average (under control)	
bad (declining)	
Worst (real cause of concern)	

**Section E****How do you rate yourself in terms of discipline? Please tick the appropriate box.**

Very good/good	Always well behaved (no discipline problems at all)	
Average	Generally no discipline problem but sometimes minor misbehaviour	
Worst (Problematic student)	Always get involved in serious discipline problems	

**Section F:**

**How do your friends rate yourself in terms of discipline? Please tick the appropriate box.**

Very good/good	Always well behaved (no discipline problems at all)	
Average	Generally no discipline problem but sometimes show minor misbehaviour	
Worst (Problematic student)	Always get involved in serious discipline problems	

**Section G:**

**How do your teachers rate yourself in terms of discipline? Please tick the appropriate box.**

Very good/good	Always well behaved (no discipline problems at all)	
Average	Generally no discipline problem but sometimes show minor misbehaviour	
Worst (Problematic student)	Always get involved in serious discipline problems	

**Section H:****Discipline Problem**

Have you ever been involved / alleged/ suspected or punished for any of the following disciplinary problems?

<b>Discipline Problem</b>	<b>Admit doing/being involved in</b>	<b>Suspected of doing/being involved in</b>	<b>Purposely accused of doing</b>
Truancy			
Punctuality			
Class disruption			
Involved in a fight with other students			

<b>Discipline Problem</b>	<b>Admit doing/being involved in</b>	<b>Suspected of doing/being involved in</b>	<b>Purposely accused of doing</b>
Quarrel /Conflict with teachers			
Vandalism			
Bullying			
Graffiti			
Immoral behaviour: -smoking -drug abuse -theft -bringing pornographic materials to school -sexual misconduct			
Others (Please state)			

### **Section I:**

The following are some of the common teacher characteristics said to be liked by some students. They may or may not resemble the characteristics of your teachers. Are you in favour of the following teacher characteristics any way? (Do you expect teachers to conform to the following characteristics?)

<b>Perception of Good Teachers</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Some what agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Friendly and approachable					
Motivating and inspiring and exemplary					
Not strict on rules					
Possesses good teaching skills					
Always with a relaxed mood and jovial					
Caring, understanding and helpful					
Allow students to do their own work if students are not interested in what is being taught					

<b>Perception of Good Teachers</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Some what agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>
Too friendly or intimate with students					
Have high moral standards (mannerism and social interaction with students and colleagues)					
Intelligent / knowledgeable					
Good at monitoring student behaviour					
Ignore students who not interested in learning					
Always insist on rules, discipline and good behaviour					
Always insist on good grades and results					
Not strict on the submission of homework or attendance during extra classes					
Does not emphasize good results or grades					
Always gives lots of notes and assignments					
Shows exemplary behaviours					
Willing to listen to student problems/show concern for student grievances					
Pays individual attention to students during lessons in class					
Supportive and appreciative of student ability					
Punish students who are disobedient or those who violate school rules					
Enters the class well-prepared					

**Section J:**

Do you notice the following discipline problems among students in your school?

<b>Discipline Problem</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Some what agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Truancy/school absenteeism					
Truancy/ 'skipping classes'					
Punctuality					
Disobedience / rule violation					
Disrespect for teachers					
Bullying					
Vandalism					
Sexual misconduct					
Fights with other students					
Others					

**Section K:**

Generally are you satisfied/ happy with the following statements about your school? Please tick the appropriate box.

<b>Issues</b>	<b>Satisfied/happy</b>	<b>Not satisfied/unhappy</b>
Student behaviour and general discipline		
Teacher behaviour in general		
The role of teachers in teaching and learning		
The role of teachers in disciplining students		
Teacher attention towards me and other students		

**Section L:**

**In my opinion the causes of discipline problems among students in my school are:**

<b>Causes of discipline problems in the school</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Some what agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
Family background					
Peer pressure					
Media influence					
Lack of attention from school and teachers					
Students' individual behaviour					
Education system which does not cater to the needs of students					

**Section M:**

**In my opinion discipline problems in my school can be reduced if:**

<b>Issues / Suggestions</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Some what agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>
School must be stringent on rules					
Teachers show understanding and caring attitude to students					
School organize interesting activities for students					
Co-operation from parents					

**Section N:**

The following are some of the perceived characteristics that are sometimes associated with students' misbehaviour, strained student-teacher relationships or conflict situations with teachers. Read the items very carefully. Based on your observation, do you notice/ experience the following teacher characteristics in your school ? Tick the appropriate boxes to match your perceptions. Tick the last column YES, NO, NOT SURE if the said item/items already contributing/ adding to student discipline problems in your school.

<b>Issues/ Perceived characteristics</b>	<b>Sometimes some teachers</b>	<b>Sometimes most teachers</b>	<b>Sometimes all teachers</b>	<b>All the times some teachers</b>	<b>Bring implications to behaviour management</b>
Teachers are not in the class ( never enter, late for class/leave the class early)					
Teachers do their own work instead of teaching					
Lessons are monotonous and boring					
Teachers always pick on certain students					
Teachers pay attention to only students they like					
Teachers show discrimination towards some students					
Teachers do not pay attention to discipline matters (ignore students who misbehave)					
Teachers are not good at class control					
Teachers always send misbehaving students to the Discipline Teacher					
Teachers do not explain/answer when students ask questions					
Teachers shout unnecessarily/ or take their anger out on students					
Teachers use sensitive and hurtful words when disciplining students					



<b>Issues/ Perceived characteristics</b>	<b>Sometimes some teachers</b>	<b>Sometimes most teachers</b>	<b>Sometimes all teachers</b>	<b>All the times some teachers</b>	<b>Bring implications to behaviour management</b>
Not honest in their awarding of marks and grades					
Never give feedback on students work					
Never mark students' work/ assignments					
Never bother to remember students' names					
Never respond when students greet them.					
Never follow dress code or are shabbily dressed					
Tease/ridicule or insult when students ask questions					
Slander/ moan about their colleagues in front of students.					

\* Please indicate if you are willing to be considered for an interview with the researcher? If you agree to be interviewed, please state:

☐      ☐  
 Yes      /      No

Interviews will be about 20-30 minutes. You may withdraw from the interview if you wish to do so.

\* Please indicate if it is alright for the researcher to find out about your discipline status from your school records?

☐      ☐  
 Yes      /      No

Name : .....  
 Class : .....  
 School : .....

## Appendix- 6 Participants According to Gender and Ethnicity

Sample Schools	Boys		Girls	
	Prefects	Non-prefects	Prefects	Non-prefects
A	3	14	4	9
B	3	12	3	12
C	4	11	4	11
D	3	9	4	17
Total	13	52	15	49

### 1. \* Student Participants According to Gender and Status

Total number of boys = 65                      Total number of Prefects = 28  
 Total number of girls = 55                      Total number of non-prefects = 92

Total = 120

Schools	Ethnic Composition							
	Malays		Chinese		Indians		Others	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
A	2	4	12	7	0	5	0	0
B	3	4	10	5	7	0	1	0
C	13	15	1	0	0	1	0	0
D	18	8	3	4	1	0	0	0
Total	36	31	26	16	8	6	1	0

### 2. \* Student Participants According To Ethnic Composition

School code	Malays		Chinese		Indians		Others		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
A	185	98	485	387	187	45	3	1	1391
B	300	189	510	380	150	48	10	2	1586
C	610	560	45	55	15	25	1	1	1302
D	723	510	25	15	50	35	0	1	1359

### 3. \*Students' Gender and Ethnic Composition in the Four Sample Schools.

School code	Teachers' Gender and Ethnic Composition								
	Malays		Chinese		Indians		Others		Total
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
A	10	55	5	10	3	5	0	0	88
B	10	52	10	15	3	5	0	1	96
C	13	65	2	8	1	4	0	0	93
D	15	60	1	4	1	3	0	0	84

### 4. \*Teachers' Gender and Ethnic Composition in the Four Sample Schools.

## **Appendix-7**

### **Discipline Teachers**

As stipulated in the School Discipline Guide (SDG, 1988) the responsibilities of the Discipline Teachers include:

- Helping the principal to draw the rules and regulations based on the criteria stipulated by the State Education Department/ Ministry of Education
- Ensuring that the said rules and regulations are followed during every teaching time or school activity
- Acting as coordinators and mediators between parents/guardians and the school, in resolving student indiscipline
- Carrying out punishment procedures (including the execution of corporal punishment) to students who violate school rules as empowered by the principal
- Maintaining student discipline records and sending feedback to the Education Department when necessary
- Managing the school Prefect Board and its activities
- Acting as the Teacher Advisor for the School Crime Prevention Club
- Acting as mediator or liaison officer for and between school, parents and the police

**N.B:** The Discipline Teacher is basically a normal subject or class teacher whose core business is teaching and learning. Though Discipline Teachers are 'recommended' to teach lesser number of lessons compared to others, this privilege is subject to factors including the availability of staff.

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