

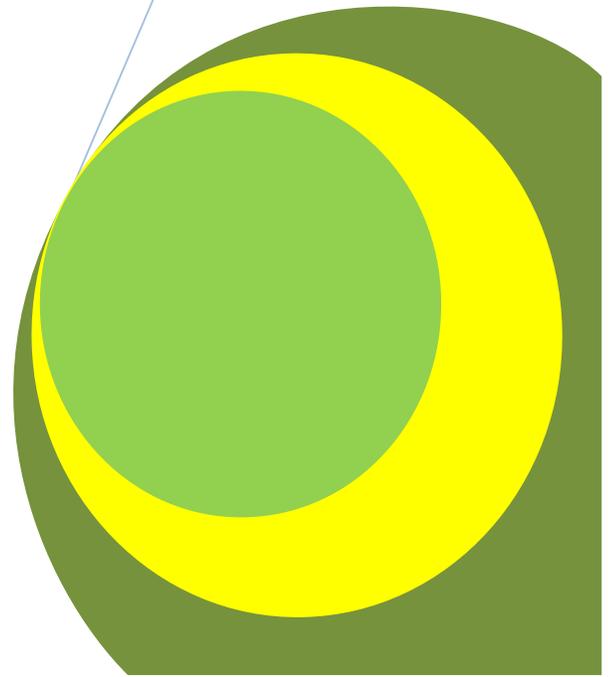
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To discipline or to punish? A critical discourse on schooling in South Africa

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Research Article

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ABSTRACT

In this paper we submit a critical, theoretical discourse of discipline and punishment in South African schools. The present situation in schools is indicative of a lack of discipline, which has led to a perpetuation of unsuccessful learning and teaching. The banning of corporal punishment has been criticised by many educators, many of whom continue to use it against the law, in the belief that it is necessary for the creation of a climate conducive to teaching and learning. We argue that the confusion as about the place of discipline and punishment in school is a definitional question. Hence, our interest in deliberating on the distinction between punishment and discipline in the context of South African schooling.

Keywords: democracy, punishing, teaching, learning, schooling.

INTRODUCTION

Discipline is a major challenge faced by educators and parents in most of the South African schools. Discourse on discipline in education often highlights corporal punishment or measures to infuse moral fibre (du Preez & Roux, 2010), and the concept of discipline is often suffused with references to corporal punishment (Parker-Jenkins, 1999). Colonial-apartheid South African schools were identified with harsh punishment and brutal discipline. In post-apartheid South Africa corporal punishment is unlawful and unjust; hence it is neither feasible nor desirable. Section 12 of the South African Constitution Act (108 of 1996) states that "everyone has the right not to be treated or punished in a cruel, inhuman or degrading way". In line with the Constitution, the National Education Policy Act of 1996 states that no person shall administer corporal punishment or subject a student to psychological or physical abuse at any educational institution". Hence the constitutional requirements call for the protection, perpetuation and safeguarding of children's rights. However, the South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996) is not explicit on the disciplinary strategies educators should adopt to handle learner indiscipline in schools (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010, p. 389).

The failure of government to suggest an immediate alternative form of punishment has led to the continuation of corporal punishment thereby causing conflict between teachers, learners, and parents. Consequently, indiscipline by students in South African schools is on the increase (Aziza, 2001; De Wet, 2007; Masitsa, 2008). Educators lament their loss of authority due to the abolition of corporal punishment since "disciplinary measures are devised to promote and maintain a well-disciplined school environment and simultaneously, prohibit and punish unacceptable conduct through measures that also encourage the culprits to improve their behaviour"(Van de Bank, 2000, pp. 310-315). Literature on discipline frequently highlights the strong connection between upholding discipline in classrooms and instilling certain values (Bickmore, 2003; du Preez & Roux, 2010; Masitsa, 2008; Parker-Jenkins, 1999; Vally, 2005; Wolhuter & Steyn, 2003). But what does it mean to discipline a person? Is discipline different or similar to punishment? This paper is a conceptual discourse on the nature of punishment of learners in South African schools.

Discipline- Punishment relationship

There are several dictionary meanings of discipline which appear to provide us with the popular definition of the notion. For instance, Collins Concise Dictionary(1999) suggests some related meanings such as order, teaching, severity, obedience, compel, restrain, restraint, punish while the Oxford Advanced Learners' Dictionary(1995, p.329) defines discipline as "...training or control, often using a system of punishment or chastisement, aimed at producing obedience to rules or the improvement of physical powers and self-control; the controlled, ordered behaviour resulting from training; the state of improved behaviour resulting from such training". Furthermore, The American Heritage Dictionary confers the following four definitions upon the concept of discipline as the most universal of the different meanings: "(1) the development of mental faculties (i.e., mental discipline) by instruction

and exercise; (2) training to act in accordance with established rules; (3) indoctrination to rule; and (4) training through suffering". It is clear from these definitions that various meanings can be associated with the concept of 'discipline'.

Discipline appears to be used in at least three senses; all matching the alternate dictionary definitions as shown above, but which are not sufficiently distinguished in everyday use. One view that discipline as an orderly or prescribed conduct, refers to the individual's ability to aim all of one's vigour, attention and capacity toward achieving ones' personal desired goals. Despite the source of the discipline being outside the self, it is still seen as focusing toward the achievement of goals and relates to associated regulative authority; for example the teacher, the chief or the judge. This view defines self-discipline. Discipline, in the second sense and in the context of education, is designed to maintain a form of order that will promote learning objectives and, providing a teacher with a classroom atmosphere conducive to teaching and learning. It is extrinsic in the sense that it involves "...complying with rule instrumental to goal...or rule is instrumental to order which helps achieve the goal"(Rich, 1982, p. 53). It involves the maintenance of order in a group, keeping the members of a group focused on a goal, preserving individuals from disturbing or harming each other ;and is believed to be possible largely through the threat of punishment. Punishment itself is the third sense of discipline. When adults administer punishment they are said to be "disciplining" the child. While in the first predication submission to rules is an instrument for achieving the desired goal and the second is respecting the rule in order to promote order necessary for attaining the desired goal. The third perspective views discipline as treatment that corrects or punishes, that is "...the means of rectifying errors and meting out appropriate punishment for wrongdoers"(Rich, 1982, p. 53). Punishment , in this sense, serves to force an individual to resist or remove certain unwanted cognitive or affective behaviours in order to become 'disciplined'(Van Wyk, 2000, p. 1).

But Paul Hirst and Richard S. Peters provide a more succinct picture by starting from the etymology of the concept discipline. For them, discipline "... is derived from the Latin word "disco" which means 'I learn'" and add that "the root idea is that of submission to rules that structure what has to be learnt"(Hirst & Peters, 1970, p. 125). Such rules may be necessary for learning something or they may be inherent in a way of thinking. From the above, it is clear that discipline involves learning and all "...education involves learning therefore education necessarily involves learning" (ibid). Discipline therefore is embedded in a learning situation and conveys the notion of submission to rules or some kind of order(Peters, 1966). Punishment, in its different forms, according to Hirst and Peters, is premised on three logically necessary conditions, namely;

- i. It must involve the intentional infliction of pain or some kind of unpleasantness
- ii. This must be inflicted on an offender as a consequence of a breach of rules
- iii. It must be inflicted by someone in authority (Hirst & Peters, 1970, p. 128).

The clear line that separates discipline from punishment will be drawn in later sections of this paper.

The teacher is assigned to a classroom with a legitimate power and authority, vested in him/her by the society through legislation and through customs(Maphumulo & Vakalisa, 2000). Such power and authority do not proceed unperturbed by the learners who consciously or unconsciously are involved in offering counter-strategies designed to serve their own interests in the classroom. They use ploys to limit the nature and extent of teacher domination which is feasible in class. The teacher's main concern is to regulate behaviour by exercising his authority, and if authority breaks down and they lose control and cooperation of the learners, "... they may resort to the use of appropriate force, i.e. punishment, in order to maintain standards of behaviour that are necessary so that education can take place"(Cleif, 1976, p. 131). Punishment in schools then comes in as an authoritarian approach to managing the classroom since learners need to be controlled by the educators. The purpose of punishment is to discourage misbehavior that defies the preventive measures taken by the teacher to create an environment that makes maximum learning possible. Maphumulo & Vakalisa (2000) further state that a necessary punishment must be meted or released out fairly and in proportion to the transgression for which it is given, and therefore, it must not be seen by a learner as a display of power by the teacher. Rather, it must be correctional and not confrontational. Hence, it must serve the interests of the learner rather than of the teacher. This implies that the learner must also know and understand the reasons for being punished even although he/she does not appreciate or accept punishment administered to him/her. The purpose of education, in this sense, is to make the learner understand that in real life human beings pay a price (are punished) for the bad choices they make. Hence, the failure to punish when it is due would make the teacher guilty of neglecting his/her duty. If the teacher and the learners have agreed on the consequence of breaking the negotiated and agreed rules of the class at the beginning of the year, those learners are responsible for their wrong doings and it is therefore necessary for the teacher to administer punishment on the offending learners.

In addition, Ruffin (2009)reaffirms that punishment in schools is imposed on learners who have done wrong or as a consequence of violating school rules. In most cases learners are punished for not completing their homework/class work, vandalism (damaging school property), late coming, cursing, bad language, bullying, stealing from others and also not paying attention in the class especially while learning and teaching is in progress(Maree & Cherian, 2004). To add, Vally asserts that punishment puts more emphasis on what a child must not do, and it also insists on obedience and condemns misbehaviour in a child as well, to discourage the wrong doers from repeating the offending behaviour (Vally, 2005). Punishment cannot be discussed in limited

terms or in the school context only, since we can still talk about parents or elders punishing their own children at home for similar transgressions to those of the school. These include violation of moral rules such as lying to their elders or disrespecting their elders in anyway. As a result, most parents tend to punish their children corporally in the name of discipline and social order.

But despite the abolishment of corporal punishment in South African schools, not all teachers abided by this ban, and corporal punishment is still in practice in many schools. This behaviour is prevalent among those referred to as *traditional practitioners (teachers)* who firmly believe in the old adage: 'spare the rod and spoil the child' in its literal sense. Such teachers argue that the ever-growing disregard for the authority by young people is a result of the discontinuation of corporal punishment, both at home and at school (Maphumulo and Vakalisa, 2000). But the SASA stipulates that corporal punishment is strictly prohibited in schools, and those who continue using it in the name of discipline and of social order are committing a criminal offence and are therefore liable for prosecution in the court of law. From the definitions above, the abandonment of corporal punishment does not necessarily mean aborting discipline or those learners will no longer be punished for misbehavior. Rather, it is an implication that other disciplinary ways must be adopted rather than holding on to the traditional form of punishment, that is, corporal punishment. In the next section, we focus on the forms of punishment common in South African schools as well as the physical, emotional and psychological effects it has on learning.

Forms and effects of punishment

There are numerous forms of punishment that teachers can select to curtail the misbehaviour of learners, and some of them are more acceptable than others (Maphumulo and Vakalisa, 2000). Physical punishment (corporal punishment) is one of the punishment commonly used in school and at home. Corporal punishment is any action that hurts an individual in the name of discipline or as a consequence of criminal activities. Corporal punishment in schools refers to the infliction of pain by a teacher or other educational officials (principals) upon the body of the student as a penalty for doing something which has been disapproved by the school (Morrell, 1994). It involves the use of physical force with the intention of causing a child to experience a pain such as *spanking, slapping, paddling, grabbing* a child roughly or hitting a child with objects such as a hair brush, or board (Cicognani, 2004). The purpose is to correct or control the child's bad behaviour rather than to injure; although incidents of injury after meting out corporal punishment have been recorded.

Another form of punishment is emotional punishment which refers to an action of adults to deliberately cause emotionally distress to children in the name of discipline. This includes punishment where a teacher encourages other children to hurt another child emotionally (Ruffin, 2009). Furthermore, the emotional pain of this nature includes an educator (teacher or principal) calling on the learners to ridicule a fellow learner and the distress caused by threats, and other hurtful, frightening or humiliating and shaming words (Ruffin, 2009). In addition, it includes screaming or shaking a fist at a child's face or shutting a child into a dark cupboard or unfair discrimination of a child or the refusal to communicate/respond to the child over a significant period of time, while at the same time encouraging other teachers to isolate a child and ignore him/her as well as encouraging other learners to isolate and ignore that learner who is accused of misconduct within the school (Ruffin, 2009).

Detention is one form of punishment which is employed in different contexts. Richard defines detention in the legal context as a state of being detained in an official custody especially as a political prisoner (Richard, 2003). However, detention in schools is referred to as the form of punishment in which a learner is kept in school after hours (Richard, 2003). On most occasions detention takes place during a break period, after the end of school day or on non-school day, such as Saturday. Maphumulo & Vakalisa (2000) argue that detention is one of the most detested forms of punishment which takes place at a time when learners are physiologically and psychologically preparing for break from classroom work and in this form of punishment, the learner remain in the classroom while others are playing or having lunch or are going home.

Richard (2003) further argues that detention in schools also takes different procedures. Sometimes it requires that a learner go to a certain area of the school premises on a specified time during school day (either at break or after school). Many teachers also detain learners by ordering them to stand against the wall facing away from the writing board, or either ordering a learner to just sit on the desk or floor in a convenient and quiet manner without talking to anyone in the class until the end of the lesson (Richard, 2003). A learner may also be asked to bring a homework book, sit quietly or perform punitive or non-punitive task usually to decrease the boredom. This could be in the form of an academic activity, for example writing an essay or answering questions on why detention was given or copying out paragraphs from the text, or writing out lines. The teacher monitors the learner during detention in all its forms cited above. But the question is: Is the teacher, in the process of detaining the misbehaving learner not detaining himself/herself as well? Detention, however can be ineffective when habitually used, and learners need to be informed beforehand about the implications of the punishment to be employed if they misbehave (Maphumulo & Vakalisa, 2000).

Time-out is also one form of punishing learners whereby a learner is required to stay in the time-out-room for some chosen time or until undesirable behaviour is terminated. It usually takes place in a room away from the regular classroom and free of stimuli which might encourage the offending learner to commit another like or unlike offence in order to be there again. Time-out is also described as a behaviour reduction procedure in which learners are denied access to all opportunities for reinforcement, dependent upon displaying their unbecoming

behaviour (Edwards, 2000). The philosophy behind this punishment is that human beings are by nature social beings, and learners are no exception, meaning that for a learner being excluded from the rest of the class is a form of deprivation and may serve as punishment on its own (Maphumulo & Vakalisa, 2000).

One other form of punishment that is employed in schools is the withdrawal of privileges. Withdrawal of privileges is simple punishment which is based on the philosophy of withholding activities which offending learners have to participate in or that which learners likely to do at school. The argument for this form of punishment is that if a learners behave well, these activities are regularly done and when a learner consistently misbehaves, the privileges of participation are taken away (Porteus, Vally, & Ruth, 2001). For example, absolutely denying or preventing a disobedient learner from participating in any sporting activity following from a pattern of misbehaviour. The withdrawal of privileges makes learners feel or experience a sense of loss and deficit especially where learners enjoy the participation in sports, the school choir and other social events, such as interschool debates and athletic games (Maphumulo & Vakalisa, 2000). The probability of being denied participation in some of those activities may invite a learner to reconsider the way they behave before placing themselves in a position that might call for their isolation.

Suspension is a punishment measure employed in South African schools. It involves a mandatory leave assigned to a learner as a form of punishment and it can last from day one to several weeks, and during suspension a student is not allowed to attend regular lesson (Richard, 2003). Suspension, like other forms of punishment, is received after one has violated rules and regulations and historically, this would have meant sending them home (Porteus et al., 2001). Richards differentiates two types of suspension in use in schools namely; in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. The former requires a student to report to school as usual but sit in a special room all day while the latter bars the learner from being on the school premises (Richard, 2003). During suspension, students might be requested to complete the work for which they receive no credit. Like in detention, any educator (teacher or principal) who suspends a learner in school should make sure that learner's parents or guardians are notified of the reasons for suspension.

Expulsion or exclusion, is one form of punishment given to a learner especially students who are a threat to the school as whole. It involves the removal of the student permanently from the school and this is an ultimate last resort, when all disciplinary methods have failed (Glasser, 2001). Expulsion applies in the case of very serious offences and only the Head of the Department of Education may expel a learner from a public school. This implies that no educator (principal or teachers) has the authority to expel a learner from school. The SASA 84 of 1996: Guidelines For Code of Conduct for Learners, Section 12, states that "a governing body may, after fair hearing suspend any learner who has been found guilty of contravening stipulations of the Code of Conduct for a period of one week; or for a reasonable period not exceeding one week, pending a decision by the Head of Department on the recommendation of the governing body as to whether or not the learner is to be expelled from the school" (Schools: Law & Governance, 2011). In addition, The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996: Guidelines for Code of Conduct for Learners, Section 11, clearly endorses the offences that may lead to suspension including the following:

- Possession, threat or use of a dangerous weapon,
- fighting, assault,
- theft or possession of stolen property including test or examination papers prior to the writing of tests or examinations and
- criminal or oppressive behaviour such as rape and gender based harassment ,and/or repeated violations of school rules or the code of conduct or
- the infringement of examination rules or unlawful action,
- vandalism or destroying or defacing school property, and thus a learner can be suspended on the grounds of falsely identifying oneself or harmful graffiti ,hate speech, sexism and racism (Schools: Law & Governance, 2011).

The question then is: what are the effects of punishment on teaching and learning?

It is very evident that any form of punishment given among individuals has its own positive or negative effects. Given the idea that punishment reduces misbehaviour among children, therefore, particular action may serve as both punishment and reward when inflicted differently on children and even on the same child when given at different occasions. For example, suspension from school may be a severe form of punishment for a child, but for another, it may be justified.

Punishment often has little or no effects on the misbehaviour, and takes the responsibility for the misbehaviour away from the child. A child, who is often punished with spankings, shouts, and threats, may learn how to avoid these punishments simply by not misbehaving in that particular way within the sight of the person who punishes. There is no guarantee, however, that the child's behaviour will be changed overtime or when he/she is away from the person who metes out the punishment punishes. Research on the ill-effects of punishment in school has shown that punishment increases the likelihood of student withdrawal from the punishing situation and increases the likelihood of tardiness, truancy, and dropping out of school and also strains the relationship between the teacher and the student by making the student more likely to avoid the

teachers (Mabeba & Prinsloo, 2000; Maphosa & Shumba, 2010; Morrell, 2001; Mosher, 2008). Punishment serves as a negative model of aggressive behaviour for both the punished student and others, because it just actively demonstrates that the use of force is a method to reduce conflict. Punishment, especially corporal punishment, has never been an effective measure or a successful strategy to achieve discipline; instead it promotes irresponsibility, instill fear among learners, passiveness and reduces learners' commitment to learning. With physical punishment, the improvement of learners' conduct becomes temporary. As long as the teacher is around learners will behave responsibly, but as soon as the educator leaves the scene (classroom), learners behave otherwise. Corporal punishment by parents on their children adversely affects their academic performance and produces low self-esteem, and anti-social behaviours (Morrell, 2001). In addition, punishment also have some educational-psychological side-effects which are probably as harmful as the physical effects and these include an increase in anxiety, fear, damage to functioning of the ego, creation or enhancement of loss, helpless and humiliation, impaired academic achievement and also self-destructive behavior (Maree & Cherien, 2004).

Critique

The banning of corporal punishment has been criticised by many educators, many of whom persist in its illegal use based on the belief that it is necessary for the creation of a climate conducive to teaching and learning. The variety of definitions of the concept "discipline" tends to obscure what is actually happening. Some forms of "discipline" lead directly away from the achievement of the most highly cherished virtue, the self-discipline, which makes possible the converging of all ones abilities toward achieving personally desired goals. But in all the perspectives, the common strand is that discipline is to train or develop by instruction especially by self-control. How then does this understanding accommodate the philosophy of consensus, non-violence and negotiation? To what extent do the above conceptions resonate with educating the "good" citizen in making political choices and pedagogical goals (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004, p. 1) in order to produce a kind of personally responsible, participatory citizen? How far are these meanings consistent with Gutmann's (1999) theory of deliberative democracy in which education should aim "...to teach the skills and virtues of democratic deliberation within a social context where educational authority is shared among parents, citizens, and professional educators... (one) that teaches children to deliberate" (Gutmann, 1999, p. xiv)? How does such a moral establishment grant the free manifestation and shared consideration of ideas? In other words, how do schools become "...one of the most important sites of rehearsal for deliberation" (Gutmann & Thompson, 2004, p. 35) if teachers and others in authority insist on instilling unreasoned conformity rules?

We submit that question of *what type of citizens are our schools attempting to develop*, is at the heart of the whole business of discipline. Do we want to create democratic schools; schools as sites designed for cultivating learners who possess a positive sense of self-respect and who are self-disciplined? Or, on the other hand, do we wish to have autocratic, punitive, custodial schools that contract student self-worth while turning out students who behave only out of fear of punishment while in the presence of an authority figure? Inculcation with the values and skills that sustain a society is deeply embedded in the nature and purpose of the society's educational institutions. Hence the "...education of the young is a standard societal value and each society defines the character of citizenship as well as how the young are to be brought up into citizenship" (Mosher, 2008, p. 4). We content that the school as a socialisation agent should also consider reforming behaviour that is not tolerated in the community. Hence there is also need to consider punishment "as reformatory in nature ... (in that) teachers, in exercising their authority should lead children towards an understanding of the rules of society and their own school rules" (Cleif, 1976, p. 132).

We support Freire's view that discipline is necessary for effective action in the social world (Freire, 1998). Hence he writes "true discipline does not exist in muteness of those who have been silenced but in the stirrings of those who have been challenged, in doubt of those who have been prodded, and in the hope of those who have been awakened" (Freire, 1998, p. 86). For Foucault (1995), discipline is a repressive operation by which individuals are seasoned into productive labour. It is "... a policy of coercions that act upon the body, a calculated manipulation of its elements, its gestures, its behaviour. Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, docile bodies" (Foucault, 1995, p. 138). Discipline in the Foucauldian sense is an externally-imposed way of gaining control through the use of the power and authority one has over others. But we argue that when punishment is being administered, we should refer to it as punishment and not discipline. While conformity of the punished child to the parent or teacher's goals is achieved or appears to be achieved, from the adult's point of view, with everyone working toward a goal, the goal is the adult's goal, not the child's, and the moral likely to be learnt by the child is conformity, not self-discipline.

Self-discipline is a consequence of individual experience, along with the experience of achievement which self-discipline makes possible. It must be a satisfying experience that the child will want to recur. Through this the child secures and enlarges the motivation necessary for self-discipline and learns how to organize his life so that success is made possible. As Hirst and Peters wrote, "self-discipline is thought to be educationally desirable because the submission to rules springs from the individual's own decisions in which some kind of autonomy is displayed" (Hirst & Peters, 1970, pp. 125-126). They add that it "...is only valuable as a means which is intrinsically related to what is thought desirable" (p.127). But, this begs the question, as Mosher (2008) asks:

“...at what age is it appropriate for a child to begin making informed decisions about how to act, how to evaluate the behaviour of self and others, and even, in rare cases, when to disobey”(p. 181)?

True democracy implies peace among a diverse group of members who make up the whole of the community including the school community. For Dewey

A society which makes provision for participation in its good of all its members on equal terms and which secures flexible readjustment of its institutions through interaction of the different forms of associated life is in so far democratic. Such a society must have a type of education which gives individuals a personal interest in social relationships and control, and the habits of mind which secure social changes without introducing disorder (Dewey, 1916, p. 115).

We acknowledge that for South Africa to achieve the ideals of a democratic state that it aims at, there is need for schools to cultivate in the young a culture of participatory involvement. But participation is only productive if members act responsibly by submitting themselves willingly and with good reason to the goods of a democracy. Hence schools are tasked with the responsibility of inculcating in children an informed ability to conform to rules from an early age. The intentional infliction of pain on offending learners, though a necessary evil, can only help to produce hardened citizens with a lost self –direction, self-respect and self-discipline.

Discipline is distinguished from punishment, order, reward, coercion and control. It is active, rather than passive in that since “the person is the doer of the action, the process employs tasks and is goal directed...it features constitutive rules and instruction...”(Rich, 1982, p. 171). Hence a disciplined person “... has orderly habits, is able to observe rules of conduct, follows instructions properly, and exercises self-control in learning tasks... (and) also manifests appropriate intellectual development by completing desirable tasks successfully and fulfilling worthwhile standards” (ibid). But when teachers control their classrooms, does the process fit into the definition of discipline following from the preceding criteria. We hold that only punishment may well have the coercive features. In some instances control may be so expensive to a point where discipline is precluded. But in instances where the teacher admits that control is just a transient phase that will progress into a more fruitful classroom setting, then the suppressing of authentic discipline can be circumvented.

From the above, we agree with Hirst and Peters (1970) that discipline, in its different forms, either conceptually or empirically necessary to education. They explain:

It is conceptually necessary to it in that some forms of discipline are part of our understanding of ‘education’ because of the connections between ‘education’ and ‘learning’ and ‘learning’ and ‘discipline’. It is empirically necessary for the enterprise of education to proceed”(Hirst & Peters, 1970, pp. 127-128).

The question then is: is punishment obligatory to education in either case described above? Can learning not take place in the absence of punishment? As discussed earlier, punishment involves the intentional infliction of pain on an offender by someone in authority. On the other hand, discipline is not necessarily about the infliction of pain neither does it spring from someone in authority. We however, argue that punishment proper *may* function as a device of underscoring a rule, denoting it out as critical. Punishment, in this sense, is a “necessary mischief”(Hirst & Peters, 1970, p. 129). In the school context, if teaching and learning are to proceed, discipline in the sense of general conditions of order has to be upheld. Teachers are often forced to have recourse to punishment when learners are determined to disrupt the proceedings by employing unpleasant though predictable forms of punishment as described above, in order to deter potential offenders. But in the case of South Africa, is the banning of corporal punishment the best way to go? Our position is best informed by Peters (1966) who writes thus:

The truth of the matter is that punishment in a school is at best a necessary nuisance. It is necessary as a deterrent, but its positive educational value is dubious. Education cannot go on unless minimum conditions of order obtain, and punishment may on occasions be necessary in order to secure such conditions (Peters, 1966, p. 279).

CONCLUSION

We made attempts to precisely discuss the distinction between punishment and discipline in the context of South African schools. Different forms of punishment were identified and discussed. We showed how punishment is inevitable and justifiable on the grounds of wrongdoing by a particular individual. Teachers in schools are the victims of behavioral or discipline problems in their area of work (school/class) and with the banning of corporal punishment in schools, they have been exposed to violent abuse by learners. This does mean that their power or authority to maintain order and discipline have been swept away, but it is a turn point where new modes of dealing with behavioral challenges are to be developed within the context of teaching and learning. Parents are partners in education, which means that some of the behavioral problems can be dealt with better through parental intervention. We argued in support of the South African Schools Act 84, section 6 (6.1) of 1996, which states that “the ultimate responsibility for learners’ behaviour rests within their parents or guardians and that it is expected that parents will support the school”. This might help in dealing with different challenges of discipline in classes. Discipline is necessary where learners see good sense to follow the rules in order to learn. Learning can only take place in an environment where participants have good reasons for submitting to those rules. But to

insist on submission to rules simply on the basis of respect for authority in the classroom is tantamount to the emergence of an autocratic citizenry.

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