



Reconsidering the role of power, punishment and discipline in South African schools

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Abstract

This article examines the role of discipline and punishment in South African schools and seeks to interrogate the underlying power relations that guide teaching and learning in South Africa. It deconstructs the pre-occupation with discipline, power and punishment in South African schools in terms of the theoretical framework provided by Michel Foucault in his work entitled "Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison" (1975) which was translated as "Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison" (1977). It was Foucault who reminded us that the modern school is based on Prussian military ideals of punctuality, discipline, neatness and submissiveness to authority. Foucault tends to see schooling as one side of "corriger", which is to punish or to teach. Education as "correction" is therefore regarded as the antipode of authoritarian punishment. Foucault draws attention to the subtle tactics and constraints beneath the surface of proclaimed bourgeois freedom. It was found that in South African schools the problem of authoritarian punishment is still rife. From the readings of Foucault's works suggestions are made for changes to the system and to teachers' mental attitude in order to move to a more constructive way of maintaining power and discipline.

'n Herbesinning van die rol van mag, straf en dissipline in Suid-Afrikaanse skole

Opsomming

Hierdie artikel ondersoek die rol van dissipline en straf in Suid-Afrikaanse skole en ondersoek die onderliggende gesagsverhoudings wat opvoeding en leer in Suid-Afrika onderlê. Die artikel probeer om die Suid-Afrikaanse skole se preokkupasie met dissipline, gesag en straf te dekonstrueer in terme van die teoretiese raamwerk van Michel Foucault soos dit verskyn in sy werk, "Surveiller et punir: naissance de la prison" (1975), in Engels vertaal as "Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison" (1977). Dit is Foucault wat ons herinner dat die moderne skool gebaseer is op die Pruisiese militêre ideaal van stiptelikheid, dissipline, netheid, en onderdanigheid aan ouoriteit. Foucault sien skoling aan die een kant as "corriger", met ander woorde om te straf of op te voed. Onderwys as "regstelling" word dus gesien as die teenvoeter van ouoritêre straf. Foucault vestig die aandag op die subtile taktiek en beperkings wat onder die oppervlak van sogenaamde bourgeois-vryheid teenwoordig is. Daar word gevind dat ouoritêre straf steeds 'n algemene probleem in Suid-Afrikaanse skole is. Vanuit Foucault se werke word voorstelle gemaak vir veranderings in die sisteem en in onderwysers se denkwyse om na 'n meer konstruktiewe wyse van gesag- en dissiplinehandhawing te beweeg.

1. Introduction

Corporal punishment was used as a means to instill discipline in South African schools for decades. The teacher had authoritarian power to control his/her class in any way he/she deemed fit. Most teachers had full control over their classrooms – but often in a hostile and authoritarian way. Teachers believed that power and authority were the bases for control and discipline (Mokhele, 2006: 148).

In 1996, however, the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996) stated specifically in section 10 that:

- 10.1) No person may administer corporal punishment at school to a learner.
- 10.2) Any person who contravenes subsection (1) is guilty of an offence and liable on conviction to a sentence that could be imposed for assault.

Teachers in general felt disempowered after the proclamation of this act. They believed that without corporal punishment, discipline could not be maintained. They believed that learners would not show respect nor develop the discipline to work hard unless they got a hiding or were threatened with getting a hiding. The teachers believed that their power had been taken away (Naong, 2007:283).

Society in general, and teachers specifically, believe that South African schools are suffering from disciplinary problems mainly because of the abandonment of corporal punishment. The lack of discipline is a general point of discussion in schools and society (Otto, 2000:2). Many reasons are offered to explain the so-called breakdown in discipline. Newspaper articles cite a litany of social ills – chief of which would be a shortage of role models, as well as the lack of parental involvement in schools. Discussions with teachers and postgraduate students in education overwhelmingly indicate that the abolition of corporal punishment is viewed as the main reason why schools experience a lack of discipline.

In schools, discipline is generally regarded as a measure by means of which authority is maintained in order to control behaviour when learners reveal non-conformist or non-submissive behaviour. According to Otto (2000:2) these measures can be seen as authoritarian although the enforcers do not share this view. They regard corporal punishment as quick and effective discipline. Kubeka (quoted by Naong, 2007:286) reports that teachers think that other ways of disciplining require too much time, patience and skill.

Traditionally, school discipline has been more concerned with punishment than reward and positive discipline (Naong, 2007:284). Otto (2000:3) argues that the traditional judgemental and intolerant approach to discipline does not offer any solution. Traditionally a reactive form of punishment was proclaimed, indicating immediate and scrupulous punishment of anyone who transgresses the slightest rule, thereby demonstrating authority's intolerance towards problem behaviour. According to Badenhorst *et al.* (2007:306) research done nationally and internationally points to the detrimental long-term effects of reactive forms of punishment such as corporal punishment, aggressive verbal reprimands, expulsion and exclusion.

The traditional forms of discipline and punishment are no longer acceptable in South African schools due to students' awareness of their human rights, as well as the democratic dispensation (with its emphasis on individual freedom, human rights, and freedom of

speech) in which schools are functioning (Van der Walt & Oosthuizen, 2008:380-381; Badenhorst *et al.*, 2007:304).

It seems that the abolishment of traditional forms of punishment, especially corporal punishment, left a gap. Teachers lack the skills to bridge the gap between reactive and pro-active discipline (Badenhorst *et al.*, 2007:303). They seem unable to apply positive forms of discipline, and still see their power vested in authoritarian ways of inculcating both “respect” and submissiveness in learners. Many teachers persist with a traditional approach to discipline as an endeavour whereby authority is maintained by controlling behaviour through oppressive disciplinary methods (Otto, 2000:2).

In October 2000, the South African Minister of Education released a document entitled: *Alternatives to corporal punishment: the learning experience*. It stated that the banning of corporal punishment in schools was based on the premise that violence begets violence. Learners are often exposed to violence at home and it is argued that if they are exposed to it at school as well, they might want to solve all future problems with violence (Unisa, 2001).

The above-mentioned document describes discipline as a constructive, corrective, rights-based, educative practice – whilst punishment is seen as punitive, destructive and anti-educational (Unisa, 2001).

The alternative way of implementing discipline in the classroom is regarded as establishing ground rules, implementing the rules in a consistent way, getting to know the learners in the class, managing the learning environment enthusiastically and professionally, and allowing learners to take responsibility (Unisa, 2001). Teachers, however, struggle to change their paradigm of practising authoritarian discipline in the classroom to a more constructive way of disciplining learners.

The authors of this article believe that discipline is necessary in schools, but it should be practised in a positive, constructive way. All stakeholders should sit together to find a solution.

Through a literature study the authors examine the role of discipline and punishment in South African schools and seek to interrogate the underlying power relations that guide teaching and learning in South Africa. They try to deconstruct South African schools’ pre-occupation with discipline, power and punishment in terms of the theoretical framework provided by Michel Foucault in his work entitled, *Sur-*

veiller et punir: naissance de la prison (1975), which was translated as *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison* (1977).

2. Punishment and power

2.1 Punishment

Corporal punishment, which dominated South African disciplinary systems for decades, is seen as a system whereby a supervising adult deliberately inflict pain upon a child for inappropriate behaviour or language. Teachers would use a wide variety of methods to punish the learner – they would hit various parts of the learners' bodies with various objects to cause pain and fear (Naong, 2007:285). Corporal punishment did, however, not result in long-term changes in behaviour. It did not teach desirable behaviour, but only what should not be done in order to avoid punishment (Otto, 2000:2). Corporal punishment could in the long run lead to the release of pent-up resentment and rage in an inappropriate violent manner (Masitsa, 2008:242). The South African education system has been trying to change to a more humane system where the well-being of all learners is of the utmost importance. Unfortunately teachers lack the skills and need assistance to leave the traditional system behind them (Naong, 2007:284). Teachers should attend workshops to learn how to discipline their classes without unnecessary violence.

Though physical punishment was part of the “normal” educational tools of the premodern world contemporary pedagogy in a post-modern world abolishes the overt punishment and sometimes replaces it with silent unconscious methods of punishment (Pongratz, 2007:29). In line with the humanist reform which Foucault (1977:13) refers to, punishment is not focused on the body anymore, but souls and minds become the focus of correction – targeted individuals are treated not through the means of pain, but through signs and representations (Hook, 2007:13). Marshall concurs with this view when he says:

The abandonment of corporal punishment and other overt exercises of power do not entail decreasing exercises of power over the young but may only indicate a shift in technologies and programs of power ... In these programs, governance is sought not by the structuring of the disciplinary block through power strategies but by, for example, turning morality itself into a set of skills, desirable attitudes and dispositions, in which individuals can be exercised, examined and normalised. (Marshall, 1989: 109.)

Power is therefore exercised indirectly through education practices and in this sense education becomes the application of power. Foucault seldom speaks directly about education, but many of his ideas are applicable to and could help in an authoritarian regime in schools like those in South Africa. In *Discipline and punish: the birth of the prison*, (1977), Foucault explains the changes in the punishment system in prisons from torture, as a public spectacle, to a more humane system. In the judicial system knowledge of the offence, the offender and the law became important conditions to ground judgement in truth (Foucault, 1977:32-69).

Foucault (1977:106; Hook, 2007:11) described the humanist reformers who challenged the sovereign's absolute say in matters of punishment. The humanists advocated a "curative" or restorative way of punishment that was taken to be the means of the correct re-ordering of social life. "Psychological knowledge," notes Foucault (1977:99; Hook 2007:12) "take[s] over the role of casuistic jurisprudence". The delinquent becomes an object to be known. Knowledge thus becomes a crucial component of power.

Knowledge of the subject, as well as the modalities of knowledge (how knowledge is structured), is important for power-knowledge relationships. Punishment thus becomes an instrument to transform a person, and should have a certain corrective technique within it. There should be a special relationship between the individual who is punished and the individual who punishes him/her (Foucault, 1977:104).

In schools it is important that a teacher and learners get to know each other in order to establish a relationship. Relationships should not be forced by power, but should be invitational. The misuse of power could be an indication of forcing one's will on learners despite resistance (Mokhele, 2006:149). The *Norms and standards for educators* (Department of Education, 2000:14) by the South African Department of Education, describes the relationship between teachers and learners as follows:

The educator will practise and promote a critical, committed and ethical attitude towards developing a sense of respect and responsibility towards others ... within the school, the educator will demonstrate an ability to develop a supportive and empowering environment for the learner and respond to the educational needs of learners ...

Establishing and fostering an environment as suggested above requires pedagogic knowledge. Foucault (Smart, 2002) says that the

regulation of behaviour is accompanied by the development of knowledge of individuals, thus, an apparatus of knowledge, as well as an apparatus for transforming individuals.

2.2 Power-knowledge

Foucault believes that power is inscribed on children at school, although the form of power and the technologies of power have changed through the ages.

Foucault's point is that these changes represent ever and more subtle refinements of technologies of power based upon knowledge which has itself [been] produced within or used by the discipline of education. (Marshall, 1989:108.)

In this regard one could refer to a clearly didactical approach to teaching, where a teacher controls the classroom situation and is quite openly exercising his/her power as a teacher. In a socio-constructivist approach the teacher acts more like a facilitator, and exercises *indirect* control of the learning environment. Exercising power in such a way is far more subtle.

Educational philosophers often regard power as a tool to subject the individual to somebody else's will by using either physical or psychological coercion. Power, seen in this way, is repressive and does not serve the interests of those subjected to it (Marshall, 1995:23).

Foucault (1977) uses his work, *Discipline and punish*, to illustrate the theme of modern power or power-knowledge as he calls it. Foucault sees traditional philosophical views on power as concerned with discussions of contractual and legal limits to power, and the Marxist conception thereof as focused on the role power plays in simultaneously maintaining the relations of production and class domination. Foucault claims that power seen in this way, is treated as a commodity which can be owned and exchanged. Ownership thus determines who has the power (Marshall, 1989:103). Foucault is not interested in "who" and "what" questions about power, but rather in "how" power is exercised (Foucault, 1977:9-17; 1988a:102; Marshall, 1995:24).

Foucault does not perceive power as domination. He is concerned with power relations in various settings such as the school. It is all about how individuals direct the behaviour of one another, and themselves. Individuals in relations of power, other than domination, can align themselves with certain goals and coordinate their actions in particular ways. These relations are more consensual and recipro-

cal. The individuals have the freedom to make choices (Wong, 2007:1-91; Smart, 2002). Power is expressed in a certain type of relation between individuals. Freedom plays an important role, because there is no power if the potential for refusal or revolt does not exist (Foucault, 1988b:84). Foucault proclaims that the possibility of resistance is an elementary condition to any power relation that is not authoritarian (Foucault, 1977:73-74; Hook, 2007:84). Although the teacher is an authority figure as far as knowledge is concerned, this knowledge should not lead to authoritarianism. The possibility to be challenged should always be present.

Power is like a stream of energy flowing through all living organisms and society. Individuals do not control power. Power is at the very least bidirectional – it entails “simultaneous relations of being *subject to* and *subject of* particular relations of force”; there is thus a possibility that those “subjected to power may also, paradoxically, play a significant role in the functioning of that power which acts upon them” (Hook, 2007:78; Foucault, 1977:156). According to Foucault (1977), power only exists when power relationships come into play. Foucault (1977:195-223; Willers, 1985:202) views power not as localised in the hands of a dominant person or group, but as it circulates in a network of techniques where individuals both exercise and submit to power.

Power can thus be a positive force. Power does not act upon beliefs, but upon actions and can be resisted. It acts upon bodies, changing abilities and capabilities, producing docile useful bodies through methods that might be called “disciplines” (Foucault, 1977:135; Marshall, 1989:105).

Later in his life Foucault redefined power to include *agency* as self-regulation. He described the self as an individual who is continually in the process of constituting him-/herself as an ethical subject, through both technologies of the self and ethical self-constitution, and a notion of power that is not simply based upon repression, coercion, or domination. He saw individuals “as self-determining agents capable of challenging and resisting the structures of domination in modern society” (Besley, 2007:158-159). Foucault uses the term *self-care* (Foucault, 1988b:259; 2001). The emphasis is placed upon self-government, indicating the government of individuals through self-examination and the guidance of conscience that are associated with the constitution and transformation of the self (Smart, 2002). Various regulatory practices (“technologies of the self”) and struggles to overcome obstacles that threaten self-mastery are used in trying to reach perfection. The self is not merely raw

material or docile useful bodies, but it is also capable of a moral/ethical dimension. We are not helpless objects formed and moved by power, but individuals/subjects who can choose to respond positively or negatively to practices of power or normalisation (Danaher *et al.*, 2000).

According to the authors all people have to take responsibility to develop their own “self”, but teachers have the task of trying to inspire all learners in their classes to develop their “self”. The task cannot be done with authoritarian discipline.

3. Power and discipline

Discipline is often associated with teaching appropriate behaviour, upholding certain convictions and societal norms. However, in South Africa discipline was historically unfortunately also associated with the notion of “not sparing the rod”. Disciplinary measures regularly meant punitive measures used against learners – this type of disciplinary action did not encourage a corrective experience. On the other hand, when discipline is curative and corrective students can experience it as contributing to their self-actualisation and self-empowerment (Masitsa, 2008:242). Teachers should realise that learners can respond either negatively or positively to corporal punishment. Even a seemingly positive response may turn out to be negative in the long-term when a learner chooses to use violence to exercise power in a different context.

In South Africa the essence of “good” discipline in education means the creation of a learning atmosphere where teachers can teach and learners can learn – and where respect is of the utmost importance. Teachers are, however, challenged with maintaining discipline without unnecessary “harshness, encouraging reasonable moral thought and behaviour without indoctrination and maintaining order and control within the classroom without adopting a pose of infallibility” (Naong, 2007:287). According to the authors of this article, educational practitioners should look for alternatives that will work in practice in a diverse society such as the South African society.

Keith Hoskins (quoted by Roth, 1992:686) traces the word *discipline* back to the Latin *disci* (*to instruct*) and *p[er]u[er]sina* (*children*), which simply means “putting learning into children”. It was the means by which a body of knowledge was conveyed to children. In modern times, however, knowledge became associated with an activity, rather than a fixed body of knowledge that is transmitted. According to Van der Walt and Oosthuizen (2008:378-379), the word *discipline*

has its origin in the Latin *discipulus* (*learner*) and the infinitive *discere* (*to learn*). The origin of the word indicates that discipline entails leading learners to learn, like being a disciple of a master with wisdom to share. In recent times the concept discipline has become associated with control and self-control.

According to Foucault (2007) discipline is a way of exercising power by means of techniques, such as the grouping of people in defined spaces, classification and individualisation. It involves constant surveillance. Discipline is the mechanism through which control over a social body is exercised.

How to oversee someone, how to control their conduct, their behaviour, their aptitudes, how to intensify their performance, multiply their capacities, how to put them in place where they will be most useful: this is what discipline is ... (Foucault, 2007:159).

Foucault uses the word *discipline* in more than one sense. He draws two senses of the word together, namely to talk about a subject area and its conceptual structure, and the concept as associated with social control.

A body of knowledge *is* a system of social control to the extent that discipline (knowledge) makes discipline (control) possible, and vice versa. (Marshall, 1989:107.)

Foucault is, however, specifically talking about post-enlightenment knowledge in his rethinking power-knowledge relations (Marshall, 1989:107). His main concern is knowledge as the outcome of certain practices associated with social control.

Disciplines are “blocks” – disciplinary blocks – in which the adjustment of people’s abilities and resources, relationships of communication, as well as power relationships, form regulated systems (Marshall, 1995:26).

3.1 Techniques of power

According to Foucault (1988b:105) discipline can be likened to a technique for human *dressage* or management, and can include a specific location, confinement, surveillance and supervision. Foucault (1977:231) describes discipline as confinement in enclosures such as colleges or secondary schools. Partitioning is also important – each individual should have his/her own place to work from.

In organising ‘cells’, ‘places’ and ‘ranks’ the disciplines create complex spaces that are architectural, functional and hierarchical. (Foucault, 1977:148.)

In order to understand the pervasiveness of power, we briefly examine the techniques by which power is exercised, as identified by Foucault (Gore, 1998:235-243).

● **Surveillance**

According to Foucault (1977:141; Gore, 1998:235), surveillance can be defined as “supervising, closely observing, watching, threatening to watch, or expecting to be watched”. Teachers are expected to monitor students and students monitor each other. “It singles out individuals, regulates behaviour and enables comparisons to be made.” (Gore, 1998:236.) Foucault indicates that surveillance is inherent to the practice of teaching, increasing its efficiency. He does not see anything wrong with surveillance *per se*, but warns against possible abuse of such a system by authoritarian teachers.

Unfortunately, South Africa still struggles with teachers who practice authoritarian discipline. If researchers could convince these teachers of the merits of using positive, constructive discipline, violence in schools might become less of a problem.

● **Normalisation**

Teaching as a social practice is supposed to be an ethical practice. It is guided by certain norms. It is about normalising judgements (Foucault, 1977:183). Gore (1998:237) defines *normalisation* as “invoking, requiring, setting, or conforming to a standard-defining normal”. According to Foucault education, therefore, includes the teaching of norms – norms of behaviour, of attitudes, of knowledge. The productiveness of normalising power seems to be a fundamental principle of any pedagogical endeavour.

Teachers in South Africa would need guidance as to what the “norm” might be in such a diverse country. The next technique of “exclusion” also presents problems in a country with many cultures, languages and religions, where exclusion often is the norm.

● **Exclusion**

Gore (1998:239) explains exclusion as the negative side of normalisation – defining the pathological. Gore states that Foucault “refers to exclusion as a technique for tracing the limits that will define difference, defining boundaries, setting zones” (Gore, 1998:239). Ex-

clusion does not only refer to excluding individuals from activities (including even bodily removal), but also to excluding identities (based on race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), and to excluding ways of constructing knowledge.

- **Classification**

Differentiating groups or individuals and classifying them is another common technique for exerting disciplinary power and is a characteristic of pedagogical practices. The classification of knowledge and student achievement, as well as the ranking and classification of individuals and groups function as an exercise of power (Foucault quoted in Gore, 1998:240). Some teachers would still classify learners as, for instance, clever or not clever, naughty or well-behaved. With labels like these, children will act accordingly and problem behaviour might escalate.

- **Distribution**

Foucault argues that the distribution of bodies in space – arranging, isolating, separating, and ranking them – contributes to the functioning of disciplinary power. The very architecture of our educational institutions is an expression of power (Gore, 1998:241).

- **Individualisation**

According to Foucault (quoted in Gore, 1998:242), naming and characterising individuals can also be seen as a common technique of exercising power. A student's fear of being singled out from the group is a powerful motivator.

- **Totalisation**

In as much as individualisation is a technique of power, totalisation is very much part of all pedagogic activity. This is done by the specification of collectivities and/or characterising the collective (Gore, 1998:242).

- **Regulation**

This is probably the most widely recognised technique of power and is defined by Gore (1998:243) as “controlling by rule, subject to restrictions, invoking a rule, including sanction, reward, punishment”. A form of regulation is structuring learners' time by setting up timetables and controlling behaviour by emphasising punctuality.

4. Pedagogical practice

One of the problems that came to the fore in South Africa during the 1990s was that of the breakdown in school discipline. This breakdown was largely attributed to the abolishment of corporal punishment. Parents, teachers and even the minister are now trying to regain control of the classrooms. Robinson (1994:1) states that “[i]n the current social climate coercion, harsher punishments and tighter control seem to be the main way of coping with these (social) ills”.

The abolishment of corporal punishment has left teachers in South Africa in a vacuum. Corporal punishment or other reactive ways of disciplining were often the only means of showing learners their power and authority. Teachers who practised authoritarian discipline believed that it was part of character-building – it was a fast, effective way of dealing with misdemeanour. Unfortunately, reactive ways of punishment could lead to the acceptance of aggression and violence as means of solving problems (Badenhorst *et al.*, 2007: 305-306). Therefore, South African educationists are looking for innovative ways of helping teachers to deal with the problem of “ill-discipline” in schools. According to the authors of this article, all stakeholders should come together to debate positive ways of dealing with problem behaviour in schools.

Power cannot be removed, but we should become aware of the way in which we exercise power. Ewald (quoted in Gore, 1998:248) says that “we must not lose the idea that we could exercise it differently”. We should rethink our concepts and beliefs about education and the rules by which we educate.

Foucault’s work can be useful in developing disciplinary technologies in pursuit of productivity in schools.

Pervasive observational practices, meticulous partitioning of space and time, examination, and documentation allow for the accumulation of knowledge on the activities, capacities, and performances of each student and provide the conditions (ideally) to correct those who deviate from acceptable norms. (Ryan, 1991:112.)

Individuals are coerced through classificatory procedures towards a range of behaviours that are designated as normal and that culminate in the most subtle form of control – self-control (Roth, 1992: 687). Until learners reach the stage of self-control, many of these technologies are used to teach them just that.

Foucault's (1977; Marshall, 1989:106; 1995:26) use of the term *disciplinary block* requires certain conditions (disciplinary technologies) to be present:

Firstly, individuals are allocated spaces/cells through classification, which he traces back to a monastic or earlier origin. It consists of self-contained units within larger units. The larger enclosure prevents distractions or invasions from outside, but the smaller units permit any individual to be placed under *surveillance* at any time. Secondly, *activities are planned according to a timetable*, also traced back to monastic origin. The prescribed activities should be appropriate for the discipline and should set regular rhythms for the activities. Thirdly, activities are broken down into stages for particular skills, abilities and capacities to develop in a given time through constant exercise. The knowledge developed through the exercise of power is used in the exercise of power to produce "*normalised*" *individuals*. Examinations, classifications, promotions and remedial treatment establish what Foucault calls normal patterns of expectations. "Whistles, bells, and other more sophisticated devices signal the times for change in cells and other moves within timetables." (Marshall, 1989:106; 1995:26.)

For Foucault (1977:302), punishment as an exercise of power is not only repressive or aimed simply at the breaking of a law. According to Marshall (1996:203) "it can have positive effects, normalising people to take an effective (if docile) place in society, in forming the 'self', and in promoting pleasure". This kind of exercise of power he calls disciplinary punishment, which is directed at the individual, the character of the individual, and normalising of behaviour in order for the individual to take a "responsible" place in society. Power is, therefore, exerted not in a repressive but in a positive way. Smart (2002:33) indicates that "techniques of the self" refers to the

... means by which individuals can affect their own bodies, souls, thoughts and conduct so as to transform themselves ... and to reflexively explore 'the self, the soul and the heart', to tell the truth of oneself and others.

The authors of this article have noted that Foucault indicates that power in itself is not negative. Power can be exercised in positive ways. Instead of using it to oppress, it can also be used to liberate. Teaching has over the ages unfortunately come to be associated with control and regulation. Otto (2000) investigates the possibilities of power becoming *empowerment*. Power can be constructive or destructive.

According to Marshall (1996), Foucault's concept of disciplinary punishment could assist in understanding the meaning and justification of punishment in education. Marshall writes (1996:206):

Freedom is to be obtained for Foucault by transcending the rule, by attempting to change agreement, by attempting to change rules for the application of concepts. Because of the notion of difference built into every concept each application of a concept involves an equivocal situation for Foucault ... In the equivocal (uncertain/ambiguous) situation when there are no longer rational criteria which compel me to follow the rule, Foucault says that we just 'know' when to reject the rule. Foucault is a positive transgressor, for it is through transgression that freedom lies.

As educationists we need to create spaces for learners to transgress rules and to free the self. Otto (2000) is of the opinion that traditional discipline is one of the barriers to the transformation of education. The exercise of traditional discipline will retain the absolute and unquestionable authority of the teacher, as well as the application of institutional power to enforce conformist behaviour. In transforming education, the teacher assumes the role of facilitator in order to become the subject of his/her own learning process, and acquires or develops the will to transform his/her world. Teachers become active participants, rather than passive receivers. In this regard we agree with Helja Robinson (1994:157) when she says "[t]he student and teacher interact, striving to meet each other's needs instead of being the respective perpetrators and victims of discipline, sharing joint ownership of the classroom".

5. Conclusion

Teachers should reflect critically on their own beliefs and assumptions about discipline and pedagogy. Giroux (2010) concurs when he says that a key element of critical pedagogy is the shift in emphasis from teachers to students, and making visible the relationships among knowledge, authority, and power. In providing students with the opportunity to be problem posers and to engage in a culture of questioning foregrounds, crucial issues (such as who has control over the conditions of learning and how specific modes of knowledge, identity, and authority are constructed within particular classroom relations) are opened up. Under such circumstances, knowledge is not inculcated into students. Knowledge is actively transformed by the students who take responsibility for their own learn-

ing, as they learn how to engage with others in critical dialogue and are held accountable for their own views.

According to the South African Schools Act (South Africa, 1996), discipline should be corrective and nurturing. Teachers should refrain from punishment (physical or emotional) and displays of power that is harmful to the learners' self-esteem. Positive, constructive discipline will promote self-discipline (intrinsic discipline). Teachers should act in such a way that learners could follow their lead. There should be a positive relationship between teachers and learners. Learners should be encouraged to respect their teachers, other learners and themselves (Mokhele, 2006:150; Naong, 2007:283-284).

Ideas on punishment and discipline should be re-considered. The way in which it is currently presented in schools and in society should be changed within the debate on the issue. The crux of the matter is that discipline and punishment are necessary for the good of the individual and for the good of society. Discipline and punishment should, however, be exercised with knowledge of the individual and in a humane way. The individual should realise that discipline and punishment are important in self-care. The endeavour to perfect oneself is not only for self-improvement, but for the betterment of society. Caring for the self is ethical with the goal of achieving a complete full life for the individual, as well as for the community (Danaher *et al.*, 2000).

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Key concepts:

discipline
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Kernbegrippe:

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straf
vryheid