Foucault and Althusser on alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques policy: reflections on South African education practice

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Abstract: While corporal punishment which is defined as using physical pain to intentionally alter behaviour and it can take many different forms, including, but not limited to, smacking, kicking, pinching, and shoveling remains a reality for some children. This article argues that school discipline and corporal punishment, both as social and power relations constructs, qualify to be through Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser's works. In our view, they provide tools conceptualizing the politics of growing school discipline issues and the hidden structure of power relations. Drawing from the works of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser, this article begins by exploring thoughts on the historical perspectives on corporal punishment, reconnoitres the thoughts on discipline, and critiques and reflects on the *Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques* policy through the lens of Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). *Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques* policy was developed by the South African department of education, which serves as the guide stands to help instructors identify more beneficial methods of handling punishment in classrooms which according to us, seen as a power relations construct that produces docile bodies and reproduces social inequalities.

The philosophical critical and prescriptive methodologies are used in this paper. Particularly intrigued by the connection between discipline and submissive bodies, Michel Foucault, describes discipline as a genealogical examination of power in his 1995 book *Discipline and Punish*. Outstandingly, discipline is used throughout all social institutions. Althusser's explanation of ideology and ISAs offers us a fresh perspective on how to investigate the hidden power dynamics, ideology, and the role of ISAs in alternative forms of punishment and positive reinforcement. Most crucially, it needs to be emphasized that schools are ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) because they are politicized subjects. Similar these ISAs, are never identify as having an ideology. The results of the study provide proof that schools are ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) since they are politicized subjects. These ISAs as such, never declare themselves to be ideological. For this reason, alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques policy fits the lens of an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Even though the paper offers a thorough analysis of the literature on ideology, philosophy, and, most importantly, implications and relevance to school discipline, it also emphasizes the importance of society and policy as decision-makers who help keep things stable and give stakeholders' and schools' decisions some momentum. The research recommends a fresh way for assessing punishment and school discipline, however it appears that the status quo has not changed due to a lack of interest in innovation and looking into various possibilities that might help with discipline.

Keywords: Alternative methods, corporal punishment, Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), philosophy, school discipline

Introduction

An extensive body of literature has been written about discipline and corporal punishment in schools. It is documented that some children are still subjected to corporal punishment as they receive it both at home and at school. Perhaps it is important to remark that the idea of deterrence serves as the foundation for the justification of punishment. As [11]) writes, "human society is accustomed to the institution of punishment as a means of fostering and maintaining social harmony". He further argues that the need to punish an offender with pain in response to a wrongdoing is a contentious in modern era.

With this in mind, notwithstanding its banishment in most countries, physical punishment is still a mutual exercise in many South African public schools. However, the significance of physical reprimand against learners as a technique of school discipline has become an issue of research, social politics, legislative reforms, and controversy. Perhaps, we need to take cognizance that school discipline and corporal punishment, both recognised as social and power relations constructs as qualified through Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser's works. Foucault and Althusser provide conceptual tools to comprehend the politics around growing school discipline issues, and the hidden power relations structure.

The physical punishment is not permitted in South African schools, especially the practice of caning, which was previously a sociocultural accepted norm which provided a turning point on learner discipline as area of interest; it was perceived to be a major educational radical change. Teachers, parents, and other stakeholders are becoming increasingly concerned about the high level of indiscipline in public schools. Recent research, according to [13], show that there are increasing occurrences of learner indiscipline in South African schools. Consequently, the critical question is "*to what extent do Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques* policy other than physical sanctions establish order and promote *"socially appropriate"* behaviour in pluralistic schools"*?* Perhaps the most serious disadvantage of this policy is that it continues to be a philosophical challenge.

We, therefore, draw upon the works of Michel Foucault and Louis Althusser as theoretical instruments for comprehending the politics of promoting "socially appropriate" behaviour and perpetuating docility in schools as social institutions. This article begins by exploring thoughts on the historical perspectives of corporal punishment. It will then explore thoughts on discipline. The third section will examine the *alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques* as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). The last section presents the reflections on *Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement* policy.

The paper solicits important questions on why teachers still use and see it fit to subject learners to physical reprimand to resolve indiscipline in schools even when outlawed. Are *alternative methods of discipline* effective and relevant in addressing ill-discipline in schools? What are the theoretical discussions regarding the use of physical abuse and the effects it has on society and education? This theoretical paper focuses on the historical underpinnings, thoughts, and alternative methods of discipline which capture previous literature and analyses the current and continuous practice of corporal punishment based on philosophy.

Historical perspectives on corporal punishment

According to [11] punishment is an intentional method used to prevent disagreements from escalating and is as old as social interactions in society. Despite the utilitarian and retributivist paradigm [11] warns that it frequently begins with the perception that another party has violated the rights, liberties, or interests of one party. The practice of using corporal punishment has a long history that is intricately linked to social-cultural underpinnings and worldviews regarding the relationship between parents and children, God and man, and the need to shield children from sin.

Considering this, one can contend that there is actual proof of corporal punishment in ancient Greece according to ancient philosophers. Plato contends it would not have been legally acceptable to impose a penalty or pecuniary, for imprisonment as punishment even it has been legislated. While a significant number of studies submit that across the board, lower socio-economic status parents tend to engage in harsher disciplinary techniques, the subject of corporal punishment as a social contract and the infliction of pain has always been a troubling moral question. However, society has accepted laws that were set by the state and therefore, subjected themselves to abiding to avoid any kind of wrongfulness.

Among others, it can be assumed that according to natural law and the social contract, one must be punished by those who are legally allowed to do so. For example, [27] argues that punishment is beneficial as it improves

character. In *Pratogoras*, Plato states if indeed a child is to be punished it can only be legally acceptable that the measure will assist in ensuring that he behaves properly or else it cannot be imposed and will amount to a disgrace.

Nonetheless the fact is engraved in ancient Greece, and gained popularity during the times of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Corporal punishment remains the most common form of punishment meted out in most schools. Most citizens believe that corporal punishment is a preferred penalty because it creates socially appropriate individuals in schools and communities. They most likely believe that corporal punishment is for deterrence. [5] and [6] imply that the use of punishments represents a fundamental breakdown in social structure.

Thoughts on discipline

The idea of discipline is quite fluid and widely understood. It has a variety of muddled interpretations and meanings. Several important scholars give variations on this definition. [24] gives only a few examples. To some extent they are influenced and directed by cultural customs, religious doctrines, worldviews that are Calvinist, Victorian, and behaviorist. Using physical pain to intentionally alter behaviour is known as corporal punishment, and it can take many different forms, including, but not limited to, smacking, kicking, pinching, and shoveling [10]). Additionally, the use of corporeal pressure of hurting a child physically in order to modify or control their behaviour is known as corporal punishment ([2, 18, 34].

Consistent with the Greek tradition, [16] defines of corporal punishment as any sort of punishment or imposed on the body; as opposed to economic punishment or a fine, physical punishment or the deliberate infliction of pain upon a student's body by a teacher or other educational official as a punishment for engaging in behavior that has earned the punisher's disapproval. As the punisher (teacher) causes some sort of suffering to the individual believed to have done something wrong or unsatisfactory, this term relates extremely well to schools. In South African schools, this has long been the case, although it has improved because of law that forbids corporal punishment. Despite being forbidden, there is some sort of an agreement amongst authors that this type of punishment is nevertheless practiced in some South African schools [21, 15].

While there are a considerable number of variations and tensions in definitions of the concept, it is worth emphasising that the common thread running through these definitions is: (1) Coercive control, which relies on threats; utilitarian control, which relies on coinage gratification and control, which emphasizes status, explaining learner behavior. However, other academics, see reprimand as a tool to establish discipline and ensure compliance. Among the punishment and discipline literature, Michel Foucault emerges as a scholar who stands against sovereignty. Hence, this section draws largely from his works. Despite the fact that regulation and punishment are typically seen as undesirable (for example, repression, violation, or termination), for [6], it is only one aspect of disciplinary power. Insightful approaches to consider the issue of "shielding" can be found in Foucault's perspectives on discipline as a kind of power. [6] notes that the power of disciplinary measures is suitable for achieving control.

The way discipline works is by limiting movement as emphasizes by [6] as he writes that, "discipline corrects because it stops or controls motions and eliminates misunderstanding". It is worth noting that punishment in itself renders bodies docile through other techniques. In the Foucauldian sense, discipline may be regarded as apparatus and technology of some sort as [4] observe, discipline is a technique rather than an institution. For this reason, discipline should not replace power; rather, emphasize colonialization that exist in society [6]. In any social setting, discipline is interpreted as different techniques and technologies. At the outset of discipline and punishment, Foucault gives an example of torture as a tool to illustrate influence.

The history of corporal punishment is exceedingly extensive and varied. For many years, interpretations principles, including those based on Judeo-Christian and other religions, have supported the use of physical punishment against minors. Here the origins of school physical reprimand in the is based on British colonial methods of student discipline, which included caning pupils frequently anytime teachers thought they were violating the rules and conventions of the school or even just performing poorly. On the other hand, corporal punishment and discipline is a scriptural mandate. From the Victorian and Calvinist worldviews, the principle of "spare the rod, spoil the child" governs how discipline should be applied; and holds that slapping students is a successful form of punishment. According to further literature, a youngster will not grasp that sin calls for punishment if they are not made to experience its consequences.

Children are respectful and oblige to the laws are much more likely to ask Jesus to pardon their sins so that they may be saved. Wisdom requires discipline, and if a child follows the law he will then be wise, even grownups who disregard advice will suffer the repercussions of their indiscretion Accordingly, the Bible Book of Proverbs the

idea that discipline has changed from a viewpoint that emphasizes on what children should not do in a similar vein and so utilizes physical punishment to stop inappropriate behavior, to a view that emphasises what the child should do and promotes self-discipline behaviour. Biblically speaking, the goal of morality and character formation served as a justification for it in South Africa [15], he also refers to corporal punishment is incorrectly associated with the word discipline in the Bible. If this argument is accepted, it will then suggest that teachers need to swiftly implement the use of corporal punishment as a remedy for behavioral issues in schools. It indicates that in order to discipline learners and instil stability and appropriate behavior, teachers must utilize the force of corporal punishment. [8] refutes this claim by noting that Jesus advocated love rather than punishment because he considered children as being near to God. Since many years ago, there has been controversy surrounding "Christianity" and the use of corporal punishment in various parts of the world.

Accordingly, South African corporal punishment was a typical method of upholding discipline in schools. The author takes the reader on a dizzying tour through the origins of the prevalent methods of school punishment often by caning, as a disciplinary response to a wide range of student infractions of school rules and norms. This ancient method of school punishment, among others, is influenced by Calvinist and Victorian worldviews as previously mentioned; and departures from the *in loco parentis principle*, which gives school authorities full custody and control of children, and the authority to impose rules and regulations. Literature states that caning is still common in several Asian, African, and Caribbean schools despite the adoption of laws protecting children's and human rights. The use of punishment regrettably cannot be completely disregarded in the management and discipline of pupils, despite the fact that it is allowed in certain other nations. It might be seen necessary for school officials to assume they have the right to discipline children for disobeying school rules, it is important to exercise discretion when administering physical reprimands Furthermore it can be argued, physical punishment must not be administered in a way that makes it appear sadistic, harsh, or excessive.

The setting of South African school discipline, according to [29] has a rather constrained connotation. They clarify that in South Africa, punishment for infractions of school rules is typically physical or even psychological, such as humiliation. Although they are occasionally used interchangeably, discipline and punishment have distinct meanings attached to them, according to [9]. This claim raises the alarming notion that some form of punishment is necessary to ensure discipline in South African schools. Discipline and punishment have various connotations and meanings; thus, this cannot be acceptable.

While on the one hand discipline is about effective behavior modification, which aims to encourage good behavior and teach students self-control and discipline [33], on the other side, punishment is a part or type of correction that entails action conducted in reaction to improper behavior to repair or modify and restore harmonious connections [31]. Therefore, one can commonly accepted in some schools, students who behave in a way that is thought to be inappropriate are expected to be disciplined.

We assert that discipline and appropriate behaviour have a symbiotic relationship. Some teachers continue to use physical punishment as a tool to manage student behavior, which is occasionally viewed as being disruptive or out of place. Teachers generally believe that punishing children physically will change their behavior. Accordingly, most teachers encourage bodily punishment because they think it improves character development. These educators appear to think that corporal punishment is quick, simple, and successful at getting temporary cooperation, giving people a sense of power, and contributing to the speedy decrease or removal of undesirable behavioral patterns. Some writers agree that many who use corporal punishment in the classroom have said that it should only be used as a last resort. They believe that physical punishment is safe, builds understanding amongst youth.

To end this section, successful discipline creates docile bodies. According to [6], a body is considered docile when it exhibits both obedience and teachability. According to him, the *Panopticon* is where a body is to develop the ideal flexibility and show remorseful stance under constant observation. As noted by [19], as a result, the application of punishment and the site of truth extortion is the body subjected to torture which is a technique of torture aimed at expediting this process. Additionally, just as suspicion was an essential component of the investigation and a component of guilt, the controlled agony associated with judicial torture was a form of punishment.

Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques as Ideological State Apparatus (ISA)

We begin this section by noting that the societal implication of school discipline practice can be quite challenging in terms of how ideas and concepts articulation. Despite the possibility that philosophies of community imitation could provide a foundation for understanding how and why inequalities are perpetuated. In this part, we use Michel Foucault's writings and Louis Althusser's analysis of ideology to critique the idea of "discipline, more

specifically the "alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques". In our opinion, discipline reflects past and present-day racial and social inequities as it serves as both an expression of and a weapon for solidifying power. We start out with the premise that an ideology always exists and is ingrained in a system, in this example, a discipline. Discipline is subtly employed as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA) to guarantee replication capacity of discipline that supports a capitalist goal and systems of inequality. Most significantly, it promotes the development of submissive bodies and disseminates the technological knowledge necessary to establish political power. The complex and drawn-out discussions regarding "discipline and docile bodies" are primarily philosophical and political, in many ways.

Particularly intrigued by the connection between discipline and submissive bodies, Michel Foucault, describes discipline as a genealogical examination of power in his 1995 book *Discipline and Punish*. Outstandingly, discipline is used throughout all social institutions. It is important to remember that whether they are at a school, workplace, prison, church, or hospital or any social institution, according to [6], is built on the connection of ideas. The body can also be controlled by radical, financial, and informative systems. Foucault repeatedly demonstrates to us that discipline is a technique for mastering the human body and an art. He views discipline as a political weapon detail that functions on discrete actions before assembling them into a recognizably defined form.

There is a belief that discipline increases the forces of the body (in economic terms of utility) and diminishes these same forces (in political terms of obedience). Whether this belief is a purely normative matter, appears to be applicable in this discourse. This results in increasing an aptitude, on one hand, a capacity, but reversing the course of the energy into a relation of strict subjection. In order to describe how disciplined acts were used to gain control and authority, Foucault introduces the term "docility." According to Foucault, a body submissive and accept to be taught. The *Panopticon's* continually seen human body starts to develop the ideal malleability, servile demeanor, and regretful posture. Even the claim that effective traditional school discipline produces "docile bodies" is debatable.

Seen from a capitalist and Panopticon stance, the purpose of the school is to produce docile bodies. As [1] explicitly observed, the capitalism state requires also realistic mechanistic replicate goods, but also on labour-power that will ensure goods are efficiently produced. He argues that the schools impart good behavior on children the so they can behave in an acceptable and proper manner that allow them to become reliable sources of labour-power by teaching them submission to the ruling ideology or the mastery of its practice.

Outstandingly, schools inculcate a culture of presenteeism, normalise alienation, teach that success depends upon obeying rules, and subordinating yourself to authority, and help legitimate authority. For [1], the school system has replaced the church in modern times as the dominant Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Perhaps the most important aspects of all we do in schools are discipline, submission, and surveillance. Although Foucault accounts of power relations functioning beyond state control, procedures of discipline, submissiveness that governs behavior is at every critical in understanding disciplinary techniques. Constant observation and the use schedules that govern behavior at every moment of the day, and an abundance of documentation, files, records, charts, statistics, evaluation, and classification are some of the disciplinary tactics that produce and constitute knowledge. A hierarchy of authorities verifies each of them.

To be more specific, Althusser's explanation of ideology and ISAs offers us a fresh perspective on how to investigate the hidden power dynamics, ideology, and the role of ISAs in alternative forms of punishment and positive reinforcement. Most crucially, it needs to be emphasized that schools are ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) because they are politicized subjects. Similar these ISAs, are never identify as having an ideology. Schools, among other things, engage their pupils through selection and exclusion, and they are one of the ways in which workers are indoctrinated into ideologies supportive to the survival of capitalism.

The powerful networks of corporate and political elites and capitalist interests are frequently favored by dominant ideologies in the form of in this case "alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques" policies. Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques, such as ideology so that this reproduction of the relations of generation can be ensured and appear "natural" and "spontaneous". As [1] pointed out explicitly, that capitalist state needs a dependable way to reproduce the labor-power that generates the products in addition to machines. He contends that through instilling in them submission and obedience to the "dominant ideology or the mastery of its implementation where institutions impart youngsters with the principles of moral behavior that allow them to become trustworthy. In conclusion, *Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques* policy, as a power relations construct, produces docile bodies and reproduces social inequalities.

Reflections on *Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement* policy

School corporal punishment is an attack on physical integrity that may result in harm and very rarely in death. Regardless of the belief that physical punishment is an essential component of upbringing and education, [18] note that in recent years, the majority of schools have abandoned physical punishment as a form of disciplinary action in favor of other techniques of punishment as suspension, confinement, and others. Discipline should be viewed as a tool for instructing students on how to take good control of livelihood [3]. He emphasises that appropriate discipline maintains students' dignity by showing them what they have done wrong, making them take responsibility for the issue that has arisen, and teaching them how to address it, [28] claims that the main administrative goal of discipline is to establish order. For teaching and learning to be successful, a school must establish order. Education is successful when it happens in a structured context. This is supported by [12] that correction is essential for maintaining harmony in the teaching space. Scholars further claims that a structured and secure atmosphere promotes learning. Discipline is thought to be more instructive than punitive in nature. According to [16], "punishment is instructional. Additionally, according to [31], "praising youngsters when they comply or do things well promotes them to model their behavior on positive reinforcement and it encourages them to learn self-discipline". The result of effective and constructive discipline is undoubtedly self-discipline.

Positive, productive discipline should instil progress, as [20] contends. Therefore, it is up to educators to ensure that students are both emotionally and physically secure in order to manage discipline. Keeping order in schools ensures the safety of the students. According to [25], students are more capable of learning as they assume to be protected and embraced. [22] proclaims that a calm and secure setting promotes learning. According to [13], discipline is more about creating a "safe and valuing atmosphere so that the rights and needs of people are acknowledged, vindicated, and safeguarded" than it is about policing disruptive or other unwanted behavior. [23] draws the conclusion that most disciplinary difficulties at the school may be readily and swiftly resolved if parents and the school support each other over learner discipline in school.

South African Department of Education (DoE) published the booklet, "alternatives to corporal punishment" in 2000. The guide stands to help instructors identify more beneficial methods of handling punishment in classrooms. It describes the laws that forbid corporal punishment. Additionally, it offers rules for acceptable substitutes for corporal punishment as well as for disciplinary actions and processes. As a result, it is up to schools to come up with and implement alternate disciplinary techniques and processes (Department of Education, 2000). This indicates that teachers should avoid using punitive, punishment-focused discipline. For learners to develop inherent castigation and accountability in their activities, the management of discipline requires educators to create an emotionally safe and physically secure environment for them [20]. [30] exhorts teachers to adopt a proactive strategy and put measures in place that would protect the environment for effective learning and teaching the classrooms. The following suggestions for are made for creating a conducive learning environment and minimizing discipline issues in the classroom: planning sessions, practicing self-control, having access to work, and ensure that effective teaching occur consistently, students create space for time out or a conflict resolution, and positive affirmation behavior.

Against this backdrop, from a Foucauldian perspective, it is noteworthy to mention that school discipline, as the main instrument of ideology and domination, is meant at indorsing and sustaining socially fitting behavior, creating docile bodies; and controlling the movement and operations of the body in a constant manner. It is worth noting that be it at school, work, prison, church, or hospital; everyone involved is subject to an extent of discipline.

While much has been written on discipline, Foucault traces its origins back to monasteries and armies as a widely used technique to control whole populations. Any societal foundation is built on the links between the conceptions of power, knowledge, and the body, according to [6]. The visibility of the body lends it to being controlled by political, economic, and educational forces, says Foucault." According to him, discipline is an art of the human body and a means of its mastery; that discipline is a political anatomy of detail that works on individual movements and gestures before eventually constructing them into a recognized pattern.

Despite the principle of '*in loco parentis*', which gives the school powers to be in complete control over the upbringing of children, the right to discipline, and the right to regulate, physical punishment is nevertheless frequently employed as a form of torture in many areas of the world. However, because it was viewed as violating children's rights, the use of corporal punishment was outlawed in many nations. According to the National Education Department in South Africa [30], corporal punishment is defined as "any deliberate act against a child that inflicts pain or bodily discomfort to punish or contain him or her." These intentional acts may involve, among other things, striking with the hand or striking with an item like a cane, belt, whip, shoe, and so on. According to the Constitutional obligation of [30], this practice was deemed to be unconstitutional. The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 Section 10 officially

outlawed corporal punishment in 1999, however there is an indication that some teachers still think it is a more effective way to manage all students. Discipline issues have nevertheless arisen as a result of the elimination of corporal punishment.

In summary, our thesis is that alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques, as "dynamic processes constantly reproduced and reconstituted in practice", among others, fit the profile of ISA, promote "socially appropriate" behaviour, harbour implicit consent realised in accepted practices and perpetuate docility. In our view, alternative methods of discipline or positive reinforcement techniques, are ideologically biased in favor of a specific class or group of classes, yet other classes accept them as natural. It should be noted that, in debunking the dominant and emerging school discipline practices and approaches, as building blocks to a network of various power mechanisms and Ideological State Apparatuses (ISAs), we should look into the legislative implications as a "non-static set of concepts," corporal punishment and the results of alternative ways of discipline and positive reinforcement" were discussed.

Conclusion

According to the argument made in this article, the history of using physical punishment is extensive and rich. and has been upheld by legal and religious teachings for thousands of years. Despite its abolition in South African schools, it remains a standard operating procedure in many public schools. The results of this research indicate that schools are ideological state apparatuses (ISAs) since they are politicized subjects. They are ISAs, but they never declare themselves to be ideological. For this reason, *Alternative methods of discipline and positive reinforcement techniques* policy fits the lens of an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA).

Although the paper provides a detailed review of the literature on ideology, philosophy and importantly on implications and relevance to school discipline, it signifies the role of society and policy as important role payers in ensuring stability and impetus on decision-making for both schools and stakeholders. The paper suggests a different approach for examining school discipline and punishment, but it seems the status quo remains in reality, due to disinterest in development and exploring other avenues that can be valuable in assisting with school discipline.

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