

# Being a Teacher

Professional Challenges and Choices

**Section Four | The teacher's authority:  
sustaining an effective learning environment**

**Writers** | Mike Adendorff, Mark Mason, Maropeng Modiba, Lynette Faragher and Zandile Kunene

**Editor** | John Gultig

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**Being a Teacher**

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1ST EDITION SERIES EDITOR: John Gultig

DESIGN FOR DIGITAL VERSION: Michelle Randell

ILLUSTRATIONS: Andre Plant

1ST EDITION VIDEO: Kagiso Educational Television, with John Gultig and Mike Adendorff

SAIDE

PO Box 31822

Braamfontein 2017

T: (011) 403 2813

F: (011) 403 2814

[www.saide.org.za](http://www.saide.org.za); [www.oerafrica.org](http://www.oerafrica.org)

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## SECTION FOUR

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# The teacher's authority: sustaining an effective learning environment

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# Introduction

## 4.1

There are three main questions that propel this section: How are teachers to maintain, or regain, their authority? What is the teacher's role in a democratic learning environment? How can teachers exercise effective authority in practice – how can they establish and maintain order that is not based on fear?

Our discussion of these issues will reveal confusions in what people ordinarily understand by 'authority' and 'democracy'. The first question will lead us to ask what the nature of teacher authority is. And as we explore the meaning of teacher authority in the context of democracy in the second question, we will ask whether democracy erodes or enhances teacher authority.

We frame the discussion in a practical way by examining these questions in familiar situations and then we provide some practical strategies to help you to exercise effective authority in a democratic learning environment.

This last topic, practical strategies for a democratic learning environment, is explored more fully in another module in this series, *Getting Practical*.

## Learning outcomes for this section

Working through this section should give you the ability to teach with added confidence based on an ability to:

- recognize and explain the nature of the authority crisis that teachers face in South Africa;
- identify what constitutes legitimate teacher authority in a democratic learning environment;
- distinguish between concepts such as discipline and control, freedom and licence, authority and authoritarianism;
- recognize the scope that a democratic learning environment gives you to use your professional judgement in managing that environment; and
- employ a few teaching strategies to help you exercise effective authority in practice; in other words, to establish and maintain an atmosphere of creative, dynamic order among your learners.

# 4.2

## The nature of teacher authority

### A challenge to authority

*Livingstone strode over to Fana in the staffroom. It was very easy to see that he was angry. 'Do you remember saying that we need to transform our teaching by striving for professionalism?' he asked. 'Well, can you tell me how we're supposed to do that when the children don't respect us any more?'*

*Fana knew that Livingstone must be pretty upset to say this. 'You'd better tell me what's happened,' he said.*

*'That damn Joba in Grade 10, he was sitting in the back of the class stroking the arm of the girl next to him. I actually ignored it for a while. Before, I'd have pulled him to the front by the ear and given him a good thrashing, but now we can't do that so I thought, what's the use, I might as well ignore him, pretend I haven't seen. But then he started getting carried away and really causing a disturbance, so I stopped teaching and said that from his gutter manners we could see where he had been brought up. The next thing he's saying, "What's it to you? I suppose you were brought up in a mission!" and sort of daring me to do anything about it.'*

*'I tell you, I was so close to hitting him. I was ... Go re nka moja a phela. I just told him to shut his mouth and get out of the room. I couldn't think of anything else. All this stuff about professional approaches! What I want to know is how do we get the kids' respect back like we had it in the past? Not through all this learner-centred teaching and banning the cane, for sure. It just takes away our authority. Like the Department telling us we've got to move away from teaching content – where does that leave us? I'll tell you, it's like being on a rope bridge, with the Department at one end and the kids on the other – each with knives out to cut the rope. This is what democracy's done for teachers.'*



You should spend around 15 minutes on this activity.

#### ACTIVITY 16: A PROBLEM OF AUTHORITY

**Jot down brief responses (one or two lines) to each of the following questions, trying at the same time to think how people with different views to your own might respond to them. If you are studying this module with others, try to find an opportunity to discuss the questions in a small group. (By the way, we do not think there is a single right answer to each of these questions.)**

- 1 It's pretty clear why Livingstone was frustrated at not being able to use corporal punishment on Joba, but if Fana was right, what do you think it was that Livingstone might have feared?
- 2 Do you think Livingstone was right:
  - to speak out as he did?
  - to send Joba out of the class?
- 3 From the evidence supplied in this story, what do you think might have given rise to Joba's behaviour:
  - before Livingstone spoke to him?
  - after Livingstone spoke to him?
- 4 To what extent do you agree or disagree that democracy has taken away the authority of teachers?

It is in the nature of young people to 'test the limits', so no teacher is likely to teach for long before receiving some challenge to his or her authority. Through experience, most teachers learn to respond to the majority of these challenges with varying degrees of effectiveness.

Sometimes, however, teachers find that such confrontations bring with them an element of fear that their authority is waning, or that they may lose their temper and break the law against corporal punishment. Also, while physical attacks by learners are rare, they are certainly not unthinkable. Every teacher should think seriously about how to avoid them, and about how to respond if threatened, rather than not think about them at all.

## Authority lost?

We sometimes hear teachers saying that many young people of today lack the respect for authority that teachers used to be able to count on. In many ways this is probably true, though even 2500 years ago, Plato was saying the same thing about young people – older generations always believe that the current generation of young people is more rebellious than those of the past. The question to ask, however, is, if respect for authority has been lost, why was it lost, and what *kind* of respect was lost?

During the seventies and eighties, many young black people lost their respect for teachers for reasons that were mainly political (Molteno, 1987: 192, 198). Teachers, after all, had been implementing apartheid education. Young people also perceived the older generation in general as having failed to resist apartheid during the sixties and seventies. Teacher authority probably lost much of its legitimacy when school-going youth were briefly in the vanguard of resistance during the protests of the seventies and eighties.

Since 1989, youths have been deprived of the significant leadership role they enjoyed during the struggle, many of them while at school. Their schooling has not necessarily provided them with jobs in the new democracy. Many live surrounded by the attractions of a *consumer culture* that they have no means to acquire themselves. Some argue that this has led to an identity crisis among the adolescents of the nineties, creating a disillusionment that could lead to crime – to satisfy the rebellious urges many young people experience and to enjoy the material comforts they crave.

But this 'history' of the youth of South Africa does not fully explain what teachers experience as a loss of authority. 'Authority' is still interpreted by many teachers as '*power over others*', a power based on a tradition that assumes students should always *defer* to their teachers, or a power based on the fear of force or unpleasant consequences.

Much of the 'respect' that has been shown to teachers has been built on such fears, often on the routine and brutal use of corporal punishment. After the seventies and eighties, however, many young people would no longer tolerate this approach. It seemed to be out of key with the constitutional rights that they or their older brothers and sisters had fought for, as well as with their desires and aspirations.

Teachers also need to acknowledge that with political resistance out of the way, television and computer games, sex, alcohol and drugs provide more compelling competition for young people's attention. Young people still believe education can improve their lives, but when so much of the teaching that learners experience is still authoritarian, uncreative, and perceived as boring and irrelevant, school simply cannot compete.

So what can teachers do when bored and unstimulated learners turn to disruptive ways of creating excitement? Let's first examine some approaches that do *not* appear to work, and some that may work better.



We are not suggesting here that teachers who break the law should not take responsibility for their actions and accept the legal consequences. We are simply acknowledging that physical violence is possible in both students and teachers, and that it does not only happen to 'other people'.

A **consumer culture** is one that is based on possessions, and on the ability to buy highly-priced products such as designer-label clothing.

When you **defer** to someone, you yield to or accept their superiority.

## Teacher strategies

In the classroom drama we have just encountered, Livingstone was right to confront Joba. In fact we believe that he shouldn't even have ignored him before confronting him. Many writers on the management of behaviour in the classroom warn against turning a blind eye to unacceptable behaviour (Kyriacou, 1991: 90; Humphreys, 1993: 30; Kounin, 1970: 90). If it is something you as the teacher should see if you're alert, it doesn't help matters to pretend that you haven't noticed – this simply places you under the offender's power. If the learners are seeking attention or 'testing the limits', they will simply be provoked by your non-response to do something even more calculated to arouse your anger.

So if Livingstone probably did the right thing in checking Joba, what went wrong? Well, a great deal depends on **how** the teacher 'does the right thing' as opposed to simply following a 'recipe'. It also depends on the circumstances that led up to the teacher's action. In this case, Livingstone ignored the arm-stroking, allowing it to go on for some time. This could well have given Joba the idea that the teacher was weak, or experiencing a moment of weakness. In fact this was partly true: Livingstone was frustrated that he couldn't resort to 'old ways'.

When Livingstone finally took action, he unfortunately resorted to insults and hints directed not only at Joba, but also at his upbringing, and even at his family. Again, something virtually all writers on classroom 'discipline' agree about is that insults, hints and sarcasm or any sort of personal verbal attack on the **person** rather than on the unacceptable **behaviour**, is self-defeating. It may appear to produce compliance for a while, but it inevitably leads to resentment. Either this produces an insolent, tit-for-tat reply, as it does in Joba's case, or it 'goes underground' as the student waits for a chance to 'even the score'.

It's difficult to blame Livingstone for losing his temper, but a more productive response would have been to take decisive action earlier, speaking to Joba in a calmer, but definitely firm manner, before anger welled up. This would have left Joba in no doubt that his behaviour was unacceptable **in that classroom** and had to stop. It is important here that the teacher's voice and 'body-language' must both convey the same conviction. But nothing unpleasant should have been said about the boy himself or his background.



Jot down exactly what you might say if you were placed in Livingstone's position.

## Humour

A teacher can diffuse a negative situation with humour. Naturally, this depends on the circumstances, which only the teacher will be in a position to judge. A teacher can make clear that a certain behaviour has to stop, but in the form of a joke – even if the humour does have a mild 'sting'.

There is a big difference between a hurtful and sarcastic attack on the student, and a funny statement or question that embarrasses the 'offender' about his or her behaviour. Both will produce a laugh among the rest of the class, but the offending learner is far more likely to recover quickly from the second, without feeling that the teacher is an enemy.

Humour can also **prevent** disruptive behaviour: learners are usually more than willing to co-operate with teachers and one another in a laughter-filled classroom. Of course, not every teacher feels capable of generating the right sort of humour. The best allies in this are usually the majority of learners themselves, if the teacher doesn't take herself or himself too seriously.

In the writer's experience, the skill of humour is something most teachers can learn over time, but one thing that they must get out of the way is their **ego**. If teachers take personal offence at the students' behaviour or comments, the possibility of humour goes out of the window. It helps greatly if the teachers direct some of the humour at themselves, and are prepared, at least occasionally, to appear foolish.

The teacher's **ego** refers to his or her sense of importance as a person to be respected.



If teachers don't take themselves too seriously, the majority of learners will be their strongest allies.

## Avoiding battles no-one can win

You are probably asking, but what if Joba was the 'hard-boiled' type, who would have been unmoved by humour, or by a firm demand? Clearly, teachers need to have 'back-up' strategies in mind.

Was Livingstone right to send Joba from the class? Many would agree that this strategy is at least partly appropriate. The object is to separate the 'offender' from whatever is rewarding his or her behaviour: the girl's admiration for Joba's daring, the awe of the other learners, the teacher's anger, or Joba's control of the situation (by his successful distraction of the teacher from his work).

However, once again so much depends on the *manner* in which the dismissal is carried out. It should be done without shaming or humiliating the learner in front of his or her peers, because this will simply provoke tit-for-tat behaviour. What Livingstone gets is an insolent response that only arouses his own anger even more. And a lost temper is probably the 'first prize' for the 'offender'. Joba would know he could always caress the girl in some other place at some other time – the added 'spice' here is the anger shown by Livingstone, so giving it to him is effectively 'rewarding' the unacceptable behaviour and encouraging further inappropriate responses.

Again, the dismissal should be done calmly, but firmly: 'Joba, I can see you're choosing to be outside the classroom – leave it now so that we can get on. You'll be called for later, and I expect you to be right outside.'

But other forms of back-up strategy are usually necessary to address the factors that lead to the behaviour in the first place. Showing an interest in the 'offender' as a person, and trying to understand what makes him or her behave in a particular way, often uncovers problems in the young person's life that have led to problematic behaviour as a way of coping.

In the video, the Grabouw teacher who sends the boy out of class questions him, discovering factors that would have contributed to his behaviour. She does not adopt an apologetic attitude, and he has been punished because he has after all infringed the rules of appropriate class behaviour. But such an approach creates a



See Excerpts B and C from Herb Kohl's 'On becoming a teacher', in Reading 1 on page 3 of your Reader, for two interesting examples of approaches to behaviour problems.



healthy atmosphere in the classroom, because young learners almost always respond to a teacher who relates to them as individual human beings, not just in their role as a group of learners.

The best *preventative* strategy for disruptive behaviour is to teach in a way that captivates and involves the learners as active partners in their own learning. They become the teacher's best 'allies' when a disruptive learner starts acting up because *they will want the learning to continue*. And at the first sign of trouble in the year from potential 'hard cases', try to find ways of giving them some special responsibilities. We pursue effective teacher strategies later in this section.



You will need 15 minutes for this activity

### ACTIVITY 17: TEACHING AND LEARNING

**Think back to your own experience of teachers, from the times when you were a learner. Make a few notes about these questions in your work-book:**

- 1 What behaviour on the part of teachers helped you to learn?
- 2 What teaching behaviours made it more difficult for you to learn?
- 3 Why do you think this was so?

## Disruptive students

As for Joba, stroking the girl's arm in class was almost certainly an attention-seeking move. Yet his reaction to Livingstone's cutting remarks were fairly natural for someone being insulted. And it's important to realize that, even though Joba was silenced by Livingstone's insult, it is unlikely that he would be very responsive to the teacher as a source of authority in the long term. Even if Joba appeared to 'respect' the teacher's authority, respect and authority are exactly what the teacher would have lost.

How can this be? Is it not removing the cane that has cost teachers much of their authority? Joba's response seems to taunt his teacher with disrespect because he knows Livingstone can't whip him. And was it not the eighties' message of 'ungovernability', and the coming of democracy, that led to this breakdown? Joba would be quick to argue for his constitutional rights if Livingstone were to lose his temper and hit him. How could we suggest that the teacher was responsible for a loss of respect?

Well, perhaps we should turn these questions around and ask whether by behaving in a *more* democratic way, the teacher could have produced a better response from his disruptive student, and increased his authority. In fact, this is the kind of case we will be making throughout this section. Can we find solutions to these problems through a deeper understanding of democracy?

Sometimes we have to remind ourselves, as we complain about increases in crime and unemployment, to value the democracy that so many strove and fought for in this country. No longer are South Africans embarrassed to be South Africans – either branded as oppressors or downtrodden masses. All South Africans now enjoy rights that cannot be trampled on with *impunity*: the right to vote, to move about freely, to join any organization, and to gain an education. Irrespective of how we vote, relatively few South Africans would seriously consider returning to the old restrictions.

So how do we reconcile democracy with teacher authority, and respectful relationships between teachers and learners, when there is so much evidence of freedom bringing many schools to the point of chaos? Livingstone says teachers have lost authority, and he seems to blame the learners, the authorities, and democracy. But we are suggesting that in this situation Livingstone has contributed to the loss of his own authority.

Clearly, there is confusion around the question of what 'authority' is, and we need to gain a sound understanding of it, otherwise all the good teaching strategies in the world will not solve the problem of disorder at its source.

When a person acts **with impunity** there is no possibility of being punished.

## ACTIVITY 18: CONFUSING POWER AND AUTHORITY

**Read Wally Morrow's article, 'Authority, responsibility and democracy in creating climates for learning' (Reading 11 on page 71 in your Reader). The article includes excellent brief activities throughout, so we will not provide additional questions on this reading. At this point, you will need to read Part 1, 'Power and authority'.**



Morrow's reading will be referred to throughout this section. You will need between 35 and 45 minutes to read Part 1 and work through the short questions.

## Legitimate authority

Morrow, in our reading, helps us to see that when we talk about 'authority' and 'respect', we often forget that people may attach several different meanings to these words. What some understand as a loss of 'respect' or 'authority' may well refer to a loss of 'fear' or 'power'.

Many teachers assume that, once they are appointed to be 'in charge' of young learners, this position automatically gives them 'authority'. When they find that the learners do not automatically respect this 'authority' all the time, they may try to back it up with corporal punishment, or at least the threat of corporal punishment.

In fact, what these teachers are doing is moving away from true, legitimate authority – into the area of power and force. Why are power and force different from authority? Because authority is based on *rights*, while power and force have nothing to do with rights. Let's look at authority first.

Part of what a teacher is expected to do is to maintain an orderly environment conducive to learning, for the benefit of all concerned. This is seen as the teacher's right or legitimate authority. So for a teacher to 'take charge' in this way is not undemocratic, any more than a soccer referee, responsible for maintaining an orderly game, is undemocratic for showing a yellow card to a player who becomes violent.

However, power and force are not based on rights at all. As Morrow points out, rights and power/force are simply not compatible. If I have power over you, I can ignore your rights. But if you have a way of ensuring that your rights are honoured (recourse to a legal system, for example), then my power over you is restricted, especially if it's a case of my forcing you do something *against* your will. So when a teacher relies on force, as in corporal punishment, that teacher is expressing power, not authority. And trying to force disruptive learners to respect others' rights is not likely to succeed in the long term because they would not see this as respecting *their* rights.

We've said that many teachers *assume* that their position automatically gives them authority. However, if teachers are put in charge for the sake of ensuring that the learners' right to a decent education is honoured, no assumptions about automatic authority can be justified. Teachers need to *earn* their authority by carrying out their regulatory function effectively. A referee would have little authority or respect if he did not bother to call players to book for foul play.

Teachers are also expected to earn their authority insofar as society expects them to have the best interests of the learners at heart, to be knowledgeable and skilled in what they teach to learners, and to be knowledgeable and skilled in how to teach it.

“  
*Just as it is not healthy for teachers to assume the status of the professional, but to strive to be professional – so it is healthier for a teacher to earn authority, and her learners' respect, than to assume it.*  
 ”

## 'In authority' or 'an authority'

It was the philosopher of education, R. S. Peters, who first pointed out the difference between a teacher being legitimately 'in authority' and a teacher being 'an authority'.

Teachers, like referees and traffic officers, are generally legitimately placed 'in authority'. However, this authority needs to be built and maintained. When teachers neglect to maintain an orderly learning environment, or rely on force such as corpo-

ral punishment rather than rights to do so, they sacrifice the legitimacy of their authority.

On the other hand, many teachers are not only 'in authority', but 'an authority', to the extent that they have a sound, broad and deep knowledge of what is to be taught, and how to teach it (we develop this idea further in Section Five).

Just as it is not healthy for teachers to assume the status of professional, but to strive to be professional, so it is healthier for a teacher to *earn* authority, and her learners' respect, than it is to assume it.



You will need about 10 minutes for this activity.

### ACTIVITY 19: THE EFFECTS OF CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

**Turn to Reading 12, which consists of extracts from the article 'Spoil the rod, spare the child' by Salim Vally. If you are working in a study or tutorial group, this would be an excellent article to discuss. If you don't have access to such a group, try to discuss the article informally among your colleagues.**

# Teachers and learners: the teacher 'in charge'

## 4.3

In this section, we continue to explore the nature of teacher authority, but we focus on another confusion that has undermined the authority of teachers – the confusion between political and educational authority. We examine the teacher's role in a democratic learning environment and try to reconcile the principles of equality and authority in a democratic learning environment.

### ACTIVITY 20: POLITICAL AUTHORITY AND EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITY

**Read Part 2 of Reading 1, 'Political and educational authority', and do the activities that are built into the reading.**



Spend about 40 minutes on the reading and the activities.

## The question of equality

*The Artis teachers had sympathized with Livingstone, but it was soon clear that they didn't have constructive answers to the problem he had expressed. Then Shahieda remembered something she'd read on a course dealing with the problem of authority. She made copies of it for her colleagues, so that everyone could read it.*

*All of them had been teachers or students during the eighties, when high school students had been in the thick of the action against the apartheid state, so they understood why it was that the idea of political accountability and authority had become mixed up with educational authority in the first place. However, there was something that worried Fana about the reading:*

*'I agree that educational authority must be based on something other than that required of public office-bearers in a democracy. But there's something I don't understand. In Part 2, Morrow argues the inequality of teachers and learners in the classroom, but surely there must be some senses in which they are equal?*

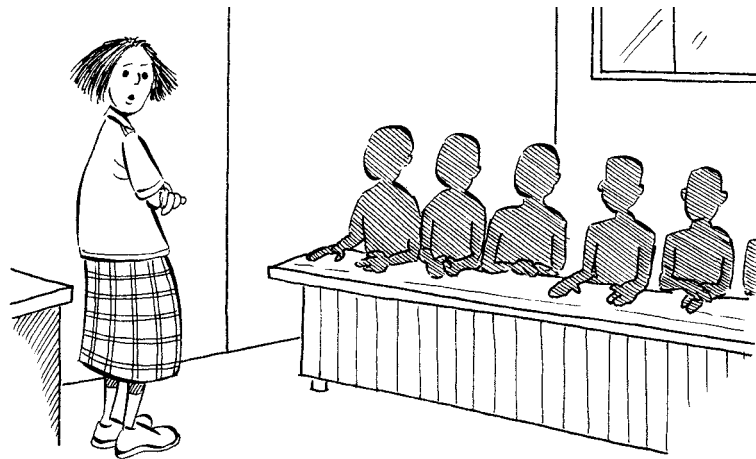
*'I think I can put your mind at rest about that,' said Shahieda. 'In another article, Morrow does in fact make the point that teachers need to treat learners as persons – in that sense, they should be seen as equals (1989: 133). It might not sound like a big distinction, but it's easy for a teacher to relate to a class in a bureaucratic way, as a collection of students, rather than as individual learners. Some of our learners have the potential to turn out far more knowledgeable and capable than we are, so we'd be wise not to treat them impersonally, or as inferior beings.'*

*Peter had been following all of this, but now it was his turn to express a doubt: 'Wait a minute,' he said. 'You're saying, or Morrow is saying, that as persons, learners should be treated as human beings, as they would be in any other sphere of life. But in their role as learners, students are in a position of inequality to teachers because they know less or have fewer skills, at least in the area in which they're being taught.'*

*'That sounds right,' answered Shahieda.*

*'But in our in-service training,' said Peter, 'they've been trying to persuade us that teaching is not just a matter of transferring knowledge into empty heads, that learning involves learners actively constructing*

Remember Herb Kohl making a similar point in Section 2.5?



It's easy to relate to a class simply as a collection of students, rather than as actual human beings.



Paulo Freire, the author of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and many other books, has been highly influential in educational thought since the seventies, particularly in developing countries and in the USA. In South Africa, his books, though banned by the apartheid government, were extremely influential among those who resisted apartheid in the field of education.

*knowledge or competence for themselves. What writer was it that said both the teacher and the students have to be learners?'*

*'That was Paulo Freire,' said Shahieda. 'He said that a good teacher would listen to and learn from her students, in order to be more attuned to their worlds and to promote their growth as "persons". I see what you're getting at – that sounds a bit more like equality, doesn't it?'*

*'Hang on,' said Fana. 'Freire was writing mainly with adult learners in mind. In schools for younger learners, even a democratic teacher would still have responsibility for structuring activities, providing challenges, and keeping order. In that sense, surely the teacher's still the one in charge?'*

This question of the teacher's role ('as an authority') with respect to the learner's construction of knowledge is a key one for teachers, and it needs to be examined more carefully in Section Five. But at this point we have to look at another aspect of the teacher's role: authority within democratic education.

# Democracy and freedom in the learning environment

## 4.4

In this section, we will again examine the teacher's role in a democratic learning environment. It will be our task to try to dispel common confusions surrounding the teacher's role with regard to discipline, the nature of freedom and authority, and the choice/compromise between learner freedom and teacher authority.

### ACTIVITY 21: RULES AND BOUNDARIES

- 1 Read 'Authority and the organization of learning-space', Part 3 of Reading 11. Again, the activities are built into the reading. Even if you only think about your answers to Questions 18 and 19, be sure to jot down some rules in answer to Question 20.
- 2 Read the brief extract from an article by David Winkley, a primary school principal in England, in Reading 13.



You will need 35 minutes for this activity. (Note that the value questions involved in this situation will be discussed in connection with another, similar situation in Section 6.5.)

## Discipline or control?

Part 3 of Morrow's reading focuses on regulative and constitutive rules. This distinction is closely linked to the distinction between a teacher's '*in* authority' function and his or her '*an* authority' function, as we shall soon see.

### Regulative rules

In their different ways, both Morrow and Winkley believe that regulative rules in school need to be justified, that they should only exist for a learner-centred purpose, which may be:

- **social**: maintaining an orderly environment for learning to take place; and
- **psychological**: maintaining a secure atmosphere in which learners can grow and develop.

Here we are talking of the control and prevention of disorderly and disruptive behaviour by means of rules, vigilance and penalties. To the extent that this may be part of a teacher's role, his or her '*in* authority' function is involved. How does Artis Secondary deal with the problem?

*Immediately after assembly on a particular morning there was an atmosphere of shock in the Artis Secondary staffroom – a matric boy, Gerry, had punched one of his female classmates, Nosipho, because she had made a comment about his trousers. She had a lump on her forehead and had lost a tooth. Gerry was unrepentant. He said that he had been circumcised and was a man, and women had to respect him. Nosipho had shown disrespect by commenting on his trousers.*

*The young woman was furious and shocked. Shahieda had taken her to the district surgeon, and would then take her to the police. Nosipho was determined to press charges and let the law take its course. The big question was, what should the school do?*

*The Principal, Mr Isaacs, announced, 'I have sent Gerry home to fetch his parents. I want to see the HODs and the vice principal in my office now, please.'*

*At break he announced in the staffroom that they had decided to consult the staff before a final decision was made.*



You will need about 15 minutes for this activity.



Morrow's use of the word 'discipline' to refer to the constitutive rules of a subject is not as common as Winkley's use of the word, which refers to anything that has to do with maintaining control and order in school classrooms.

## ACTIVITY 22: MAINTAINING A SAFE AND ORDERLY SPACE

- 1 Write down a rule for inclusion in the school's Code of Conduct to deal with problems of this sort in the future.
- 2 Write down brief guidelines on how this rule should be applied (a few lines will do).

### Constitutive rules

Constitutive rules are bound up with the very existence of human activities such as sports and disciplines; they 'constitute' or form the very possibility of such activities. Constitutive rules are the internal, structuring rules that make soccer soccer and painting painting. In the case of soccer they may be actual rules, in the case of painting they may be principles of effective practice. If we value these pursuits and submit to the discipline involved, we do not need to question the purpose of the rules that constitute them. If the teacher needs to initiate the learner into the requirements of these disciplines, that teacher is required to be 'an authority' in the field.

### Do rules restrict freedom and creativity?

What kind of rules did you think would be appropriate in your classroom in Part 3 of the Morrow reading? What purpose did they serve? Would they help to maintain the orderliness and safety of the learning environment? Would they create the kind of environment that Winkley suggests – one that your learners might prefer to their own homes in the holidays?

In Part 3 of the reading, Morrow makes the point that if we undermine the sort of rules and authority that help maintain a safe, systematic and productive learning environment, we will not advance democracy and freedom. But he also asks whether these rules restrict the freedom and creativity of learners. The answer seems to be that they may in fact create the conditions for the exercise of freedom and creativity, much as the good referee's enforcement of rules allows good soccer players to display their skills to maximum effect.

Of course it is possible for rules, and the punishment by which they are enforced, to become so restrictive that learners neither feel safe nor feel any incentive to be productive in their learning. This was the situation at the *Yizo Yizo* school at the beginning of the first series – a school under the grip of a 'disciplinarian' headmaster.

However, much of that fear was aroused, not by the Principal's cane, but by criminal elements in the school, bullies who tortured other learners out of sight in the toilets. This fear became a distorted image of the Principal's reign of fear. It's an irony often found in schools where the rules are grim and restrictive. Despite the tight control, youthful cruelty can co-exist and even thrive. In such schools, rights count for very little; they are ignored by both the Principal and the bullies. How can learners attending such a school learn that people's rights are important and to be respected?

In fact, it is not necessary for rules to be so restrictive, or applied so restrictively. Many teachers seem to think that their only choice is between authority and licence (freedom from all restrictions). This thinking is based on a double confusion. Democratic freedom in teaching is confused with licence (learner-centred teaching taken to extremes), just as authority in teaching is confused with authoritarianism (the abuse of authority for one's own ends). The faulty perception that results is that teacher authority and democracy are incompatible – many teachers wrongly assume that if they are to move away from the authoritarian teaching of the past, they must move toward licence – the removal of restrictions.

An **irony** is an unexpected truth, contrary to what one might think to be true.

## Freedom from and freedom to

Behind the double confusion described above lie oversimplified ideas of both freedom and authority.

The philosopher, Charles Taylor (1985: 211–299), points out that democracy requires two forms of freedom:

- 'freedom from' interference, restraint and oppression; and
- 'freedom to' act and fulfil one's potential as a human being.

This distinction is particularly important when we shift our focus from the world of politics to the world of education and growth. An overemphasis on the removal of restrictions can create a world without boundaries in which children feel insecure and in need of structure, and in which bullies can make life very miserable for the rest. Therefore a balance needs to be struck in which the conditions necessary for learning, growth and development are maintained.

## Authority and authoritarian

An oversimplified understanding of the word 'authority' is also responsible for much confusion among teachers. Paulo Freire has commented on this confusion in his dialogue with Ira Shor, *A Pedagogy for Liberation* (1987: 91):

*The democratic teacher never transforms authority into authoritarianism. He or she can never stop being an authority or having authority. Without authority, it is very difficult for the liberties of the students to be shaped. Freedom needs authority to become free. It is a paradox, but it is true. The question nevertheless is for authority to know that it has its foundation in the freedom of the others, and if the authority denies this freedom and cuts off this relationship, this founding relationship, with freedom, I think that it is no longer authority but [...] authoritarianism.*

*[On the other hand] if freedom does not meet authority because authority renounces itself, denies itself, the tendency is for freedom to stop being freedom in order to become licence. Because of that, I am convinced that the educator, no matter if she or he works at the level of pre-school or primary school or the university, has to assume the necessary authority which he or she must have, without going beyond it by becoming authoritarian.*

A **paradox** is a statement that seems to contradict itself (because it contains opposing ideas), but that nevertheless makes sense.

In fact, an either/or choice between licence and authoritarianism is not forced on us by democratic education, or by Curriculum 2005, though many teachers think this is so. Let's look in on the classroom of a teacher grappling with the requirements of the new curriculum.

### ***Lukile's story***

**Lukile, a Grade 5 teacher, had witnessed examples of learner-centred teaching during her teaching practice at a progressive, previously 'white' school. She was keen to bring the benefits of this experience to less privileged learners in a township school, where she was given the responsibility for teaching a class of 40.**

**Despite this intention, at the end of her first term as a full-time teacher, she found herself heeding the frequent advice from her more experienced colleagues: 'Start tough!' She was surprised by the ability of**



eleven-year-olds to create havoc, and in fact 14 of the 40 learners in her class were considerably older. 'Making an example' of a few ring-leaders seemed to help, as did a few break-time detentions for the whole class, though she hated doing this. Still, it had worked to the extent of enabling her to get through her first year without becoming a nervous wreck. The children took her threats seriously, and mostly they co-operated.

Lukile started her second year with more confidence, again with the intention of introducing more learner-centred activity. Lukile arranged the learners' tables in groups of six, hoping that the learners would experience the classroom as a more natural environment, and learning as a more active and pleasant pursuit.

Much of the time, though, she found that she had to conduct the lesson in the 'traditional' way, standing at the chalkboard and explaining the work. This was mainly because in the group arrangement, the learners related to their groups as well as to herself. She felt she had less control in this situation, and the children sensed this too – they tended to become very noisy and to distract one another. Even when she gave the groups specific tasks to do, half an hour or more would pass before they would get down to working.

Sometimes she would say, 'I'm going to count to five, and I want everyone to be quiet,' but find herself counting to 'four ... four-and-a-half ... four-and-three-quarters ...' still unwilling to act out the consequences of her rather empty ultimatum. Eventually she was forced to shout at them. She knew they were playing with her lack of resolve.

The fact was that she didn't really feel comfortable punishing them. She associated stern discipline with teachers she'd had as a child – the sort who made everyone afraid. She wanted to give the children the opportunity to express their growing understanding of the world, and to give them a sympathetic ear. However, they just didn't seem to share her desire for intelligent discussion; they seemed more interested in chaos!

Such a lot of time seemed to just get wasted. And when the learners did get down to the tasks she set for groups, there were always a few learners who dominated the activity. Some of these were witty, showing signs of leadership, others just bullied the smaller children. No-one gave the quiet children a chance, or asked what they could contribute. It was all going wrong ...



The teacher from next door stormed in and yelled at the class.

**One day, when the learners were getting out of hand, Oliver, the teacher from the next-door classroom stormed in and yelled at the class. They immediately kept quiet. Lukile was sure that Oliver had caught sight of her at the back of the room, where she was stooped over the work of one of the learners, trying to help him with it. But he pretended not to as he scolded the children for disturbing his own class, and 'behaving like savages'.**

**When he left, Lukile was so embarrassed she hardly knew what to say to the children. She felt that Oliver was right, yet she knew that despite the order in his classroom, his Grade 6 learners were usually bored stiff. His nickname was not 'Drone' for nothing. Lukile wondered what her nickname was among the children ...**

**Oliver obviously didn't lose any sleep over his learners, which Lukile felt was wrong. Yet she sensed that she was doing the wrong thing, even if it seemed to be for all the right reasons.**

“  
*In situations where democracy is mistaken for a removal of restrictions, the teacher can arguably cause more harm to learners than stricter colleagues.*  
 ”

Lukile assumes that learners will be eager to learn and behave sensibly. She doesn't want her learners to be restricted by fear. But despite all her good intentions, she is disappointed and her performance falls far short of professional. She knows that punishment makes life easier for the teacher, but regrets the costs – for herself and her learners. However, it's clear that removing the restrictions leads to disorder.

The mere arrangement of learners in groups does not make for active learning. The children don't seem to know how to work together, much time is wasted, little systematic learning takes place, and a battle of nerves and willpower follows. So the teacher falls back on transfer-of-information teaching, which, with the children seated around tables in groups, has been called mere 'cluster teaching, not group-work at all.

In despair, the young teacher considers giving up teaching after only a year and a half – a waste of all her training. But has this training contributed to her problems? It has not helped her to understand why learners do not respond to her efforts to win them over. It has not equipped her with the skills required for working collaboratively so that she can develop these in her learners. It has not provided her with a well-grounded sense of her own authority as a teacher. All she has acquired are a few vague notions about groupwork and children's capacity to develop if not too many restrictions are placed on them.

What we may see in Lukile's story is the confusion over authority and freedom that many teachers experience, especially when old, essentially authoritarian attitudes are giving way to more democratic attitudes. In such a situation, where democracy is mistaken for a removal of restrictions, the teacher can arguably cause more harm to her learners than her stricter colleagues. So let's examine this confusion.

Lukile adopts what is often called a *laissez faire* approach; Oliver adopts an authoritarian approach. In the *laissez faire* approach, the child is given licence; young learners look in vain for secure boundaries; bullies tend to dominate. Learners are unlikely to learn to respect the rights of others in this environment. This approach discounts the inexperience and relative immaturity of young learners, as well as the essential need to grow that Kohl describes.

In the authoritarian approach, rules are restrictive, there is an overemphasis on control, and teacher power is based on force or the fear of punishment. The teacher is not accountable, and therefore abuses his or her power. This approach discounts the learner as a person with potential for growth, and it discounts the possibility of the teacher being wrong, or at least short-sighted.

A *laissez faire* approach refers to the principle of allowing people's activities to develop without exerting any control over them.

## A different approach to order: democratic authority

The limitations of these two approaches are obvious. Fortunately, there is another approach – the way of democratic authority, which focuses on empowerment, in which the *freedom to* learn and grow in constructive ways is as important as the *freedom from* restriction. This does not discount either immaturity and inexperience, or the learner as a person with potential for higher development.

It regards teachers and learners as equal insofar as they are persons, but not equal in terms of their roles in the teaching/learning situation. This is because, as we saw, teachers are appointed in authority and given the right to exert this authority over learners, especially when the learners are disruptive. In such cases, the learners' equal rights as persons are subordinated to the rights of other learners, and to the teacher's legitimate right, in order to maintain an orderly learning environment.

Democratic authority encourages learners to participate in class because it is focused on the learner's potential. But it recognizes the teacher's central role in maintaining an ordered, safe and stimulating learning environment, that will challenge and extend learners. It therefore requires the teacher to be both 'in authority' and 'an authority' in the classroom. It is neither authoritarianism, nor licence. In democratic authority, rules are not absent, they exist to create the possibility, security and freedom for creative growth to happen.

In fact, democracy and authority are completely compatible. Democratic teachers do wield authority. They are not weak, and do not just passively let things happen. But on the other hand they do not rely on 'claimed' or traditional authority, or on respect that is based on force or fear. Rules (both constitutive and regulatory) and boundaries are very much a part of democratic authority, but they are not enforced for their own sake, or for the sake of the teacher.

Clearly, a democratic teaching and learning environment gives teachers a choice of roles that is not limited to authoritarian strategies on one hand, or licence on the other. The teacher who wields democratic authority constantly seeks a balance between order and freedom – the one never excludes the other, and with larger or smaller classes, at different times of the day or the week, the teacher will display her authority by knowing when to lean towards order, and when to lean more towards freedom.

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# Effective teacher authority in practice

# 4.5

## ACTIVITY 23: EXERCISING EFFECTIVE AUTHORITY

Read Part 4 of Reading 11 by Wally Morrow ('Effective authority'). Complete the activities that are built into the reading.

The last section of Morrow's reading is very brief, but it raises some issues that seem to concern teachers a great deal. One of these issues (the abuse of authority) has already been discussed in Section 4.4. The first issue raises concerns about the penalties and punishments that ultimately back up the rules on which the orderly maintenance of learning environments is based.



You will need about 15 minutes for this activity.

## Punishment

In the case of soccer referees, rule enforcement is backed by *sanctions* that are formally laid down and widely recognized. The sanctions available to teachers, however, are far less systematic and are by no means agreed on by everyone in society.

Sanctions can range from subtle to drastic measures, such as the suspension of a learner from a school. The range is enormous, limited only by the Code of Conduct and the law against physical force. Usually these are left up to individual teachers. However, individual teachers are usually supported by the collective authority of the school, and in many cases by the community that it serves.

Although a system of sanctions or punishments needs to be in place to give enforceable meaning to regulative rules, it is important for teachers not to confuse punishment with discipline, or with control. When many teachers talk about discipline, they automatically think in terms of punishment. For this reason many are afraid that to abolish caning is to abolish discipline.

This is another double misunderstanding: control is confused with discipline, and punishment is confused with control and order. This misunderstanding severely limits a teacher's stock of teaching strategies, especially if he or she becomes *fixated* on one form of punishment, such as corporal punishment.

As Winkley points out, the goal of discipline strategies should be a safe learning environment that encourages learning. Another goal that is often mentioned is the gradual development of self-discipline in learners. For such goals, punishment should always be a last resort.

One reason why it is *not* always seen as a last resort is that many teachers have a limited understanding of discipline and authority, and see them as dependent on punishment. You may recall Fataar and Patterson's statement that the abolition of corporal punishment seems to have added to the breakdown of order and discipline instead of creating a 'human rights-friendly' climate in some schools (Reading 4).

Another reason is that teachers often view disruptive behaviour as an attack on, or an insult directed at, themselves personally. Their egos become too involved, and punishment is meted out partly out of revenge, to show the class 'who's boss', or to maintain a reputation of being 'in control' among colleagues.

In fact, very little disruptive behaviour is a personal attack directed at the teacher. Dreikurs and Cassel, in an influential study called *Discipline without Tears* (1990: 30–41), analysed the often unconscious goals behind young learners' unacceptable behaviour. After working with hundreds of children over many years, they identified only four goals of misbehaviour:

**Sanctions** are penalties or rewards that force or persuade people to keep to a particular rule or standard of behaviour.

A person is **fixated** when they are obsessed with one particular thing to the exclusion of others and are therefore unable to think of alternatives.

- attention-getting;
- power;
- revenge; and
- displays of inadequacy (a desperate avoidance of any expectation).

Of course, behind these goals may be many factors and combinations of factors in the young learner's background and personal makeup, but the single drive behind all four goals tends to be the child's deep desire for *social acceptance*.

If various factors have discouraged particular children in their quest for recognition and belonging, they are likely to imagine that their misbehaviour will gain them the social acceptance they need. Even the goal of 'revenge', which may seem like a personal attack on the teacher, usually stems from deep discouragement experienced in the child's social environment (including family and community), rather than from some particular hurt inflicted by the teacher.

Knowing this, teachers should be able to recognize how inappropriate punishment and criticism of the learner (rather than criticism of the *behaviour*) may be in many situations. In addition to the negative effects of corporal punishment noted in Reading 12 on page 84 of the Reader, there are many other reasons why teachers should keep punishment in the *background* of their thinking until rules are actually broken.

When rules *are* actually broken (preferably rules that have been agreed upon by all involved), punishment needs to be meted out in a calm but firm manner, making it clear that it is a consequence of breaking agreed-upon rules. The learner should not be led to feel that the punishment represents revenge, or a display of power, on the teacher's part.

Herbert Kohl gives an example of a teacher using a calm but firm approach *without* resorting to punishment where many teachers would have punished the offender (see Excerpt B of Reading 1 on page 5 of the Reader). The teacher's approach in Kohl's example also takes note of the need for social acceptance that underlies the boy's anti-social behaviour.

The reasons for not relying on punishment as a means of establishing and maintaining one's authority are well summarized by Chris Kyriacou (1991: 97):

#### THE SHORTCOMING OF PUNISHMENT

**The most important aspect of punishment to bear in mind is that its impact is largely dependent on it being used as a formal and weighty sanction employed for serious incidents of misbehaviour when other strategies have been unsuccessful. There is, however, an element of illusion involved here, since very few classroom sanctions are in fact of any weight, with most involving only a short period of unpleasantness or having a nuisance value. Their impact owes much more to using them in a way that conveys the seriousness with which the misbehaviour is being viewed. It is also largely the case that the type of pupils most likely to be punished – notably disaffected pupils who have little respect for authority and the values and ethos of the school – are the pupils least likely to respond by behaving better in future. In contrast, those pupils who would be most worried about punishment are those for whom skilful use of other strategies should be sufficiently effective.**

The word '**disaffected**' means discontented or lacking in loyalty.

**The main drawbacks to using punishments are:**

- They form an inappropriate model for human relationships.
- They foster anxiety and resentment.
- They have a short-lived 'initial shock' effect.
- They encourage pupils to develop strategies (such as lying) to avoid getting caught.
- They do not promote good behaviour directly but simply serve to suppress misbehaviour.
- They do not deal with the cause of the misbehaviour.
- They focus attention on the misbehaviour.
- They are tiring to maintain as a method of control, and can create unnecessary hostility.

“

*Those pupils who would be most worried about punishment are those for whom skilful use of other strategies should be sufficiently effective.*

”

## Some strategies for exercising effective authority

Part 4 of the Morrow reading also deals with the *manner* in which authority is exercised, whether you are confronting, preventing or punishing unacceptable behaviour. Acting with authority is so much more than following a technique or a laid-down rule. Much of it involves action that will **prevent** undesirable behaviour.

There are many positive ways to create and maintain an orderly, safe and effective learning environment, ways that enable teachers and learners to move away from a relationship of punisher and punished. Here is a brief selection to convince you that neither order and discipline, nor democratic, legitimate authority need be sacrificed when caning is banned.

- Work on a 'charismatic' or winning personality – it isn't everything, but it certainly helps. It's also something you can develop in a two-way interaction in which you and your learners bring out the best in one another. Being prepared and relaxed for a creative lesson that involves active participation from the learners can do wonders for your 'personality'!
- Make variety a principle in lesson preparation; use your creativity. Remember you're competing with television, the Internet, sex, soccer, and so on for learners' attention.
- Develop your awareness of individual needs, abilities and styles of learning, and prepare your lessons accordingly.
- Remember that learners' need to find work relevant to their concerns and interests.
- Actively manage your class with the aim of encouraging and challenging active, purposeful learning.
- Give learners as many opportunities as possible to learn actively through participation and inquiry-based groupwork activities. Plan these activities carefully so that learners understand their purpose, and structure them so that they know exactly what they are expected to do. Monitor groups, intervene with questions that challenge further investigation and give instructions that encourage disciplined, systematic work.
- Being 'in authority' does not mean 'standing on your dignity' – be prepared to 'suspend your ego' (See Reading 1, Excerpt C, page 5 of the Reader). Admit when you're mistaken, don't try to cover this up, and don't let your teaching be limited by the fear that the learners may ask you something you cannot explain. Better still, make it clear to learners from the outset that you're not, and aren't meant to be, **infallible**; that you're also learning, and that learning is a lifelong necessity.
- Hold back when you are tempted to 'hold the floor'. Listen more often to what learners have to say, and create more opportunities for them to speak – they will

When a person is **infallible** they are incapable of being wrong or making an error.

find themselves learning by doing and by speaking.

- Show in small ways that you care for your learners as people.
- Listen to offenders; make inquiries, their stories may be legitimate, and you may possibly be about to punish someone unjustly. This does not mean being 'soft'.
- Remember that having a reason doesn't excuse breaking the rules. There must still be consequences for wrong actions and moral mistakes.
- Find subtle ways to reward positive behaviour. Such small rewards as a smile or a 'Well done!' will count for a lot with learners if your good opinion matters to them; and it will come to matter to them if they know you care for them as learners and as people.
- As far as possible, avoid 'rewarding' undesirable behaviour – such rewards may include your losing your temper, or even corporal punishment if it's seen as a 'badge of honour' in your school. Refuse to play the student game of 'I'll make you punish me'.
- Model responsible behaviour yourself in as many ways as possible, without seeking to become 'too good to be true' – the latter is more likely to put young learners off than to serve as a role model.
- Develop a code of conduct for your class together with learners. Remember that it will be much more effective with learners if it's binding on you as well. And resist the temptation to make this a long list of rules. Draw the learners' attention to the function of codes of conduct, constitutions, and accountability as the pillars of democracy.
- When learners do breach the code, permit punishment by natural consequences as much as possible. For instance, latecomers were locked out of a school because the school perimeter had to be secured against criminals when teachers and learners were in the classrooms. This approach carried risks, but most latecomers were embarrassed when their parents found out that they had not been in school. After a few days, late-coming ceased to be the major problem it had been at this school.

In this section you have learnt how teachers can establish or regain their authority among learners: it does not have to be imposed through force or fear; neither should it be claimed simply as one's traditional 'due'. You have been shown how the democratic teacher wields an authority that is legitimate, that is unafraid to employ rules, that does not impose control for its own sake but to ensure an effective learning environment in which all learners are safe to learn and be creative. This type of authority also seeks a dynamic balance between freedom and control, and is therefore neither rigid and unbending, nor lax.

In the next section, we will turn our attention to that other crucial source of teacher authority, namely the teacher's knowledge of the learning area that he or she is to teach, and the teacher's knowledge of how to teach it.

## Key learning points

1. Many teachers in South Africa today contribute to their own lack of authority by confusing *authority* and *power* – they still interpret 'authority' as 'power over learners'. Such power is based on the fear of corporal or other punishment, in other words force.
2. *Force* is not based on the recognized *right* of the teacher. It is simply based on the teacher being in the stronger position, and it ignores the rights of the learner. *Authority*, on the other hand, is based on the teacher earning the right to control the learning environment in the interests of the learners, and on the learners' rights to a secure learning environment.
3. Teachers could get better responses from disruptive students – and increase their own authority – by behaving in more, rather than less democratic ways. This would earn them *legitimate authority*, in which society grants teachers the right to control certain situations for the benefit of all. However, if teachers rely on force rather than rights, they sacrifice this legitimacy.
4. In addition to being legitimately appointed with an acknowledged right to control the learning environment ('*in authority*'), a teacher should also have sound knowledge and skill ('*an authority*').
5. Legitimate *political authority* in a democracy is based on the principle of equality, but legitimate *educational authority* involves inequality between teachers and learners – at least in respect to what is being taught and learnt. This is because even democratic teachers are responsible for structuring activities, providing challenges, and keeping order.
6. Democracy and freedom are not in conflict. Nor do rules and authority restrict the freedom and creativity of learners.
7. Constitutive rules are different from regulative rules.
  - *Constitutive rules* structure human activities. Without them, most human activities would have little form or logic.
  - *Regulative rules* exist to help ensure order and safety in human activities. Two legitimate purposes of regulative rules are social (to maintain order) and psychological (to maintain a secure atmosphere).
8. Control and discipline are two different things.
  - *Control* has to do with the 'external' prevention of disruptive behaviour by means of regulative rules and penalties. Teachers are placed 'in authority' to ensure a reasonable measure of control in the learning environment. This is not undemocratic.
  - *Discipline* has to do more with 'internal' rules and structures of a human



activity. To learn, one has to submit oneself to the 'discipline' of the appropriate form of this knowledge or skill. A teacher is seen as 'an authority' to the extent that he or she is able to initiate learners into such a discipline.

9. Authority is not the same as authoritarianism.
  - *Authority* involves the two roles 'in authority' and 'an authority'. Both are necessary to enable learners to achieve the knowledge, skill and attitudes required for successful participation in human activities, and to have the freedom to participate creatively. Authority is therefore compatible with, and essential for, freedom and creativity.
  - *Authoritarianism* cuts learners off from freedom and creativity by imposing rules and restrictions as an end in themselves, or for the sake of imposing one's will on others.
10. There are two forms of freedom, 'freedom from' and 'freedom to'.
  - *Freedom from* excessive, authoritarian restrictions is necessary for growth and creativity. But an overemphasis on freedom from restrictions removes the safety that comes from boundaries.
  - *Freedom to* act and to achieve one's potential as a human being provides a purpose for freedom; it does not mean freedom for freedom's sake.
11. Teachers therefore have a third choice besides *authoritarian* and *laissez faire* approaches. The former discounts the learner as a person with potential for growth; the latter discounts the inexperience and relative immaturity of young learners.
12. The *democratic* approach, on the other hand, gives teachers a choice of roles that is not limited to authoritarian strategies or licence. The teacher who wields democratic authority constantly seeks a balance between order and freedom.
13. Many teachers are afraid to abolish caning: they think that this amounts to abolishing control, thereby confusing control with punishment.
14. If the goal of regulative rules and control is a safe learning environment that encourages learning and self-discipline, then punishment should be used as a last resort.
15. The type of pupils most likely to be punished – those who have little respect for authority and the values of the school – are the pupils least likely to respond with better behaviour in future. The type of pupils least likely to be punished – those who worry about punishment – are the pupils for whom the skilful use of other strategies should be effective.

## Tutor-marked assignment 2

**Write a few pages describing the discipline policy at the school where you are teaching, or doing your practice teaching, or where you have taught in the past. Give the school a made-up name in your assignment. If a formally stated policy does not exist, describe what actually happens at this school with regard to maintaining order (in other words, the actual discipline 'culture' at this school). If there is a document setting out the school's official policy, quote from this, and use it as a basis for analysis when you answer the questions below.**

**The length of this assignment should be approximately 800 to 1 000 words (about three A4 pages, hand-written or typed in double spacing).**

- 1** What were the contextual factors that led to the shaping of this policy? Use your own knowledge of the school, of the community surrounding it, and of their history. Consider asking staff members who have been associated with the school longer than you have. Remember to tell them that you are doing this for an assignment, not 'snooping'.
- 2** Describe to what extent the policy or culture of discipline at the school seems to be based on fear and a need to use power to establish and maintain teacher authority. To what extent does it help learners to gain the freedom to achieve their potential as learners and as human beings and members of a democratic society? Provide some examples.
- 3** Do you think the school's culture of discipline emphasizes the enforcement of regulative rules in order to create a climate for systematic, disciplined learning, orderly activity and healthy development? Or are rules there to impose control, to show the learners 'who's boss'? Again, give some examples.



If a teacher is guilty of misconduct that involves breaking society's laws, he or she could face criminal charges in court, in addition to disciplinary action within the profession. This is, of course, the case for members of any profession.

