Understanding Dynamics of School Discipline: Examining Classroom Practices and Teachers' Perspectives in a Primary School

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Abstract

The research paper aims to shed light on the dynamics of school discipline practices within the context of a primary school in Delhi, exploring how the disciplinary ideal unfolds, assimilates, and becomes deeply ingrained in teachers' beliefs and classroom practices. This qualitative study employed participant observation, informal interactions and interviews to explore differing perspectives, experiences, and contexts within which disciplinary practices are applied. The research addresses key questions, including the types of disciplinary methods commonly employed in primary schools, teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of these methods, and the factors influencing their disciplinary decisions. Participant observations address the disciplinary aspects of the activities and social hierarchies between students, teachers, and administrators, which form the basis of normative power. Interview results indicate that teachers view discipline as the 'soul' of any formal educational institution, and consider it to be a vital part of the school experience. The categories of order, rules, obedience, respect and service emerge as having the utmost priority among teachers' perceptions of discipline.

Keywords: *Discipline, control, order, ethnography, primary education, educational ideals*

Introduction

This article presents insights from ethnographic fieldwork conducted at a primary school in North East Delhi. The paper explores pedagogic and co-curricular activities to unravel how the idea of 'school discipline' unfolds, assimilates, and becomes ingrained in a teacher's beliefs and classroom practices. Attempt is made to delve into teachers' beliefs regarding school discipline and introduces the lens of subjectivity, highlighting the interplay between personal convictions and institutional values and how specific educational ideals of discipline and order are fostered in students through schooling. The paper argues that schools function and operate with guiding values that may not be overtly visible and aims to explore the subtle but influential forces that shape individuals' beliefs within a community and contribute to the construction of socially acceptable norms.

Conceptual Framework

"Discipline at its most basic level, simply means the submission to rules or some kind of order." (Winch & Gingell, 2008. p.58). Winch & Gingell (2008) argue that in the extensive literature on discipline in schools, the complexity of the concept 'discipline' and its connections are often neglected with inadequate attention paid to "the legitimate limits of school and teacher authority or the aims of education" (p.58). Discipline as a concept is thus used to indicate 'order' and 'regularity' and often interchangeably

used with 'control' (Clark, 1998, p. 289). In this paper, the terms discipline, order, and regularity are used to explore, situate and document the mechanisms of control perceived as discipline. According to Durkheim (1973), "discipline in society is to be seen as the father, commanding us, and prompting us to do our duty" (p. xii) and external discipline is a socialisation tool to instil moral authority and respect for social norms. "Discipline in effect regularizes conduct. It implies repetitive behavior under determinate conditions" (Durkheim, 1973, p. 31). Although Durkheim doubted punishment's effectiveness as a deterrent, he accepted it to uphold disciplinary authority in order to maintain social norms and order. It thus becomes the responsibility of educators to establish for students the moral authority of social norms through their disciplinary authority, and to provide the necessary external reinforcement to keep them in place.

However, traditional authoritarian disciplinary measures are argued to undermine a school's socialization objective by alienating students (Dewey, 2012). While Dewey (2012) is sceptical of discipline imposed by teachers, citing that an external discipline is merely a tool for control; he argues that discipline is critical to the growth of the individual and social democracy. Students' active participation in the curriculum and completion of assignments foster self-discipline; teacher-imposed discipline undermines this process by stifling initiative. Thus, teachers should help students choose and engage with their surroundings rather than imposing beliefs or habits on them. Both perspectives advocate for the development of internal discipline with internalised respect for the authority of rules.

Issues of student control through everyday school life are critical themes for sociological research in education. Illich (1971) argues that modern schools have an ulterior motive of creating a homogenous population that thinks alike fits into a predefined mould and functions as per the institution's requirement. This study draws upon the work of Foucault (1975), Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison, where he posits that the evolution from public executions in monarchic power to imprisonment in a democratic society reflects the transition of power structures in society, giving rise to modern disciplinary practices. With industries, hospitals, and schools modelled after the contemporary jail, Foucault contends that this new kind of punishment becomes the framework for governing a whole society wherein surveillance, normalising judgments, and taking examinations became the control mechanisms. This form of control focused its target on the body of an individual. He explains that this new system of power is based on making"docile bodies" that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved (p. 136) rather than exerting brute force over them. Foucault (1975) shows how disciplinary practices create 'docile bodies' of prisoners, soldiers, and school children who were subjected to disciplinary power so that they become more useful and easier to control. Discipline, in principle, is how power is exercised on bodies to make them docile and more productive to increase the efficiency and utility of the people. He then examines how discipline is encouraged by institutions (specifically, here, schools) and becomes the norm in modern societies as an instrument of change. The observed classroom interactions are also explained by Foucault's assertions on surveillance and punishment in the educational system.

Studies on schools and school culture also reflect the diverse ways in which discipline is carried out in classrooms and school premises. Iyer (2013, p.163), in her ethnographic study of disciplinary and pedagogic practices in a primary class, found that the chief concern in the school was disciplining children, and teachers strived to create docile and obedient bodies through disciplining, thereby reforming children. Caddell (2005) in her ethnographic study of a school in Nepal, observed that schools establish inequalities

and differences between "educated and uneducated, developed and less developed, and mark divisions between ordered, disciplined, modern, and 'national' from those considered 'backward', undisciplined, traditional, or confined to the local" (p. 78). Discipline thus plays a chief role in shaping the 'modern' identities of children, teachers, and the broader community. By acting as a disciplinary institution and normalising certain interactions, schools mould children's minds toward more desirable behaviour and bring a sense of prestige.

Chun's (2005) ethnographic study in a Taiwanese middle school reveals the features of power centralisation and authoritativeness of the Taiwanese educational system. The study explored how schools' institutional regime, through disciplinary practices, becomes a significant socialisation agent resulting in constant regulation of thought, a prominent feature of everyday life at school. Chun, 2005, p. 60) notes that, "the wearing of uniforms, the application of uniform codes of social conduct and obeisance to political authority all make school life a microcosm of the militarised and politicised polity already being played out in society at large". Sarangapani (2003), in her paper 'Childhood and Schooling in an Indian Village', describes how teachers in schools were regarded as gurus (spiritual knowers), deepening the unquestioning institutional authority of the teacher over the students. Teachers were regarded as the sole bearer of knowledge and thus held the ultimate power over the development of a certain ideology among students. The submission to authority, i.e., the teacher, and accepting them as the sole bearer of knowledge contributes to the conception of student identity. She highlights that these beliefs and perceptions about self and others come from a deep-rooted framework of "pedagogic and cultural traditions" (p. 415).

Sarangapani's (2003) observations align with Froerer (2007) and Sarkar (1996), who argue that education is used to serve the chief purpose of nation-building and imparting the idea of a 'good citizen' (moral citizenship) with political correctness and can think, act, and feel in a certain rehearsed kind. Sadachar, or moral improvement/education, becomes one of the ways through which schools attempt to achieve their aim of creating well-behaved, dutiful citizens with nationalistic values. This discipline is primarily physical in the early years, shifting towards moral and ideological as students progress to higher grades. Froerer (2007, p.1037) observed, "the prarthna (prayer) is where the school's disciplinary regime is most prominently displayed with strict attention to bodily comportment and students' demonstration of physical discipline".

Tan (2011) reiterates and amplifies the disciplinary culture observed in papers by Froerer, Sarkar and Chun. Tan's (2011) study in an Islamic boarding school in Ngruki, Central Java, focused on 'conditions' that lead to, sustain, and perpetuate a disciplinary tradition in schooling. The school in Tan's (2011) study mirrors a uniform, monolithic religious ideology that is also consistently and deliberately imposed in their daily school activities. Discipline is enforced where students are deliberately kept away from newspapers, radio, and television and regulate their meetings with their parents only once every two weeks. Themes of authority and discipline accompany the discourses of nationalism, religion, surveillance and control in the context of everyday practices and life at school.

Method

The data for this paper was collected during October 2023- January 2024 in Blossom Public School (BPS) (name changed to maintain anonymity), which is located in Sewa Vihar (name changed to maintain anonymity) area of North-East Delhi. The school was established in 1990 as a co-educational, English medium, private, unaided (recognised by MCD) school. This institution primarily serves pre-primary (Nursery and Kindergarten) and primary

grade (grades I-V) students and is situated in a double-story building with a small courtyard within the premises.

Four hundred and twenty students were enrolled in the school during the period of research. BPS follows the mother-teacher concept for all grades, from nursery to class 5. There are about 20 teachers presently employed in the school. The school has one person in- charge of overseeing day-to-day administration work and one receptionist. The in charge and receptionist also fill in as substitute teachers when any class teacher is on leave. The school's mission is rooted in making education accessible to families with limited financial means, and as shared by the School Principal, caters to children from low socio-economic backgrounds. The tuition fee for Nursery and KG was INR 800 and around INR 1000 for primary grades. The school does not charge any development fees or miscellaneous charges from parents.

Data was collected through: 1) unstructured classroom observations-taught classes and during free periods, as well as observations in the school premises, lunch breaks and school assemblies; 2) informal conversations with teachers and students, as well as semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers, the school-in-charge and the Principal. A semi-structured interview schedule was prepared to understand teachers' perceptions of disciplinary practices. Participant observation, unstructured conversations, and interviews explored teachers', students' and administration's perspectives on experiences and situations in the school context where disciplinary actions are often used. The interviews, in particular, explored issues, such as the kinds of discipline techniques frequently used in elementary schools, the efficacy of these techniques as perceived by teachers, and the variables affecting their judgments regarding discipline. Semi-structured interviews, of an average duration of 45 minutes each, were audio recorded with participants' permission. These were transcribed fully. Thematic analysis approach was adopted to analyse the interview transcripts and field notes of classroom / school observations were used to triangulate and contextualise the interview data. The names of the school, teachers and students were changed to maintain the anonymity of the participants.

Findings and Discussion

Findings are presented under two overarching themes: Children as subjects of discipline and School as a 'System' of Discipline. The first theme explores how discipline is enacted upon children through various school practices, including the regulation of student speech and thought (maintaining silence), control over students' body (disciplined body), and the negotiated nature of discipline (disciplining with consensus). The second theme focuses on the role of the teacher, representing the school system, in shaping student behaviour (teachers as agents for 'good' behaviour) and the structures of observation and control (culture of surveillance). These themes highlight the ways in which discipline is conceptualised and enacted in everyday life and practices of the school, shaping students' conduct, interactions and consciousness.

Children as subjects of discipline

Maintaining silence- of thoughts and words

During the school observations, it appeared that the explicitly stated purpose of education was to create 'humans' out of the children, to discipline them, to 'regularise' them and to make them mindful of set norms and rules. It could be argued that this was probably the case because children were not seen as 'persons' but rather as 'moulds' that could be shaped the way adults want them to be, with schools' responsibility to manufacture them. A 'good' classroom was seen as akin to a quiet classroom. The teachers, on various occasions, were noted to ask the children to maintain silence in the classroom, in the corridors, while having lunch, and even at

play. Ms Neena of class 1 would not start teaching unless the children put their fingers on their lips (a practice where one puts their index finger on their lips as a sign to remain silent). It is a daily ritual that she sticks to in the classroom, followed by instructions for the children to abide by. The children are discouraged from speaking out of turn or asking 'unnecessary' questions. Comments like, "Don't speak when two people are speaking, it is not a good habit" resounded many times, not only in this particular class but in others as well.

The teachers in BPS were assigned duties in the morning, during lunch break, and in the afternoon, during dispersal time to enforce discipline and maintain silence and order in the corridors. Talking loudly in the presence of teachers was not deemed appropriate. The ones who were found talking were dealt with seriously. Teachers often complained, "There are three teachers/ elders standing before you, and yet you are talking so much. Show some respect". Respect for elders was equated with being silent in front of them, not only during casual talks but even when the children had to ask questions or comment on certain events. Unwanted questions and undesired comments were discouraged. "The children should talk only when prompted by the teacher", Ms Bhawana of class 5 commented, responding to a boy asking questions regarding the timetable. Nothing in the classroom should happen without the teacher's permission. During an EVS period in class 5, a girl, Priyam, asked the teacher, Ms Tanya, "Why do cows only move their tail to ward off flies? Why don't they move their body?". The teacher was miffed and irritatingly instructed her not to ask questions unrelated to the lesson. She dismissed her queries by explaining, "Good children do not ask too many questions. These are not good manners."

Conversations among children were strictly restricted to recess or during school dispersal (when students are released from school and allowed to go home). Even during these periods, the children were 'advised' to keep their voices low so as not to disturb the school's discipline. Talking out of turn or talking loudly was a major factor contributing to indiscipline in school. While sitting at the reception after the dispersal of students, Ms Prachi (the computer teacher) and Ms Neha were talking about a rather 'difficult' class (class 4) that they have to deal with. Ms Prachi was complaining about the noise that the children of said class make in the absence of their class teacher, "Their voices could be heard outside the classroom". Ms Neha seemed to resonate with the experiences and lamented that she was exhausted from dealing with such brash students. "Yours is the most indisciplined class in the school", she told the children. The teacher acted as a warden who oversaw whether all the rules were followed. This instance resonates with the observation that "Indian teachers show an unusual and exaggerated concern for maintaining order, perceived in a relatively narrow and confined sense among their students" (Kumar, 1991, c.f. Iyer, 2013, p. 168). While in class, children were expected to seek permission from the teachers to speak or ask questions. They were directed to raise their hands if they had to say something to the teacher or their peers. Asking questions and reasoning were considered threats to the culture of discipline created in the school.

A disciplined body

"To a great extent, signs of disobedience are mapped on the body and how the body is conducted, groomed, or made to appear" (Deka, 2014, p. 76).

Children in BPS were seen as certain physical entities that needed to be controlled and trained. "It is difficult to deal with young children as their attention span is short. It is a task to make them sit at a place for an extended period" commented Ms Babita, class teacher for class 1. She claimed that young children are restless and have lots of energy; thus, disciplining them at this age is a much harder task but an important one as they might become unruly in later stages if they are not adequately taught how

to control their bodies now. The teachers believed that children and their behaviour should be regulated from a young age so that they grow up to be disciplined adults. The teachers regulated body postures and behaviour, repeatedly reminding them to stand while talking to the teacher, raise their hands before talking, and control their classroom movements (not moving around the class without permission). The arguments posed align with the ethnographic study undertaken by Iyer (2013), where she argued that through disciplining, teachers were striving to create docile and obedient bodies.

The classroom/school was seen as a space different from their homes. "You are not in your home; this is a classroom sit properly" was regularly floated around the school. Almost in a ritual-like manner, the students were regularly reminded in the morning to sit with their legs down, back straight and elbows on the table. The school adhered to disciplinary practices as akin to following rituals. Basil Bernstein (1982) argued that rituals in school embody and transmit the school's value system. In enacting such rituals, individual students were likely to experience a sense of belonging to the group. 'They served a crucial socialising function in that acting out such rituals socialised the children into the school's ethos' (Iyer, 2013). Bernstein (1982) argued that socialisation through rituals is profound because it operates at a tacit, primaeval level. Whenever any disruption was observed, the teacher would loudly call, 'How do we sit?', and the children would assume the desired position quickly, almost like a reflex.

The school strictly observed the practice of students standing when talking to the teachers. While taking rounds to ensure classes were running smoothly, Ms Latika spotted a boy from class 5, engrossed in talks with his friend and scolded him for talking during an ongoing lesson. The boy started explaining, but she cut him midway, instructed him to stand, and then answer her. "You should stand while talking to the teachers, she explained. Meanwhile, Ms Bhawana glared at two girls and shook her head, signifying them to stop their discussions. The girls quickly sat straight and started copying classwork from the board. Persistent stares from the teacher, a slap on the desk, and loud calling of someone's name were some of the cues the teacher would employ to maintain discipline in the classroom. It was as though the children had internalised these 'disciplinary cues' and acted what was expected out of them through these cues.

The observations of disciplinary practices in the school are similar to Iyer's (2013) analysis of discipline in her study, where she states that 'central to the teachers' constructions of children was the idea of the 'child as a physical being'. These constructions were revealed in the rituals, which regulated children's bodies. 'In the teachers' construction, the child's mental existence was largely absent or was reduced to insignificance' (Iyer, 2013, p. 173). In BPS, it was observed that in the case of disciplinary transgressions, the children were strictly reprimanded or, in extreme situations, were also physically punished. A slap on the face or a twist of the ears as punishment was common in the school. Although handing out corporal punishments was not allowed in the school, the management did not seriously follow up on this rule for the teacher. The in-charge herself believed that doling out mild physical punishments should be acceptable as it helps to keep the children in check, and they take the teacher seriously. A teacher once complained about a boy in her class talking back to her and commented that "children who misbehave with the teacher and question the authority should be punished physically; otherwise, it may become a habit to disrespect teachers if not taken seriously. Now they will complain, but it will only help them in the future". The teachers believed that disciplinary practices that are carried out in the school benefit the students as they grow. They become more "organised, orderly and proper". Deka

(2014), in her study, also commented that "the authorities act as the 'custodians of the body', which is strongly associated with the notion of modesty and docility" (p. 77). Cheruvalath and Tripathi (2015, p.130) study of secondary school teachers' notion of corporal punishment in India similarly observed, "corporal punishment by teachers is justified by the assumption that teachers have good intentions". At BPS, the school's major objective of corporal punishment was also articulated to correct or stop the child from wrongdoing, which they sought to achieve by creating docile and obedient bodies.

Disciplining with consensus

The school not only seeks to decide how the children of 'their' institution would behave but also establishes how one should dress and appear in the school. Crisp and ironed school uniforms, trimmed nails, no nail paint (for girls), well-groomed hair (without any stylish haircut, for boys), polished shoes, and clean appearance were how the children were expected to show up at the school. The class teachers would organise a thorough inspection of the mentioned aspects every day in the classroom, and every Wednesday and Saturday, the inspection would happen in the morning assembly before dispersing to their classes. Defaulters were asked to stand aside, and appropriate punishment was decided.

The school ascribes a representative image to the children. They want 'their' children to behave, look, dress, and talk in a certain way as they represent the school in society. The teachers also have to follow the same standards of discipline as children. In a staff meeting, the Principal, Ms Sudha, reprimanded two teachers for their rude behaviour towards the parents and asked them to think before they act because they and the children are the 'face' of the school. Discipline is thus also an instrument for the institution to build an image in the minds of society. Being seen as a strict disciplinary institution is important because the parents will take the school seriously. Data collected from the interview with the teachers indicated that the parents view schools as a medium of upward mobility, both cultural and financial and want the school to instil certain values and discipline to help them achieve said mobility. In light of such aspirations, schools embody the role of 'manufacturing centres' whose primary objective is to create disciplined students that 'look and behave educated'.

The teachers were expected to wear salwar kameez regularly and sarees on special occasions, Parent Teacher Meeting (PTM) days or at any school function. The Principal strictly regulated this and would check if all the female staff wore chunni with the salwar kameez. The teachers had no qualms about wearing Indian attire, although sometimes they wished they could one day wear Western clothes. Ms Latika, at the reception, was discussing this with a fellow teacher who was observed complaining about wearing suits even on days when students were absent (only children participating in the annual function had to come). Ms Latika explained that they have to wear salwar kameez in front of the children on regular working days as a teacher in jeans does not look appropriate in front of the parents when they come to pick up the children. She said, "If teachers wear such clothes in school, what impression would it make on the children and parents?". Other teachers nodded their heads and seemed to agree with the statement. The consensus was thus gained for enforcing any rule with the teachers and students alike. Teachers were also not allowed phones in the classroom and had to submit them at the reception till dispersal. When asked, the teachers explained that "phones disrupt the class. Thus, Principal Ma'am has not allowed us to keep phones with us". The teachers were defending the practices themselves and fully consented with the reasons.

A monitor was appointed in the classroom with the children's consensus who would enforce discipline in the absence of the teachers and be her 'eyes and ears'. The children, as well

as the teachers, were consensual beings in this 'disciplinary apparatus' (Foucault, 1975), where they accepted the authority of the school and acceded to the order of the school. A boy, Rohan, in class 5 was quoted saying in an examination, "Sit straight; otherwise, ma'am will see you, and then you know what will happen. You will be sent out of the classroom". The children saw punishment as a consequence of acting out or creating disruptions as a natural reaction, which can be borne out of the ritual-like enforcement of disciplinary rules.

Punishments were normalised to the extent that the children could foresee the kind of consequence their actions could have. Students were not allowed to leave the classroom without teacher supervision, but when they had to go out, they were expected to carry a 'class pass' with them, signifying that they had the teacher's permission to be out of class. The class pass was a representation of teachers' authorisation and approval. This consensus is gained for disciplining individuals and creating docile bodies by normalising judgment. Foucault (1975) claims, "at the heart of all disciplinary systems functions a small penal mechanism" (p. 177). Transgressions involving one's use of time, activities, behaviour, speech, body, sexuality, and other areas are subject to 'micro-penalties'. The ideal setting for the disciplinary apparatus is one in which there are frequent micro punishments. The person subjected to these micro-penalties must believe that everything is punishable and that doing anything at all may result in social humiliation, mockery, deprivation, or a reduction in one's status.

Apple (2019) points out that consensus in society is valued, and any conflict between the various institutions in society is not pronounced as conflict is antithetical to the smooth functioning of society. Conflict in many institutions is not celebrated; the hidden curriculum reinforces the negative view of conflict and sees it as undesirable. The children saw punishment as a consequence of acting out or creating disruptions as a natural reaction, which can be borne out of the ritual-like enforcement of disciplinary rules. Consensus for the disciplinary practices was gained through a moral obligation of obeying one's elders or someone above them in the positional hierarchy and giving teachers the utmost respect as gurus. Prayers in morning assemblies, stories in the moral education subject, values taught at the end of every chapter in Hindi and English, and various classroom practices like not speaking before the teachers and standing while talking to teachers aimed to generate an intrinsic value of respect and obedience in the minds of children. The prayer called 'thoda dhayn laga, guruvar daude daude aayenge' (If you concentrate a little, the Guru will come running to you), which students sang in the morning assembly, was in reverence of the teacher, "for they show us the path towards enlightenment" (the message of the prayer).

Sarangapani (2003) in her paper also notes that teachers in schools were regarded as gurus (spiritual knowers), deepening the unquestioning institutional authority of the teacher over the students, where teachers were regarded as the sole bearer of knowledge and thus hold ultimate power over them. Students' and teachers' sense of identity concerning their traditional and everyday identities and the realization of both controlling and epistemic functions normalises their authority. It refers back to the identity of a teacher as a guru (a spiritual knower), as an adult, and a non-institutional identity as a parent. All these joint representations that a teacher bears, pose an absolute and unquestioning authority over the child. "They deepen the institutional authority of the teacher to a taken-for-granted, subconscious level of the psyche" (Sarangapani, 2003, p. 408), which is influential in the construction of an ideal student. A teacher's identity as a guru was significant in carrying out the process of discipline and punishment to correct undesirable behaviour.

The children were expected to internalise these values of respect and obedience.

"Ideally, subjects like moral education should encourage children to internalise values of respect and obedience, but we have to use such means to motivate them and sustain the order in school", said the Principal when asked about instruments they employ to ascertain discipline. Clark (1998) argues that teachers are supposed to manipulate extrinsic rewards and punishment to maintain their position of authority. "It is usual to reinforce this quest for power by soliciting back-up from colleagues, from parents who, as the instructing agents, are expected to give support" (Clark, 1998, p. 291). While intrinsic motivation is preferred in pupils, the children were motivated to stay disciplined through tools like prizes, results, certificates, appreciation in the assembly, making student leaders or class monitors, and encouraging competition.

School as a 'System' of Discipline

Harnessing discipline: teachers as agents for 'good' behaviour

Schools are seen as the agents of socialisation for students. Schools teach children more than reading, writing, computational skills, and studying specific subjects. When asked about the school's role in imparting discipline, Ms Babita remarked, "The school gives them an environment to learn 'good' values. Even if it is with the help of scolding, fear of punishment, or embarrassment, the child would at least follow the instructions and learn something".The arguments around this have hinted towards the fact that schools are seen as the agents of socialisation for students. The school in charge, Ms Shivani, asserted that "the daily activities carried out in the school, the timetable, the management, the actions that we do, our clothing and dressing, way of responding to everyday school situations all teach children order and discipline". Schools are seen as 'social sites' that aim more than just prescribed goals and objectives that are extrinsic but also provide some intrinsic knowledge that is not a part of the formal curriculum but is hidden and works parallel to the formal curriculum through school objectives, values, and beliefs projected and transmitted in the day-to-day school experience.

During the interview, the Principal described the school as a 'system'. A system that the children and the teachers alike should follow. 'Following the system' is a pertinent characteristic of a 'good student' and 'good teacher'. Parsons (1959) argues that school acts as an agent of secondary socialisation: "It is in school that children learn not just the particularistic values of their own family but also the universalistic values of society. From the functional point of view, school class can be treated as an agency of socialisation" (p. 298). Thus, schools act as an agency through which individual personalities are 'trained' to perform adult roles adequately. "Schools are communities with rules, expectations, and customs, all of which reflect schools' underlying values" (Mullis and Fincher, 1996, p. 243). Schooling is then arguably seen as a system of order, rules, and time, which is believed to be inherent to its nature.

The teachers see themselves as guides and mentors to the children. Ms Aabha remarked that "the teachers should be friendly but firm so the children do not take them lightly. Teachers are there in the classroom to correct the children's behaviour and model appropriate actions. It is okay if the teacher becomes somewhat strict and punishes someone for that purpose". Teachers view themselves as agents of maintaining discipline and order in the classroom. It echoes Clark's (1998) assertion that "educational order consists in part in submission (by teacher and child alike) to the demands of the internal values of practices"(p. 295). Participation from all community members fosters a supportive learning environment. It also enhances a sense of community and cohesiveness amongst the members. It is a way through which individual students will likely experience a sense of belonging to the school community. It serves as an important socialising function.

Discipline as a value is also characterised as an aspect of good education. "Just because a child can read, write, and comes first in class does not mean that he/she is educated. If they do not respect elders, our education does not have meaning", remarked Ms Neha. Ms Tanya and Ms Aabha also supported this statement and commented that "respect for elders, obedience, and following rules laid down by the school are symbols of quality education". Good behaviour with everyone, not arguing with elders, not intervening when adults are talking, and sitting quietly even in the teacher's absence are some values a disciplined student must have. "A child with good manners is the topper for me". While reflecting on her imagination of 'good education', the Principal described it as one that enables children to be systematic and ordered in their lives. "They should know the difference between right and wrong. It should teach them the value of time and the importance of doing things orderly". She also extends this notion of punctuality and respect for time to the teachers: "good education can only happen in the presence of good teachers. If teachers are not disciplined, how can they teach children its importance?" Discipline within teachers and students is also seen as a value that they should possess for the school to run smoothly and to maintain its authority.

Culture of surveillance

Teachers in the school were kept under surveillance and the supervision of the in charge and management. Although there were no cameras on the school premises and classrooms, the school in charge, Ms Shivani and Ms Latika, took regular rounds of the classes to check for any disruptions and disorderliness. When talking to Ms Shivani about her role in the school, she explained that she keeps teachers in check, manages them, assigns them duties, maintains discipline, and 'checks' if they are doing their duties properly: "Sometimes I have to be strict with them (the teachers) when they do not heed the instructions. But what can I do? It is part of the job". After being checked by their class teachers, students' notebooks were re-checked by Ms Shivani and Ms Latika to 'catch' any mistake on the part of the teacher. When discussing my role as a participant in the school, the Principal expected me to adopt a supervisory role for the teachers, wanting me to observe and provide her with regular reports of the teachers:

> "Teachers should be teaching in the school. Children look up to the teachers. If the teachers are indisciplined, what will the students learn? We have not allowed phones to the teachers because some teachers have been caught using the phones in the classroom)".

There was a lot of stress on keeping the teachers under constant watch, keeping them on their toes, and creating an environment of immediate responsiveness. It is believed that the teachers should not slack off on the job. During these meetings, teachers were advised on maintaining discipline and order in their classrooms and what they can do to 'manage' students. Also, the teachers were not allowed to discipline them as they wished. Before meting out any major punishment or decision, the Principal had to be consulted.

Furthermore, the Principal organised regular meetings with the teachers where she took reports on day-to-day matters concerning pedagogy, classroom management, assessment and updates on any upcoming school event. There were several instances where teachers were reprimanded for not doing their given tasks on time. They were held accountable and were expected to submit their work before time for a review. These practices ensured that the teachers and students stayed in a perpetual state of alertness and hypervigilance.

The Principal, in one of our earliest meetings, expressed her desire for the school to be more 'convent-like', insisting on mimicking a life of order, discipline and regularity that a convent school offers, in her opinion. That was why she was very keen on me taking up a supervisory role for the teachers, keeping

an eye on them, and checking the extent to which they performed their roles. The educational ideal of the school is tied to the disciplinary ideal. The imagination of a good child is closely related to the value of discipline exhibited in school with teachers and peers. Good behaviour and strict discipline reflect the quality of education they have.

Conclusion

School discipline, during observations, seemed to have two main goals: maintenance of order, and socialisation. Discipline was associated with the need to maintain an environment conducive to learning. Indiscipline and disruptive behaviour, as it is believed, distract the children from the educational function of the school. Discipline was also a mechanism of socialisation. In addition to teaching academic subjects, the school aims to inculcate values so that children can become productive citizens of society. Discipline was perceived as a means for teaching students socially appropriate behaviours and attitudes.

Based on the study of this school, it appears that the educational ideal and the imagination of an educated person are closely tied to the level of discipline engendered in the everyday practices of the school, internalised and enacted by teachers and students. The disciplinary practices in school sought to create docile and obedient bodies. The study's findings and insights into the everyday disciplinary regimes of school are not novel. Similar practices have been observed in other schools and among other teachers in diverse contexts as the literature review points out. The data points towards the ways in which the themes of discipline, order, punishment, control, and the moral ideals are internalised as part of teachers' beliefs, reinforced by school leadership's vision and practices. Results indicate that teachers view 'discipline' as 'order and control' as the 'soul' of any formal educational institution, and consider it a vital part of the school experience. The categories of order, rules, obedience, respect and service are given significance and of utmost priority among teachers' perceptions of discipline.

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