

## Human rights values or cultural values? Pursuing values to maintain positive discipline in multicultural schools

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*Discussions on discipline in education often accentuate corporal punishment or measures to infuse moral fibre. In addition, many authors argue that inculcating a particular value system can promote discipline in schools. This could however be profoundly problematic in the light of the Constitution. We argue that positive discipline in multicultural school environments needs to be based in part on human rights values that are neither solely universally interpreted nor particularistically interpreted. We report on the data generated at a research workshop held as the final dissemination process of a four-year international research project entitled "Understanding human rights through different belief systems: intercultural and interreligious dialogue". Dialogue was chosen as a form of data gathering since it is more spontaneous than conventional questioning techniques and can thus generate more naturally occurring data to strengthen the outcomes of the project. It appears that some teachers believe discipline can only be maintained through the elevation of cultural values (particularism). We argue that schools should start negotiating, at the most basic level, the values, including emancipatory, human rights values, and cultural values, which could underpin positive discipline in multicultural schools. Drawing solely on cultural values is not only unlikely to solve the problem of discipline, but could also undermine the efforts to transform our diverse, democratic society.*

**Keywords:** cultural values; human rights values; multicultural schools; positive discipline

### Introduction

Discussions regarding the notion of discipline are often permeated with references to corporal punishment or are even synonymous with discussions of corporal punishment (Parker-Jenkins, 1997). Such discussions sometimes lead to discussions of human rights. However, our point of departure is positive ways of maintaining discipline (Parker-Jenkins, 2002). We will argue that maintaining positive discipline in multicultural school environments partly relies on the infusion of human rights values that are neither solely universally nor particularistically interpreted. Early in our research project, it became evident that some teachers believe that discipline can only be maintained through the elevation of cultural values (particularism) (Roux, Du Preez, Ferguson, Jarvis, Small & Smith, 2009). One reason for this phenomenon could be that people in many instances see traditional, cultural values as preferable to emancipatory, human rights values (Du Preez, 2008:98-99). This could lead to the elevation of the values of only one culture and the consequent subversion of the multicultural ideals of our democracy, which seeks to honour the human rights of its citizens. In exploring this situation, the

following questions seem useful: What is the nature of the discourses of human rights values and cultural values — both in theory and in the voices of teachers? What do these discourses imply for the use of values to underpin discipline in multicultural classrooms?

In order to address these questions, the literature on discourses related to the quest for values that could underpin positive discipline is explored. In this critical exploration of these discourses, particular attention is given to the notions of culturalism and traditionalism. Thereafter a research study is described which demonstrates some of the complexities of these discourses. We will conclude by providing another possible way of looking at the dilemma of selecting appropriate values to promote positive discipline in multicultural schools.

### **The quest for values to underpin discipline**

The notion of discipline has evolved from a view that focuses on what children should not do and so uses corporal punishment to correct unwanted behaviour to a view that emphasises what the child should do and promotes self-disciplined behaviour amongst children (Vally, 2005:4). Scholarly articles and papers on discipline frequently highlight the robust relationship between maintaining discipline in classrooms and instilling certain values (*cf.* Baumrind, 1996; Parker-Jenkins, 1997, 2002; Vogel, Seaberry & Kelley, 2003; Wolhuter & Steyn, 2003; Bickmore, 2003; De Klerk & Rens, 2003; Masitsa, 2008). Parker-Jenkins (1997:4), for example, explains that the historical view of discipline as corporal punishment derives from the norms and values of the Victorian society towards corporal punishment. This attitude was based on the notion of teachers guiding children away from original sin (“a state of being alienated from God”) by implementing corporal punishment (Parker-Jenkins, 1997:4). She maintains that this view is still often used in religious school contexts to instil a particular value system and/or to justify corporal punishment.

An illustration of a particularist stance is illustrated by Wolhuter and Steyn (2003) and De Klerk and Rens (2003) who argue that acceptance of certain Christian values could promote discipline in schools. What De Klerk and Rens (2003) propose has been critiqued by Parker-Jenkins (1997) as (i) a process of teachers guiding children away from original sin, and (ii) a situation in which the values underpinning discipline is often embedded in one particular narrative (i.e. a specific religious or cultural belief system). De Klerk and Rens (2003:357) argue that “... pedagogic discipline implies the child’s voluntary acceptance of the influence and teaching of the normed adult educator ...”. They also assert: “What leads to a lack of discipline or lies at the root of a lack of discipline, can possibly be ascribed to the absence of a value system grounded in a specific lifeview perspective” (De Klerk & Rens, 2003: 354). We could respond to these views by using arguments about the relativity of truths, not only between different religious beliefs, but also the varying interpretations and truths found in one religious denomination (Kruger, 2003;

Roux, 2007). However, for the purposes of this article we prefer to critique them from a pedagogical and ideological point of view.

We agree with Masitsa (2008:244) who argues that “[e]ducational theory on discipline should demonstrate a consistency between teaching objectives, curriculum and school management; otherwise, disciplinary procedures are reduced to a mechanical behaviour modification, with the educational value of the system being compromised”. Masitsa’s (2008) argument contests the position adopted by those who draw on the values of one particular religious or cultural view to inform discipline. A value system that is based on only one particular religious or cultural view means that only one narrative is taken into account. That could jeopardise the realisation of the multicultural ideals of the democratic education system in South Africa. Such ‘mono’ approach to values in support of education might even take the form of a revival of the highly contested and divided ideology, Christian Nationalist Education, which dominated the apartheid era (1948–1994).

It also seems necessary to comment on the general tenor of De Klerk and Rens’s argument. Firstly, they appear to reify values: making it look like a notion a teacher might possess and then transmit to acquiescent children. This is especially evident when they refer to “transferring and teaching of values” (De Klerk & Rens, 2003:357). The early sophists tended to argue against the reification of values and virtues. It seems that even they felt that values and virtues were not to be taught, but rather inherited through education (Curren, 2008:8). Secondly, the authoritarian Christian undertone of their arguments suggests that they hold the view of the relationship between an adult and child that is obsolete and behaviourist (Smeyers & Wringe, 2005: 311). Du Preez (2008:66) argues that such an outdated view of the relationship between children and adults does not take account of children’s changing needs and circumstances, and that such a view is tantamount to a shallow conception of facilitation (or teaching-learning).

While discipline rightly deserves a firm value base in order to be effective, choosing to draw on the value system of one cultural or religious group to fulfil this role might be problematic and profoundly unconstitutional. Some might argue that many of the religious and/or cultural groups have common values so drawing on only one life-world’s values should not be a problem. However, one often finds that the way in which these values are interpreted differs greatly (Du Preez, 2008:254-255). It is an awareness of this very diversity of interpretations, in part, that led to the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001). Drawing on the ideals enshrined in the Constitution, it proposes a set of socially constructed values that all South Africans can subscribe to. These values have been endorsed by the national curriculum. We argue for the promotion of the human rights values that are firmly embedded in the ideals enshrined in our constitution as the foundation for discipline in democratic, public schools. Du Preez (2007:73) describes human rights values as follows:

... universal and communal values ... grounded in the principles under-

pinned by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as maintained in the South African Bill of Rights (1996). Human rights values could be characterised as values to be cherished globally as well as locally.

Morrison (2000:124-125) argues that it is exactly this characteristic that provides human rights values with the scope to include various identities; and “respect religious and social distinctions”. More specifically these values include: democracy, social justice and equity, equality, non-racism and non-sexism, an open society, accountability (responsibility), rule of law, respect, reconciliation, and *ubuntu* (we perceive *ubuntu* as a value that has culminated into a constitutional value) (Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy, 2001). We concede that these values are also open to different interpretations. However, we would argue that through democratic dialogues in local contexts, the meaning ascribed to these values could and should be negotiated.

Next, some of the notions discussed hitherto will be brought in relation to the concepts ‘culturalism’ and ‘traditionalism’.

### **The challenge of culturalism and traditionalism**

Brown (1999:108) argues that cultural relativists — who believe that all people adhering to one culture hold more or less the same values, beliefs and principles — are too often unable to justify competing values. This notion he refers to as ‘culturalism’. To explain this in the context of South Africa, Du Preez (2008:98) provides the following example:

... in South Africa sexism is often evident in the principles and values some cultures uphold. This cultural phenomenon contrasts with the universal movement toward anti-sexism also endorsed by the South African Bill of Rights. However, it may be that not all individuals belonging to this culture believe that sexism is justified and might for the purpose of specific incidences adhere to other sets of principles and values to justify their claims. Thus, intracultural diversity is found which does not justify competing values and principles but only underscores the importance of internal diversity.

We find that De Klerk and Rens (2003) do not only reify values, but that they view the values belonging to a specific religious group (which they propose should underpin discipline) as hermetically sealed. This means that cognisance was not taken of the internal differences of interpretation and understanding of the values of a particular religious or cultural group. Therefore it might be argued that the two authors are not only unable to justify competing values, but disregard this problem altogether.

Booth (1999:39) argues that the danger of culturalism lies in its propensity to propagate traditionalism:

[t]he main problem with culturalism is traditionalism, the propagating of traditions to serve (conservative) power interests ... Culturalism ... reproduces traditionalism, and this can have several regressive consequences for the theory and practice of human rights.

Booth (1999:37) also argues that “[c]ulturalism is tempting ... because it simplifies, and makes complexity easier to handle”. The movement in support of culturalism (and inherently traditionalism) is evident in several education discourses that have emerged since 1997. One example is that of the “Conservative Christian Lobby” who responded to the introduction of the new curriculum (Chisholm, 2005:202-204). Their main concern centred on the possible future outcome that the values promoted in the curriculum might have on education in particular and society as a whole (Chisholm, 2005:203). The arguments of the lobbyists were for the most part hostile to the explicit enhancement of humanistic values (human rights values) and the overall emphasis on social justice, equity, tolerance and diversity (Chisholm, 2005:203). It could be argued that this lobby’s tendency to reflect extreme culturalism, with reference to religion, caused them to adopt traditionalist arguments. Many of their arguments remain anchored in the beliefs upheld by the previous Christian Nationalist Education ideology. We would argue that De Klerk and Rens’s (2003) view of the lack of discipline due to “the absence of a value system grounded in a specific lifeview perspective” (De Klerk & Rens, 2003: 354) is another example of how culturalism leads to traditionalism.

Booth (1999:36-41) argues against culturalism by dismissing the view that cultures would accord more value to traditional values than emancipatory values. Du Preez (2008:98-99) critiques this view when arguing

... that in many instances, especially in more communitarian environments, people might still adhere to traditional values (or principles) even though they might desire emancipatory values (or principles). This notion might be the result of the individuals’ fear of being rejected by those that share these values or the need to be accepted by a cultural community that holds more or less the same beliefs.

The point is that disregarding culturalism and arguing in favour of universal, emancipatory values will not solve the problem of which values should underpin discipline.

In the following section, a small-scale research study will be explained to shed more light on the intricacies and complexities of this debate. We will conclude by providing another possible way to look at the dilemma of values in support of positive discipline in multicultural schools.

## **The research process**

### **Background to the research**

Between 2005 and 2009 an international research project was conducted entitled: “Understanding human rights through different belief systems: inter-cultural and interreligious dialogue” (Roux, Du Preez, Ferguson, Jarvis, Small & Smith, 2009). This research was funded by SANPAD (South African Netherlands Programme on Alternatives in Development) and involved researchers from various South African universities as well as one researcher from a university in the Netherlands. As a result of this multifaceted study a programme for in-service teachers was developed (in conjunction with teachers) using a critical, participative intervention research methodology (Du Preez &

Roux, 2008). The intervention research programme was entitled: "Dialogue as a facilitation strategy: infusing the classroom with a culture of human rights". The aim of this programme and concurrent research was to gain an understanding of how in-service teachers deal with the notion of dialogue as facilitation strategy to infuse a culture of human rights and, secondly, to provide them with an opportunity to reflect and improve their classroom practice (Du Preez & Roux, 2008). A first round of the dissemination of this programme in the Mafikeng/Mmabatho area proved to be very successful (Du Preez, 2008). It was therefore decided to extend this dissemination process in the form of workshops to other in-service teacher groups as well. The data from one such dissemination research-workshop are used here to explore the relationship between and the dilemmas that stem from values, human rights, culture, and discipline.

### The dissemination research-workshop

#### *The participants and the school context*

A dissemination research-workshop was held with six Xhosa-speaking, in-service teachers (four female, two male) from a predominately Xhosa-speaking high school in the Stellenbosch vicinity in 2008. The age range of these teachers was between 35 and 55 years old. All of them had been teachers for more than 10 years. The participating teachers were responsible for one or more of the following subjects in Grades 8 to 12: Life Orientation, Arts & Culture, Social Sciences (Geography & History) and Languages (IsiXhosa, English, Afrikaans). They indicated that they had not received any formal training on how to infuse a culture of human rights, but that it had been briefly addressed in previous professional development initiatives they had participated in. This was also an indication that the document, *Guidelines for the implementation of the ACE on integrating values and human rights in the curriculum* compiled in February 2003 had not been properly disseminated to teachers.

The school consists of learners and teachers from different African traditions — some teachers came from deep rural areas and others had been brought up and lived in metropolitan and township areas. Some of the teachers originated from other African countries. The teachers stated that the school community is mainly Christian, many from independent African churches and individuals who merge Christian beliefs with beliefs of African religion. The school is poorly equipped and resourced and its learners are drawn mainly from the surrounding economically disadvantaged area. The parents, who can afford to send their children to 'better resourced' suburban schools, do so.

#### *The research workshop*

Cohen and Manion's (1994) principles of ethical considerations in social research were used as guidelines. The research workshop, which took place after official school hours, was preceded by obtaining the necessary permis-

sion of the provincial department of education and the school principal and the necessary formal consent of the principal. The researcher began by contextualising this aspect of the research in relation to the previous research that had been conducted.

#### *Data collection and analysis*

The research workshop took the form of a dialogue. This was very important: since dialogue is more spontaneous than more formal ways of interaction, the assumption was that it would generate more profound, naturally occurring data (Silverman, 2001:286-287). The researcher posed some pre-defined open-ended questions, which the group responded to, as would be the case in a semi-structured focus group interview. However, the teachers were given considerable freedom to explore topics beyond the questions posed by the researcher. When certain topics were addressed by the participating teachers, the researcher connected their ideas with some of the theory used in the programme (without formally referring to the theory or programme). Theories relating to the programme that did not emerge during the dialogues were addressed afterwards by the researcher. Participants were also given a copy of the programme for future use. The entire workshop was video-recorded for analysis because "... the eye of the camera often freezes moments the human eye ignores" (Rosenstein, 2002:3).

After all information had been organised, discourse analysis was used to analyse and interpret the information captured. This method could be described as "[t]he analysis of communication ... with special attention given to the speaker's intent and how the communication is structured" (Babbie & Mouton, 2001:641). Discourse analysis implies a process in which the purpose of constructing meanings relating to present practices; to discourses that preceded the practices (*a priori*); and to the discourses that might be the outcome of a practice (*a posteriori*) (Du Preez, 2005:120). Attention was given to the underlying meanings of the discourse produced by participants as they dialogued particular themes, as well as to the patterns that emerged from the analysis of information (Denscombe, 2003:267).

#### Main findings and discussions

In the discussion to follow, we will highlight the teacher-participants' responses regarding the relationship and contradictions between human rights (values), cultural values and maintaining a culture of positive discipline. Phrases such as the following frequently appeared during the teacher participants' dialogues:

*"... 2008 onwards our youth will deteriorate because they have no respect for anything or anyone because they have no cultural roots ..."*

and

*"... children nowadays ... they have no manners and they back-chat ..."*

The participants revealed and debated the discrepancy between values taught at school and those which are nurtured at home and in the community. In their view, learners are taught human rights (values) in schools, but are often

confronted with different sets of values outside of the school and that this leads to disciplinary problems in the schools. However, as the discussions to follow will indicate, these teacher-participants are often confused. This confusion seems to stem from the contradictions they have experienced between human rights (emancipatory) values and cultural values. It also seems to be related to their sometimes seeing human rights merely as a legal construct and not as a moral construct (therefore we sometimes place values in brackets when we refer to human rights values). The main points of this dialogue are provided here and then discussed. Dialogue phrases are given in the direct words of the participants.

1. *“There is no link between the school, community and home. The school introduce something, the community do it totally different and the same happens at home, and this is where the problem lies — our children are confused.”*
2. *“When learners are at school, they mostly respect the teachers, but when they return home, respect diminishes. It almost seems as if parents fear children ... parents throw the responsibility back to schools — parents must punish their children because we may not and it is not our responsibility.”*
3. *“Informal education starts at home and in the community and this count for human rights as well. When children misses informal education there’s a gap when formal education about human rights begin.”*

The discrepancy between values nurtured at school and those nurtured at home and in the community results in quite a complex situation. It seems that parents are not aware of what is taught at school, but as the following discussions will indicate the main problem seems to stem from the differences and contradictions between human rights and its supposed values and the cultural values of this community. This phenomenon was also questioned when one of the participants asked:

*“What comes first: human rights or culture?”*

And another two who said:

*“Whoever came up with the idea of human rights didn’t look at the role of cultures — there’s a clash between the two.”*

and

*“Human rights wants to change elements of our culture to feed human rights. Politicians want us to choose human rights above our culture.”*

This question and the responses to it were vigorously dialogued amongst the teacher-participants. Towards the end it seemed that all the participants set more store by cultural values than human rights values, since they perceived these as having preceded human rights values (*“I think that what comes first is the culture, then the human rights. The culture was here first”*).

This progress in dialogue is provided chronologically below:

4. *“Take for example a boy from rural Eastern Cape and one from a township in the Western Cape — just in terms of respect and addressing elders, the one from the rural area will have more respect than those from townships, because it’s in the values of traditional culture.”* (Respondent A: Male 1, grew up in rural Eastern Cape)



5. *"... let us get to the clash between culture and human rights: culturally a woman doesn't have a right to address men — where does that put me as a modern woman who likes her culture and is learned ... let us talk about initiation school: my son has to go to initiation school. I raised him without the father, without the so-called relatives of the father, and now that he is to become a man, my role all of a sudden fades away. Now they [the father's relatives] do as they please [according to culture]. They don't even inform me — this is a clash between my rights as a mother and our cultural values and traditions ..."* (Respondent C: Female 1, grew up in township in Cape Town).
6. A male respondent B (Male 2) responded to this story by saying: *"Well, that's culture!"*
7. *"The government might impose these things [human rights] as if culture doesn't exist, because when you go into our community you'll discover that there's some kind of contradiction. For example, I did a case study in my class about a 'struggle woman' who preaches that women have the right to say no to sexual intercourse, but because of culture you might be seen as a stupid woman for not allowing your husband to have sexual intercourse with you, because there is labola in sight and he owns you"* (Respondent D: Female 2).
8. *"What comes first? Culture or human rights? Before human rights was introduced in South Africa women knew what to do, what their roles were, they never complained ... Human rights are in the Western culture, so we women feel that the Western culture is better than our culture, hence we say we want equality ..."* (Respondent E: Female 3).
9. *"It's not about the introduction of human rights — people always had rights. I blame this on globalisation, people come from all over the world and now we try to copy them and the way they do things ... for black people, what comes from a white person is always right and not our own culture"* (Respondent A: Male 1).
10. *"I come from a very religious background ... but my father used to beat up my mother. Culturally this is acceptable. We as children used to say to my mother 'divorce this man, we can afford you'. But according to her cultural values she is married to him and will never divorce him, as much as she knew divorce in this instance is justified. She remained loyal to him and to her cultural values ... This is a man's world and our culture always favour men ... you never see a culture that favours women"* (Respondent C: Female 1).

The respondents were asked whether they thought that learners experienced the same contradictions as they had described above or whether learners today were more inclined to accept human rights values since these are emphasised so strongly in education. Their responses were as follows:

11. *"Many of the feminists, learned, rich people don't send their children to our schools any more. Many of these children go to expensive boarding schools, then to university ... they [the learners] are not involved in the important discussions regarding culture, because they are bombarded with all these*

*western thoughts. It is our responsibility to maintain our culture ...*"

(Respondent B: Male 2).

12. "... children don't value our culture today ... no, there's an imbalance between those who come from rural, traditional areas and those who come from townships — they are in permanent contradictions and conflicts" (Respondent C: Female 1).
13. "Culture is fading from us — it will fade by the time we have grandchildren if we don't revive it now" (Respondent E: Female 3).

### Interpretations and theoretical conclusion

The interpretations will focus on four patterns identified from this dialogue that are directly related to the research questions. These include the following: the intuitive preference for a particularist perspective; the over-simplification of values in multicultural school context; the adoption of a traditional perspective to preserve cultural traditions; and the impact of intracultural diversity in the way values are negotiated.

Firstly, the dialogue and the discussion above indicate that the participants spontaneously entered into the universalist versus particularist, or human rights (values) versus cultural values, debate. This is manifested when participant E asks: "*What comes first: human rights or culture?*" The participants tended to intuitively choose the particularist perspective. It could be that this viewpoint poses fewer challenges and that it makes the complexity of multiculturalism easier to deal with. However, this position, as was indicated in the opening discussion of this article, might lead to the selection of *a value system* (that is based on one grand narrative) to underpin disciplinary measures intended to be applied in a multicultural school environment. In our view, this could result in learners not being able to accept certain disciplinary measures, either because they do not understand their value-base or because they can not subscribe to them because of their cultural heritage.

Secondly, it is evident that people often turn to their cultural values because they perceive these values as less complex and more univocal. This notion is based on the false assumption that the way in which values are interpreted is the same for all people belonging to a particular religious or cultural group. Additionally, it seems that this view provides people with simple answers to challenging unanswered questions. An example is when participant B states that "... 2008 onwards our youth will deteriorate because they have no respect for anything or anyone because they have no cultural roots ...". However, many other factors besides the cultural roots of society may influence this deteriorating phenomenon. Our view is that this culturalist perspective causes people not only to simplify complexity, but also to situate themselves within their comfort zone when arguing, which would limit their perspectives. Also, if we argue that maintaining positive discipline is a process of emphasising what the child should do and that creates self-disciplined behaviour, we ought to be sensitive to a variety of perspectives to accommodate learners from diverse environments. Being sensitive to various perspectives and prioritising diverse learners' values does not imply that 'anything

goes'. Instead, it requires that people transcend their comfort zones and enter into negotiations about values underpinning disciplinary measures.

Thirdly, adopting a culturalist perspective seems to present a way of preserving traditions or protecting them from external forces. These participants appear to be open to human rights (emancipatory) values and principles, but they turn to their traditional (cultural) values in most instances, because they are concerned to protect their cultural heritage (quote 13). The argument used by some of the participants that human rights were a western construct (quotes 8 & 9) which negates African traditions may thus be seen as a traditionalist position adopted by them in the face of the forces of post-modernism. We argue that the values underpinning discipline in a school should not be established to serve some (hidden) traditionalist interest. The likely result would be the selection of values to underpin discipline that are not consistent with a contemporary view of positive discipline. This point also became evident earlier in the critique of De Klerk and Rens (2003).

Fourthly, intracultural diversity is evident in various levels of this dialogue. In the data presented above, internal diversity (or diversity in the interpretations of people belonging to the same cultural group) is illustrated when these participants enter into dialogue. One example is when the one female (respondent C) says "... *culturally a women doesn't have a right to address men — where does that put me as a modern woman who likes her culture ...*". (Other examples of this intracultural diversity can be found in quotes 4, 9, 10, 11.) This female respondent's (C) narrative reveals that she has a different view from that of some of her colleagues and that in certain situations she refers to other sets of principles and values to justify her claims (in this case human rights are another set of principles and values). One might define this internal difference as a difference between historico-traditional interpretation of culture and modern interpretations of traditional cultures (see for example quote 4). The point is that people in certain situations negotiate and move between different sets of value systems to deal with uncomfortable situations which they are unable to solve or deal with from their comfort zones. Put differently, we find that people sometimes use the relativity of value systems to solve moral issues they encounter. This may explain the confusion that people sometimes experience. We argue that reflection (individual and dialogical) is needed for people to deal with and make sense of this confusion.

The data presented and discussed indicate that people seem to adopt a particularist stance when they propose values that should underpin discipline, for example. From the data it appears that the reasons for this phenomenon are as follows: participant's belief that cultural values carry more weight because they are older; that cultural values are less complex and more univocal; and that the prioritisation of cultural values in everyday situations might lead to the preservation of traditions. However, this creates several challenges for multicultural schools and even creates confusion amongst people arguing from such a stance. We should *not* be asking whose values should be promoted in education, since this might lead to particularist hostility. It would also be precarious to accept human rights values as univocal

and not subjected to diverse interpretation. For this reason we will discuss the position of Bhikhu Parekh (1999) in terms of this debate, because he provides an alternative way of thinking about this. His position may assist in pursuing values to maintain positive discipline in multicultural schools that is both contextually recognised and justified on a universal level.

His main thesis (which we would support) is that humans could express their moral life in different ways, but that this does not exclude anyone from being judged according to basic universal values (Parekh, 1999:130-131). He refers to the latter notion as “minimum universality” which “represents an intermediate position between relativism [particularism] and monism [universalism]” (Parekh, 1999:130-131). This could be viewed as one means of overcoming the binarity of universalist and particularist discussions. Parekh (1999:130-131) describes the idea behind minimum universalism as follows:

... the universal values constitute a kind of ‘floor’, an ‘irreducible minimum’, a moral threshold, which no way of life may transgress without forfeiting its claim to be considered good or even tolerated. Once a society meets these basic principles, it is free to organise its way of life as it considers proper.

In short, Parekh suggests a benchmark of universal values which all must accept before societies can practise their unique principles and values. The values listed in the *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy* (2001) could serve as an example of a benchmark of values to underpin discipline. However, it is important to engage in dialogues about how the practice of cultural values is accommodated in relation to this benchmark of values. We therefore suggest that schools should start negotiating, at the most basic level, the values, including emancipatory, human rights values and cultural values, that could underpin positive discipline in multicultural schools. Not only is drawing solely on cultural values unlikely to solve the problem of discipline, but it could also undermine the efforts to transform our diverse, democratic society. On the other hand, focusing solely on emancipatory values may also be problematic; these might be too objectified and abstract for people to relate to personally. We contend that the only way to facilitate the process of negotiation is to encourage profound dialogue (Du Preez, 2008) in classrooms and staffrooms. This profound dialogue should enable people to engage reflectively and proactively with their understandings of values, the understandings that others have of values and what values are collectively important in a multicultural school environment, and so arrive at an agreed interpretation of the values that could underpin discipline.

## Conclusion

Maintaining positive discipline in classrooms necessitates a firm value base that is understood and constructed by all through a process of dialogue. We have argued that the process of maintaining positive discipline is not one that can be solved either through the elevation of cultural values or human rights values. Rather there is a need to have dialogues on values in our different contexts as a way of assisting us to transcend our comfort zones. These dia-

logues need to be based on the assumption that humans might express their moral life in different ways, but that this does not exclude anyone from using basic universal values as a point of reference. Contradictions between human rights values and cultural values could entrench confusion if people do not engage in reflection and dialogue about their confusion. Furthermore, this confusion could provide learners with the leeway to act in morally wrong ways and at the same time leave teachers unsure of how to address disciplinary problems.

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