

Creating Safe and Well-organised Multicultural School Environments in South Africa through Restorative Discipline

Kevin Teise

*Faculty of Education, University of the Free State, South Africa
E-mail: teisekl@ufs.ac.za*

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ABSTRACT The new Constitution of South Africa specifies that all schools should be open to all races. Consequently, black learners migrated to white schools in the hope of being educated in safe, disciplined and equitable environments. However, reports on racially motivated incidents suggest that race relationships at some multicultural schools in SA are neither sound nor conducive to teaching and learning. Appropriate disciplinary strategies which could heal and restore relationships are therefore needed. This conceptual paper proposes restorative discipline (RD) as an appropriate response to the disciplinary and safety challenges in multicultural schools. Firstly, it situates multiculturalism within the SA educational context and then focuses on the restoration of relationships and dialogue as two principles of RD. It also considers the extent to which SA school policies promote RD principles, and makes recommendations to enhance RD practices in SA schools.

INTRODUCTION

According to Maslow's hierarchy of basic needs, safety is a basic requirement of all human beings and it is paramount for self-actualisation. This means that safety can be regarded as being central to the development of healthy and happy adults and thus of stable societies. In addition to the above, safety is also important to the establishment of an environment that is conducive to the teaching and learning that is necessary for quality education. To this effect the South African Department of Education considers a safe and disciplined school environment to be one of the most critical elements for the successful delivery of quality education (DoE 1996). Safe and disciplined school environments are free from any disruption and chaos that may negatively affect learners' education or interfere detrimentally with an atmosphere that is conducive to positive teaching and learning in the classroom or in any other school activity (Mestry and Khumalo 2012). However, school safety and learner discipline are such major concerns in SA that public schools are labelled 'war zones' (Jephthas and Artz 2007). This not only suggests that the relationship between various stakeholders might be shattered, but also that SA schools are dangerous places in which to be. Because sound relationships form the backdrop to education, it can be expected that no effective teaching and learning can take place in conditions resembling

'war zones'. With SA schools being multi-cultural in nature, it appears that relationships amongst various cultural groups in some schools might not be as sound as one would expect after many years of democracy and with the constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination. Rather, it seems that some learners experience multicultural schools in SA as rather hostile and unsafe places.

Although research by Jacobs (2012) negates racial differences as a statistically significant factor that contributes to school violence and by implication to school safety, other studies report on the prevalence of racial prejudice in multicultural schools. Vandeyar and Killen (2006) in particular identify disturbing patterns of teacher-learner interaction in multicultural schools, amongst which are the prevalence of hierarchies based on race, and the negation of learners' self-esteem and explicit cultural prejudices. Soudien (2006) finds deliberate and conscious racial harassment in teacher-learner interaction. While we cannot ignore the tendency of print media to focus mainly on sensational incidents (Jacobs 2014), a local newspaper (City Press 23 July 2014) recently reported on cases in multicultural schools where teachers were found guilty of racism and hate speech, as particularly black learners were allegedly called derogatory terms such as 'kaffirs', 'baboons', 'monkeys', and 'little black witches' by some white teachers.

However, it should be noted that racial tension in multicultural schools is not only a black-white phenomenon, but that incidents of racial prejudice and discrimination are also prevalent in coloured-black and Indian-black school communities where learners attend schools that were not previously allocated to them (Vandeyar and Killen 2006). In addition, race might not be the only factor contributing to the perceived racial prejudice and the lack of safety at multicultural schools. Although racially motivated incidents might become cemented into the fabric of a school if they are ignored, a wrong response could also encourage the institutionalisation of racial intolerance. And this could promote chaos, a lack of discipline and violence at schools.

Responses to perceived racial incidents at schools generally vary from condemnation to calls for tough disciplinary action such as the immediate expulsion of the perpetrators. However, whilst expulsion and other punitive disciplinary measures could be regarded as appropriate forms of punishment, they might not necessarily bring justice to either the school community or the perpetrator, nor will they heal broken relationships or promote racial tolerance and neither might they establish discipline and safety in such environments. Rather, such measures might further fuel feelings of injustice and bring more harm to relationships in multicultural schools.

In this conceptual paper the researcher proposes restorative discipline (RD) as a possible response to the problem outlined above. RD aims to re-establish good relationships in multicultural schools, especially where racial tensions are perceived to be the cause of the breakdown in relationships. The researcher suggests that RD could rebuild damaged relationships and so potentially promote racial tolerance and create safe and well organised multicultural school environments. To this purpose, multiculturalism within the SA educational context will be explored. Thereafter this paper will focus on the restoration of relationships and dialogue as principles of RD. Lastly, this paper considers the extent to which SA education policies promote solid relationships and dialogue and so create space for implementing RD. It also recommends how RD practices at SA schools may be promoted.

Multicultural Education in South Africa

Before the advent of democracy in 1994, a characteristic of SA education was the official

segregation of education, resulting in separate schools for separate races. However, racial segregation at school was officially terminated in the period between 1990 and 1994. The *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa*, Act 108 of 1996, promulgates equality (Section 9) and human dignity (Section 10). It furthermore outlaws any form of unfair discrimination (Section 9.3) and guarantees education as a basic human right (Section 29). Within this context, various educational laws and policies aimed at advancing the principles of the Constitution have since been enacted. The *South African Schools Act* (SASA) (Act, 84 of 1996) is one such instrument designed to achieve equality and non-discrimination in education. By articulating the stipulations of the Constitution, this Act effectively advanced the opening of the doors of learning to all learners and so created opportunities for all to attend the schools of their choice. With these policy directives, the Department of Education (DoE) demonstrated its intention to 'redress past injustices in educational provision' (DoE 1995) and to advance the democratic transformation of society, combat racism and sexism and all other forms of unfair discrimination and intolerance, and to protect and advance our diverse cultures. The desegregation of SA schools should therefore be seen against the backdrop of the efforts that are intended to advance equality and non-discrimination in education, as well as to promote the transformation of SA society.

The desegregation of education saw many black learners in particular enrolling in formerly white, coloured and Indian schools. Although the demographics of the learners at these schools have changed significantly, the demographics of the teachers have remained largely unchanged (Soudien 2004). Whilst the desegregation of schools implied the promotion of social equality, it anticipated the creation of solid relationships amongst various races at all schools which would ultimately promote tolerance and strengthen social cohesion and unity in SA society as a whole.

Restorative Discipline in South African Education

Traditional disciplinary approaches in schools are retributive in nature and focus on punishment (Varnham 2005). In addition to this emphasis, these approaches appear to have

been ignorant of the damage that victims and schools suffered due to misconduct or ill-discipline, and they appear to have failed to prevent future misconduct (Amstutz and Mullet 2005; Hicks 2008). Although SA education abolished corporal punishment as a retributive and dehumanising approach to discipline (DoE 1996), disciplinary approaches in SA schools are still largely regarded as being retributive, punitive and humiliating (Mestry et al. 2007; Reyneke 2011; Jacobs 2012). It is furthermore perceived that SA schools are hierarchical in structure, and that teachers use authoritarian discipline (DoE 2001) in an effort to establish an environment that is safe and conducive to learning. Teachers whose identities are vested in hierarchy contribute to violence, and thus to unsafe schools, by being violent, by condoning violence and by supporting a school ethos that is intolerant of difference and that insists on conformity (Morrell 2002). Thus it appears that, rather than creating safe and well-organised school environments, authoritarian disciplinary approaches in particular contribute to unsafe school environments. Consequently, disciplinary approaches in SA schools appear to have had a negative effect on relationships and on school climates. Judging by these perceptions about SA schools, one could suggest that SA education is potentially being challenged to implement disciplinary approaches that would establish safe and well-organised school environments for all. The absence of safe and well-organised school environments for all could be detrimental both to teaching and learning, and to the transformation of SA society.

Due to its effectiveness in creating safe and well-organised school environments, RD is increasingly being used in schools around the world (Hicks 2008; Lee 2011; Lewis 2009). Although little scholarly research could be found about its implementation in SA schools, it seems that the Western Cape Education Department is increasingly sensitizing schools to RD (Coetzee 2005). Moreover, in attempts to promote discipline and build the moral character of learners, the Catholic Institute of Education in the Northern Cape Province promotes restorative processes in their schools (personal communication with Chris Jones, 30 August 2014). Thus, apart from proposing RD as an approach to safety and discipline in multicultural schools, this paper furthermore tries to add to the voices of Reyneke

(2011), Kimbuku (2013) and Lephhalala (n.d.) which frame RD as a possible approach to address these issues in SA schools in general. In addition, this paper aims to put forward RD as an approach to discipline which will serve both the educational and the transformational needs of SA society.

What is Restorative Discipline?

A literature study revealed that RD is informed by the values of restorative justice. This means that it regards sound relationships as being pivotal to the establishment of safety, discipline and harmony in schools. Thus, in dealing with a lack of discipline and discord, RD emphasises healing, repairing and reparation through personal reflection which encourages accountability and responsibility for transforming and rebuilding injured and damaged relationships (cf. Amstutz and Mullet 2005; Burke 2013; Braithwaite 2003; McCluskey et al. 2008; Zehr 2002). In the process RD hopes to prevent future harm and further injury and misconduct. As a more positive and less punitive approach that emphasises fair process and resolution, RD collaboratively engages all parties and brings together all people affected by misbehaviour (Gonzalez 2012). The value of RD lies in its potential to help to create safe and disciplined school environments by helping the perpetrator to understand and deal with the harm he or she has caused to individuals and to the school community (Amstutz and Mullet 2005). Although RD tries to resolve conflict and restore relationships through reparation and understanding, it does not completely reject chastisement through punitive measures. In other words, saying 'sorry' might not be sufficient. Rather, RD provides for restitution in any form that would satisfy the needs of the victim(s) and assist their healing, forgiveness and the unity of the community. Given the principles of *Ubuntu*, which promotes unity and togetherness, restoring relationships in the school community in whatever way necessary is therefore relevant and important to both education in multicultural schools as well as to the transformation of SA society.

Discipline is educative by its very nature (Wilson 1973). To educate is to develop 'desirable qualities in people' (Hirst and Peters 1970). This implies that, as an educative process, discipline should be a learning experience in which

certain desirable skills, values or knowledge is imparted. Because it is an inextricable part of education and a basic requirement of society (Oosthuizen 2010), discipline should endorse the aims and objectives of education. On the other hand, disciplinary measures which fail to educate could therefore be regarded as anti-educational and, as such, might not only prevent education from achieving its aims and objectives, but also contribute to the deterioration of discipline and safety in schools as well as of society. Meyer and Evans (2012), Amstutz and Mullet (2005) and Gonzalez (2012) posit that RD corresponds with the educative goal of teaching, which strives after 'desirable' skills and knowledge, but also aims to instil values of positive citizenship, and the values required to restore and change communities.

Restorative discipline subsequently resonates with both SA education's conceptualisation of discipline as being educative, constructive, corrective and rights based (DoE 2000), as well as with the vision that education should 'advance the ... transformation of society' (DoE 1996). The assumption is, therefore, that approaches to discipline in multicultural schools in SA will focus on building sound relationships between the learners, teachers and the broader school community, and that this will contribute to the transformation of SA society. Although such discipline should correct bad behaviour in a nurturing environment, it should furthermore sensitise learners to their responsibilities as democratic citizens. This means that the transformation of South African society does not only depend on the nature and existence of relationships between all people and groups, but equally on disciplined citizens. A lack of discipline emanating from perceived racial tensions at schools therefore has the potential to jeopardise the ability of SA education to develop in learners and citizens the desirable skills, values and knowledge that are needed to transform society.

Restoring Relationships in Multicultural School Settings

Being fundamentally a social process, education calls for good interpersonal relationships. What happens at schools is therefore greatly influenced by the quality of the human relationships within school communities. Spaulding

(1992) posits that sound relationships within a school community are the foundations on which effective teaching and learning are built. For Kruger and Van Schalkwyk (1997), the quality of relationships greatly influences behaviour in the classroom. This is true for relationships between teachers and parents, as well as between teachers and learners (Marais and Meier 2010; Oosthuizen 2010; Rossouw 2003) of various racial groups. It indicates that poor racial relationships might have a negative impact on well-organised school environments and on safety within a particular school community. Therefore, whilst unsound racial relationships might fuel the lack of discipline and bring about disturbances at school or in the classroom, positive relationships and closer co-operation between various parents, educators and learners might potentially create favourable, safe and well-organised teaching and learning environments at school and advance the goals of education. Similarly, because learners who have been treated correctly are more likely to co-operate and behave properly, solid relationships shaped in this way significantly contribute towards the learners' academic success.

RD accepts that 'positive and supportive relationships are important for learning to occur' (Meyer and Evans 2012). Misbehaviour is therefore viewed as a violation of an individual's rights and of the immediate relationships within the school and the community, and as being damaging to these bonds (Varnham 2005). Hence, in an attempt to address a lack of discipline and to create well-organized and safe environments, RD emphasises the restoration of relationships (McCluskey et al. 2008; Gonzales 2012). By implication, RD therefore acknowledges that effective teaching and learning cannot take place when hostile relationships threaten discipline and make schools unsafe. In SA schools, codes of conduct aim to establish and maintain sound relationships and harmony and to create healthy school climates by regulating the behaviour of various people. Subsequently, the underlying assumption of RD is that a breach of a code of conduct is a breach of the social contract between members of the school community, and as such, damages relationships in the school community. RD therefore regards misbehaviour as having both a wider as well as a deeper impact on relationships within the school. The implication for multicultural schools is there-

fore that perceived racial tension and misbehaviour emanating from them should be viewed as being damaging to sound relationships in the school community, and not narrowly as the mere violation a code of conduct.

In as much as solid relationships are pivotal to proper behaviour, they also form the backbone of a healthy school climate. The term *school climate* refers to the overall feelings students and staff have about the school environment over a period of time (McGrath 2011). These feelings concern how comfortable people feel, the extent to which they feel that their teaching and learning are supported, how safe they feel at school and with teacher-student relations in particular. Moreover, school climate relates to the developmental assistance that all learners get from their teachers in particular and from the school community in general. Sound relationships amongst various members of a school community are therefore central to the experience of a positive school climate and the creation of a positive teaching and learning environment. Thus, since they largely determine the nature of a school's climate, relationships that are free from any derogatory and humiliating language and verbal, physical or psychological abuse and the unfair treatment of learners, teachers or parents from different cultural groups or races would necessarily contribute towards a healthy school climate. Thus one can say that not only are the nature and quality of relationships within schools equally important determinants of safety and discipline, but that the climate in multicultural schools contributes equally to them.

Restorative discipline promotes various pro-social values such as fairness, inclusion, empathy, openness and honesty, respect, sharing, understanding; awareness; friendship and forgiveness, truthfulness, dependability, self-control, acceptance, responsibility and accountability, interconnectedness, care and humility (Amstutz and Mullet 2005; Coetzee 2005; Johnstone 2003; Kimbuku 2013; Reimer 2011). These values are not only central to restorative discipline and necessary for sound relationships, but they could potentially promote a positive climate in multicultural schools, provided that they permeate every aspect of the school. This means that discipline should focus on restoring relationships in order to repair both the social equilibrium and school climate rather than on puni-

tive measures which restore neither these relationships nor the social equilibrium. Punitive measures do not restore relationships. Instead, they could leave both victims and perpetrators with negative feelings of revenge or contribute towards their disassociation from the broader school community. As such an unfortunate situation would have a ripple effect on the entire school community and the school climate, negative feelings could ultimately break down the social cohesion and sense of community of various members of the staff and learners instead of enhancing it. For Payne et al. (2003), a strong sense of community advances supportive relationships, collaboration and involvement, positive student attitudes and less problem behaviour. Berkowitz (in Nieuwenhuis 2007) furthermore maintains that schools that develop a sense of community promote social competency, critical thinking, democratic values, and reduces violence. It could therefore be assumed that, because RD restores relationships, it could potentially improve the interaction between people of various cultural backgrounds and so advance a sense of community at multicultural schools.

Establishing and building solid relationships in which racial diversity is respected and promoted (especially amongst South Africans from different cultural backgrounds) is necessary to substitute the relationships of disrespect and mistrust that prevailed previously in SA in general and in education in particular. Against this background, the Preamble of the Constitution of South Africa (1996) calls upon South Africans to 'heal' and to 'build': that is, to heal damaged relationships and to build a new society that is based on common values that would advance tolerance, non-discrimination and equality. As the supreme law of the country, the Constitution mandates all sub-ordinate laws and regulations, including those relating to education to heal and to build damaged relationships.

Therefore, SA education policies aim 'to heal the divisions of the past and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights' (RSA 1996). Furthermore, the DoE (2000) envisions that positive relationships will set the stage for a positive learning environment which could significantly reduce disciplinary problems at schools, and change the relationships between various cultural groups within

schools and society. It could therefore be assumed that education policies should not only advance the restoration of social divisions of the past, but establish safe and well-organised school environments and multicultural schools that are characterised by relationships that value respect and advance learners' dignity and cultural and racial diversity. Policy furthermore envisions practices which will advance positive school climates and make education a positive experience for all learners, irrespective of who they are or where they attend school. Moreover, it could be said that the educational policy advances disciplinary approaches that reflect an inclination and sensitivity that will heal relationships and change school communities in order to establish schools in which values such as friendship, forgiveness and collaboration are nurtured. This being so, it could be assumed that SA educational policies explicitly advocate disciplinary approaches which emphasise sound relationships and a positive, multicultural school climate in which 'peace and stability become the normal condition of our schools' (DoE 1996) and our society. To this effect, Fullan (2001) testifies to the relevance of relationships to improve SA schools and society.

In demonstrating the importance of interpersonal relationships to SA education in particular and to SA society in general, schools were 'given back to the community' (DoE 1995). It is therefore the responsibility of various members of the different school communities to respect one another and to work collaboratively to ensure that the school advances the aims and objectives of education as well as the vision of society. For this reason it is anticipated that relationships that will ensure a school environment that is free from any disturbances that would prevent effective teaching and learning from taking place will be established with stakeholders. Hence, the DoE (2001) acknowledges the critical role that respect for others can play in the creation of positive school climates in which diversity is respected and embraced and a sense of community is built. Not only are relationships within the school community hampered by the absence of respect for multiculturalism and diversity, but also a multicultural school environment 'based on mutual respect will decrease

the need for disciplinary action' (DoE 2000). SA policies consequently prompt multicultural schools to build and maintain sound relationships with the various cultural groups that make up the school community not only to meet each other's needs for validation, understanding and recognition, but also to establish positive, conducive, safe and well-organised school environments (that is learning and teaching environments) to advance social transformation. One way of doing this is through dialogue.

Dialogue as Tool of RD to Restore Relationships in Multicultural School Settings

Restorative discipline promotes values that encourage us to listen and to speak to one another in ways that validate the experiences and needs of everyone within the community (Amstutz and Mullet 2005). An important value is dialogue – which is a central aspect of restorative discipline. Dialogue provides a safe space for those affected by a particular behaviour to directly engage with each other in order to talk about the full impact of the errant behaviour upon their lives, to address lingering questions, and to develop a plan for responding to the harm (Umbreit 2000). Hicks (2008) maintains that dialogue creates the opportunity to listen, speak and be heard as well as for honesty, equality and openness. The value of listening lies in the opportunity for people to share what bothers them, the feelings of recognition and transparency they experience, and also to establish the origin of the problem. As a pedagogical communicative relationship (Burbules 1993; Singh 2001), dialogue assumes discovery and better understanding. However, dialogue supposes more than a deepening of understanding (Smith 1997); in fact, as part of making a difference to the world, dialogue presupposes informed action aimed at change.

RD advances dialogue by allowing the wrongdoer and all members of the school community affected by his or her action to engage with one another. Whilst the interaction takes the form of a face-to-face engagement, it has the power to promote understanding, to provide an opportunity for the voice of the victim(s) to be heard as well as for the affect-

ed parties to enter into and establish mutually satisfactory agreements that are aimed at change. Such meetings could therefore potentially empower all stakeholders involved. Since empowerment is directly linked to participation (Lohrenscheit 2006), dialogue militates against a culture of silence, exclusion and the acceptance of oppression. Instead, it creates space for the voices of the marginalised and disenfranchised to be heard. Within RD, dialogue provides the victim(s) of misconduct with the opportunity to have their voices heard as opposed to being disenfranchised, invisible and voiceless victims in the process.

Dialogue requires respect, open participation, co-operation, modesty, courage, hope and tolerance (Durakoglu 2013; Singh 2001). Lohrenscheit (2006) maintains that dialogue is possible when people come together with respect for the dignity of others. Thus, dialogue presupposes respect for other human beings and for different ideas, values and ways of doing things. Since respect is an integral component of dialogue and a prerequisite for solid relationships, disciplinary approaches which do not provide for dialogue, might not advance a true understanding of the misdemeanour. Moreover, such approaches might not yield the anticipated outcomes of education and discipline which, amongst other things, focus on a safe and disciplined school environment, democratic citizenship and societal transformation.

For these reasons, the value of dialogue for discipline in multicultural school settings in particular lies in the space it creates to advance respect for diversity, discovery and a deep understanding of both others and the self. These insights enable people to confront and interrogate their own prejudices and preconceived ideas about others, and to establish the origin thereof. In addition, it is through dialogue that particular members of a school community come to understand and respect the behaviour of others. Freire (Smith 1997) regards dialogue as being important to enhance the community and, in addition, to build social capital and to lead individuals to act in ways that make for justice and human growth and success. Because dialogue is so much more than an ordinary informal conversation, it provides an opportunity to strive for

justice and to act in a just manner. Another benefit of dialogue is that it creates an opportunity for change and to build and strengthen relationships, the community and social capital. Furthermore, provided that it involves only truthful information and openness (Burke 2013), dialogue has the potential for spontaneous requests for forgiveness to be made with tremendous power to repair and rebuild relationships (Hicks 2008). Because victims are afforded the opportunity to speak without being interrupted, they are treated with respect, and valuable communicative skills – which are important in a democracy like that in SA – are developed. In other words, because it takes a stance that promotes democratic values, as a tool of RD, dialogue could strengthen democracy in SA and, amongst other things, promote diversity and dignity. However, this is possible if SA education values and cherishes dialogue in its policy and implements it in the practice of education.

Because the DoE (2001) acknowledges that a culture of dialogue is either absent or discouraged in SA schools, it encourages talking about misbehaviour as an essential element in the process of developing safer schools. The DoE (2001) advances dialogue as an opportunity for people to learn about interacting with each other, ‘through an exploration of how we have interacted with one another before’, while at the same time maintaining that dialogue creates the opportunity for the victim to be ‘empowered to move on without anger’ (DoE 2001). Thus, SA educational policy advances dialogue as an opportunity for one to scrutinise one’s actions and behaviour towards and engagement with others, while prompting victims not to seek justice in the form of revenge, but rather to develop a sensitivity and understanding of the circumstances and background of the perpetrator through dialogue. For people involved in multicultural schools in SA, this presupposes and encourages reflection on their own behaviour, as well as on the behaviour of the perpetrator. Furthermore, dialogue not only creates the opportunity to continuously evaluate and reassess one’s own values and the values and priorities of others. More exactly, for the DoE (2002) dialogue creates opportunities for all learners to express their feelings and needs.

Sullivan and Tift (2006) maintain that, if fundamental needs are not met, and if a wrong is

not corrected in ways that take into account the needs of those who have been affected, the community loses its ability to evolve successfully. Although such needs might be material, financial, emotional or social, they also range from the more abstract needs for information, validation, vindication, restitution, testimony, safety, and support (Brink 2006; Clark 2012; Marshall 2003; Zehr and Mika 2002), to the need to speak, to find the answers to questions, to restore power, to experience forgiveness and justice (Zehr 2002). For RD, having the opportunity to enter into a dialogue is therefore a basic need of both the perpetrator and the victim. Being afforded the opportunity to enter into a dialogue opens up channels of communication within which people from various cultural backgrounds can express their needs and be appreciated and validated. Such channels are important for people who 'know how to talk and how to listen, don't have to resort to misbehaviour or violence' (DoE 2001). Thus it can be said that the DoE fosters the creation of opportunities for dialogue in which stakeholders, victim(s) as well as the perpetrator have the opportunity to be heard and listened to and to articulate and express their needs in safety.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to make a case for the implementation of restorative discipline practices in order to curb misbehaviour in multicultural schools and so create inclusive, safe and well-organised school environments for all. Two principles of restorative discipline, namely restoring relationships and dialogue, were highlighted as tools that could possibly serve to create safe and well organised multicultural school environments.

Restorative discipline could potentially achieve responsible democratic citizenship and societal change by establishing sound relationships as the basis of safe and well-organised school environments. Particularly since RD takes into consideration that misbehaviour has a wider ambit than merely the victim and that the entire school community and school climate are affected by misbehaviour and ill-discipline. Sound relationships between South Africans from different cultural backgrounds are necessary to build the new SA that is envisioned in its Constitution. In

this regard, SA education has an important role to play in educating learners to become good citizens in the transformed SA in which values of tolerance, equality, diversity, equity and non-discrimination are parts of the moral fabric of every South African. Through its focus on relationships and dialogue, RD not only assumes these values, but tries to advance them in learners and all South Africans.

In this paper the researcher advocated for the restoration of relationships and the creation of opportunities for dialogue in multicultural schools as the foci of restorative discipline. The assumption is that solid relationships and dialogue will prevent a lack of discipline, but also establish safe multicultural school environments. In addition, it is assumed that dialogue will create both the space that will ensure open discussion in which the views of all are respected and honoured, as well as the opportunity for the victims to experience forgiveness.

However, despite its potential to create just, well-organised school environments and safe multicultural school communities, RD should not be viewed as the panacea for racial intolerance and relevant misbehaviour at SA schools. As a process, RD requires patience and an understanding that it is a time-consuming process. To effect systemic change it is recommended that school policies and codes of conduct be interrogated to explore the extent they reflect the intention to restore relationships, keep the school community together and provide opportunities for dialogue by emphasising respect, care, compassion, openness, and forgiveness.

By implementing RD, SA multicultural schools will not only provide a nurturing environment in which to deal with perceived race-related misbehaviour, but also to challenge what SA schools were designed to do: i.e. to maintain the status quo. Thus, whilst RD can provide non-punitive measures with which to deal with issues of perceived racial prejudice and discrimination which effectively make schools unsafe for particular learners, it could also offer the opportunity to embrace all South Africans with values, skills and knowledge that are relevant and required for the transformation of SA.

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