"You detain yourself if you detain children": Educators' perceptions of detention as an alternative to corporal punishment

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Detention as a method of disciplining children in South African schools has been mandated by the post-apartheid legislative abolition of corporal punishment. Educators have traditionally used corporal punishment to discipline children since the inception of schooling in colonial times. In this article I report on a qualitative case study conducted in the Mpumalanga province, South Africa, where 26 educators participated in the study. Observations and key stakeholder interviews in line with the Cultural Historical Activity Theory were used to explore primary school educators' transition from using corporal punishment to using alternative forms of punishment, with specific reference to detention. Findings suggest that educators view detention as contradictory to the objectives of schooling, cumbersome in application, contextually irrelevant, and ineffective.

Keywords: apartheid; corporal punishment; Cultural Historical Activity Theory; detention; school discipline; violence

Introduction and Background

Anecdotal evidence suggests that South African educators, especially those from previously disadvantaged schools which received inferior slave and Bantu Education, are struggling to maintain school discipline (Morrell, 2001; Naong, 2007). With the abolition of corporal punishment in schools through the South African Schools Act of 1996 (Republic of South Africa [RSA], 1996a), alternative discipline strategies were suggested by the Department of Education (DoE) for educators to use (DoE, 2000). A reflection on the implementation of the Outcomes Based Education (OBE) system in 1998, South Africa's first democratic education system, has shown what could go wrong if policies are transposed directly from one context to another, without full consideration of their contextual relevance (Jansen, 1998).

My aim with this article was to highlight educators' perceptions and their experiences related to the use of detention. Our argument departs from the premise that if educators find detention and other disciplinary strategies to be ineffective, they are more likely to fall back onto using corporal punishment, which they know and believe to be effective. In this article I respond to the following research questions:

- How do educators experience the transition from using corporal punishment to using detention as a disciplinary strategy?
- What are educators' views of detention as a deterrent of misconduct in learners?

In this article, detention refers to when a teacher keeps a learner in solitude with the instruction that the child reflects on what he/she has done wrong, why he/she has done wrong and why the behaviour is wrong. The child should then apologise in a concrete way for the misconduct, and state that he/she will not do it again in the future. In addition, detention may entail keeping learners in solitude after school or during lunch break to perform some menial work, or, if the offense is curriculum-related, the child would have to complete a curriculum-related exercise. In some cases, children stay in class after school or during lunch time with other offenders and the supervising educators, but interaction is forbidden.

Findings from the study will inform policymakers, educators and professionals in education management about the gaps and contradictions between policy and practice in relation to school discipline. This will further enhance interventions that highlight teachers' behaviour in the classroom as an essential factor for learning and the development of discipline among learners. Further, findings from this work will advance the policy imperatives that bring about desired teaching and learning environments in schools.

Literature Review

For many decades, corporal punishment was favoured as a more effective method of discipline compared to the rest, even though studies suggest that it does more harm than good in the long run (Gershoff & Grogan-Kaylor, 2016; Mayisela, 2017). Corporal punishment has been banned in all the countries that have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union, 1990), the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989); South Africa being one of them (Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, 2019).

Corporal punishment was legislatively approved in South Africa for juvenile judiciary until its use was abolished in schools in 1996, and much more recently in families in September 2019. As an alternative to corporal punishment (ATCP), the use of detention has been successful in some South African schools, while it has not been contextually relevant to others, particularly the disadvantaged schools located in areas that are plagued by different types of social violence such as bullying, domestic violence, rape and street muggings

(Harber, 2001). Drawing from this experience, the abolition of corporal punishment in South Africa and the suggested guidelines on the ATCPs need to be understood through a contextual lens.

Since the abolition of corporal punishment in Section 12 of the South African Constitution Act 108 of 1996 (RSA, 1996b), the National Education Policy Act of 1996 (President's Office, RSA, 1996) and Section 2 of the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (RSA, 1996a), the levels of misbehaviour and violence perpetuated by children, as well as their disregard for educators' instructions in schools, have increased dramatically. Educators state that learners do not listen to instructions, arrive late to school, do not do schoolwork, smoke cigarettes, talk back to, insult and even physically assault educators. Hence, corporal punishment remains perpetually ubiquitous in schools (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). Educators and parents lament that the government has taken away a functional tool for disciplining learners in schools (Mayisela, 2017). Even though there is no evidence suggesting that misbehaviour at school has escalated since the abolition of corporal punishment, educators seem to believe that it has rendered children uncontrollable and so they continue to use corporal punishment (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). According to Burton and Leoschut's (2013) School Violence Study, 51.7% of learners reported experiencing corporal punishment in 2008. The practice had increased in most South African provinces, including Mpumalanga from 43.6% in 2008 to 63.5% in 2012, but there was a significant reduction in the use of corporal punishment in Gauteng schools from 61% to 22.8% in 2012 (Burton & Leoschut, 2013).

Busienei (2012) reports on a survey in Kenya, a country with a history of corporal punishment similar to that in South Africa, which indicates that Kenyan educators did not use corporal punishment, even though they believed that alternatives were not as efficient because learners continued to misbehave. These sentiments are also shared by South African educators who believe that the ATCPs suggested by the DoE are not effective (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010). Contrary to this well-documented regard for corporal punishment, there has not been any evidence to show that corporal punishment is an effective disciplinary method. Studies such as Donnelly and Straus (2005) and Soneson (2005) show that corporal punishment is usually administered to the same learners over and over again, which suggests that the cause of the child's irregular behaviour is linked to physical, psychological and socio-economic factors beyond the child's control. The punitive discipline practices focus on external issues but ignore the internal motivators and psycho-social factors contributing to learners' mis/behaviour, which need

be viewed in terms of the child's unique developmental needs.

Veriava and Power (2017) suggest using positive discipline and a code of conduct, with no mention of punitive disciplinary measures as ATCPs. They describe positive discipline as;

> … a different way of guiding children. It is about guiding children's behavior by paying attention to their emotional and psychological needs. It aims to help children take responsibility for making good decisions and understand why those decisions were in their best interest. Positive discipline helps children learn self-discipline without fear. It involves giving children clear guidelines for what behavior is acceptable, and then supporting them as they learn to abide by these guidelines. (Veriava & Power, 2017:347)

Is detention a form of positive discipline? Detention is a concept borrowed from juvenile justice, which refers to the locking away of children or detaining them while awaiting trial. This is usually done after a child has been assessed and found to be a high risk to society (Holman & Ziedenberg, 2006). However, detention has been used in a different way in schools, whereby a child who has committed an offence is made to sit in solitary confinement. Some schools have a detention day when the children are detained after school on a Friday and they do menial work as a form of punishment (Lapperts, 2012). However, Lapperts (2012) found that detention is often ineffective when the same learner is exposed to it repeatedly. Atkins, McKay, Frazier, Jakobsons, Arvanitis, Cunningham, Brown and Lambrecht (2002) found that the same students who received detention and suspension in fall (autumn) and spring were more likely to receive the same punishment again, suggesting that detention and suspension served as a negative reinforcement for these learners. Although detention is proposed as an ATCP, depending on how it is used, it can be a contravention of the Schools Act regulation of School Safety, which states that "learners should not be punished in a cruel or demeaning manner and should not be detained in solitary confinements or locked out of safe environments" (Maphosa & Shumba, 2010:389).

Lewis, Butler, Bonner and Joubert (2010) note that detention is the most prevalent punitive measure used in some American schools, followed by suspension and expulsion. Ngidi (2007) investigated South African educators' use of verbal warning, community service, demerits, additional tasks, menial work, and detention as ATCPs. His findings suggest that verbal warnings were used most commonly after corporal punishment. This is in keeping with the apartheid dispensation of racially segregating laws that were the foundation of the Bantu Education system (Morrell, 2001). Ngidi (2007) found that detention was used infrequently as an ATCP, which begs the question

to why that was the case. Even though it is punitive in nature, there is not enough research to explain its minimal uptake in schools.

Theoretical Framework

Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) views human activity and collective practices as fundamental to the socio-cultural development of the mind and human behaviour. CHAT emerged from Soviet Psychology with Vygotskian scholars, Leont'ev and Luria, as the founding fathers of the theory. It is evident from their writings that this theory is the culmination of the ideological influences of, but not limited to, Hegelian, Marxist and Engels' thinking on the development of the human mind as embedded in object-related and goal-oriented human activity and the use of tools.

I believe that the relevance of this theory to this study pertains to the notion that social practices develop out of the collective mind (interpsychological processes), and that the development of practices such as child discipline and detention is a function of the collective mind. Thus, they are cultural practices which developed on the basis of historical, political, economic and social development (Vygotsky, 1997b). I assume that detention as an ATCP may be a progressive child discipline tool compared to corporal punishment; however, it may not be a psychologically and practically appropriate tool for the communities with a history of inadequate socio-economic resources.

Activity occurs within a particular context and thus the historical, political, social and economic contexts determine the cultural tools used in activities. However, cultural tools cannot be separated from the psychological tools as they are an extension of human biological and mental tools (Vygotsky, 1997a). Cultural tools are used in human activity to transform the external world, where consequently the tools and the transformed external world transform the human mind in return (Stetsenko, 2008).

The third Vygotskian generation of scholars argues that activity occurs within a community or communities, where there is a division of labour and social rules/values that form boundaries for the activity to achieve its goal or purpose, hence an object-oriented activity. Nardi (2005) aligns his understanding of an object-oriented activity to the German concept of *Objekti*, which refers to making the world a better place. In keeping within this view, the abolition of corporal punishment pertains to creating a context through social rules (policy) for the development of object-oriented transformation, aimed at the development of appropriate learner discipline tools such as detention. In this study, detention is an activity and therefore the unit of analysis relevant for this study (Mayisela, 2018). In the context of this study, there

is a need for teachers, and the community as a whole, to undergo intrapsychological transformation in order to abandon the abolished corporal punishment and adopt new disciplinary tools. Intra-psychological processes are those processes that are internalised in the mind of an individual, and have transformed the individual to the point that s/he can possess the processes as her own and s/he can appropriate these processes to transform their immediate world. In this case, teachers have internalised corporal punishment as their own tool to use to change the behaviour of learners.

I believe that attention to learner discipline in schooling is important, however, it has been escalated as a matter of a dog wagging the tail, when in essence it is a by-product of effective teaching and learning. In this article, I use CHAT as a theoretical lens to understand the nature of teaching and learning and the prevailing violence in South African schools from a broader contextual view as well as from actual learning processes. Further, recommended for the advancement of intrapsychological development of discipline among learners, is the dynamic model which draws a sharp focus on the actual classroom activities of a teacher. This model posits that the actual factors of teacher's classroom behaviour and activities have a huge impact on effective learning (Kyriakides, Christoforou & Charalambous, 2013). I recommend the use of the dynamic model, as a fundamental approach towards the understanding of effective teaching and learning, which is the main objective of schooling, with discipline being its by-product.

Methodology, Research Design and Methods

A case study design was found to be suitable for finding answers to in-depth questions about the use of detention as a phenomenon in schools. A case study allows for the phenomenon to be studied in its natural environment and for multiple data sources to be used for triangulation (Stake, 2005).

Case Study

This study was based on the case of a primary school in the Mpumalanga province of South Africa, a research site which was purposely selected as an example of a rural primary school. A case study was used in order to gain in-depth understanding of both the interpsychological and intrapsychological processes involved in learner discipline, the use of corporal punishment and its alternatives, like detention. Purposeful selection of the case was used, as the research site (the school) was accessible to the researcher on a partial insider and outsider perspective; insider as she knew some members of the community, and an outsider as she was not exposed to any members of the school community prior to the commencement of the

research project. The community where the school is located is predominantly of native descent, and their economic system, values and culture have been tainted by the colonial and apartheid systems. The system entailed racial marginalisation and economic oppression, leading to most of the adults working away from home in urban areas. Fundani Primary School (pseudonym) was founded in the early 1970s by a Lutheran missionary and incorporated into the Mpumalanga DoE after 1994 at the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Even though children at the school and parents were also participants in the study, in this article I report mainly on the teachers as primary actors in creating a safe, healthy and non-violent environment for effective teaching and learning. The teachers at this school and the community in which it is situated believed in corporal punishment as a method of discipline.

Participants and Sampling
All the teachers at the school participated in the study. The school had 22 teachers including the principal, the deputy principal with only four male teachers. Four teachers who had retired from the school were also interviewed to establish the intergenerational transference of the practice of child discipline. All the teachers had been educated under the Bantu Education system, an apartheid education system used to provide the most inferior education to and to mentally oppress the native South Africans. The system had a strong influence on education and teaching practice that is still evident 24 years after democracy and has led to corporal punishment still being a dominant disciplinary measure.

Methods
Observations and semi-structured interviews were conducted at the school. It is essential to state that interviews were conducted within the context of ethnographic observations. I visited the school and intermittently lived in the community for 13 weeks over a period of 2 years. The reporting in this article leans more on interviews, as it was in my interest to demonstrate the internalised or rather intrapsychological processes that informed the understanding on why alternatives to corporal punishment, particularly detention, did not gain favour among those who seemed to need it. Individual and group interviews were conducted at the school. Individual interviews were conducted with two educators; a male teacher who was a Senior Phase head of department, and a female teacher who was a learner support team chairperson. The other two individual interviews involved a deputy principal and the principal. Group interviews were conducted with four educator focus groups: one with eight Foundation Phase educators, one with eight Intersen[i] Phase

educators, one with a mixed group of seven educators, and one with four retired educators. These teacher interviews were triangulated with observations and interviews of parents and children whose opinions were not included in this article due to limited space.

Data Analysis
As I am conversant in both languages, I transcribed and translated data from the interviews from IsiZulu to English. Thematic inductive data analysis was conducted, with reference to Braun and Clarke's (2006) model, as follows: the analysis started with 1) transcription and translation, then 2) meaningful units were coded, then 3) similar codes were grouped together into themes, and finally 4) these themes were linked to the research questions and the theoretical framework, producing a meaningful whole report.

The data were verified by sharing the transcripts with the participants and allowing them to edit their captured expression where necessary. These measures led to increased confidence in the veracity of the data and suggested that the observations may be relevant to other schools with similar historical and socio-economic contexts. Further case studies of other schools using this methodology would confirm this and extend the understanding of the use of ATCPs in South Africa.

Ethical Considerations
The necessary ethical procedures that aimed to protect the participants' identity and confidentiality were followed. The aims, objectives and nature of the research, including any risks involved, were fully disclosed to the participants.

Findings
All the teacher participants at Fundani Primary School indicated that they had considered and, in some cases, attempted to use detention. Some of the educators used it without consciously considering it as a disciplinary method. What emerged from the data was that educators were convinced that detention was not the best alternative disciplinary method to corporal punishment. Educators cited the following issues with regard to the use of detention: 1) a "racialised" view of detention, 2) safety concerns, 3) contravention of children's basic rights, 4) parents' disapproval of detention, and 5) detention as self-punishment for educators. These issues are discussed below.

Socio-economic Class and Racialised View of Detention
In South Africa, racial difference has a significant influence on how human relations and activities are viewed and justified. Firstly, the use of corporal punishment is highly prevalent among the racially

oppressed Black populations. This was found to be true for detention as well, where educators at Fundani Primary School had considered the use of detention as it was one of the recommended discipline strategies, but they did not believe it was suitable for "us Black people", as stated by one of the Foundation Phase educators: "*… they* [the DoE] *actually told us that we should detain them. And this detention thing, for us Black people, we cannot manage it.*"

Firstly, it is necessary to clarify that the government this teacher is referring to here is the democratic government of the African National Congress. The use of "us" denotes a group identity that signifies the person as belonging to the collective or community, which was signified by the other educators in the interview group agreeing with this opinion. Furthermore, the "us" in the teacher's articulation stands for the collective identity, where the community itself has an identity of "Black people." Here, the meaning of "Black people" refers to a group of people with a specific socio-political, economic and historical background that informs their cultural practices. This statement was articulated in juxtaposition to corporal punishment, which, according to Harber (2004), was justified on the grounds that "corporal punishment is part of African culture" (p. 74). Harber (2004) dejects this view, noting that "evidence on pre-colonial education systems suggests that this is unlikely" (p. 74).

These findings concur with the study conducted in Sekhukhune district, Limpopo by Ntuli (2012:95–96), where a principal lamented the following: "our attitude as Black [people] towards this form of discipline, it is very awkward. In case of White learners, they are already disciplined and you won't even encounter such problems that we are encountering at our schools."

Black South African people have a peculiar history, in comparison to that of White South African people, which was shaped by the economic, systemic and structural violence orchestrated by the colonial and, more recently, the apartheid regime. These educators seem to believe that Black children cannot learn to be disciplined as well as White children do.

Safety Concerns as a Factor for Disuse of Detention

Traditionally, children in rural areas walk or travel to school daily by school bus or in public taxis, whereas in suburban schools most learners are transported to and from school by their parents in family cars. Children of Fundani Primary were observed to walk long distances to get to school, although some travelled by a scholar bus, it did not apply to all the learners. Educators at Fundani

Primary School believed that afternoon detention was not suitable for their community, as noted by the deputy principal:

> *It is also that when you try and adopt some of the alternative methods they don't work. Because look at our school the children live far away and if you detain a child after school, they might be attacked on their way back or miss the bus, meaning you have made that child miss the bus. You see? You see, you find that sometimes you want to make the punishment something educational, you may want to keep them back so that they can learn something but you find that you can't because as I've said some of these kids don't have parents. For example, look at Thembisile (reference to a particular learner) who might be a parent figure at home, and so, holding her back (detaining her) means that Thembisile must come and fetch the little ones, the little one suffer as well. Whereas, White people drive and they can come through and pick their children up. So those are the kind of things that make people (educators) frustrated because they wonder how is it that they are meant to discipline this child now?*

There is evidence in this expression that educators and school authorities do not wholly reject alternative means of discipline, but they conflict with other interests, such as safety for the learners. Detaining a learner after school means that they have to walk home alone, thereby missing the safety and protection of a group of learners who walk together. Sometimes, parents have already paid upfront for transport for their children, and so have to pay even more money for transport when their child gets detention; this becomes tantamount to double punishment for this learner.

Below is a quote from a deputy principal who is in favour of detention but battles with the practical arrangements of implementing after-school detention: "*In the afternoon, especially the younger ones, they walk home with the older children and if you detain him the older ones will leave him behind, then it's a problem again.*"

In this context, the deputy principal's concern was a genuine one and similar views were echoed in the retired teachers' group: "*And some children walk in groups, if the child is left behind the child may be in danger because s/he may be caught up there in the forest and you'll be in trouble, you as a teacher.*"

These utterances show the amount of responsibility that educators carry in relation to learners' safety, which seems to be of great concern with the implementation of detention. This should, however, not be the reason for the educators to fall back on corporal punishment, which is a quick and immediate punishment, but also failure to implement the recommended disciplinary measures.

Detention as a Contradiction to Children's Basic Rights

Besides the abolition of corporal punishment, there are other legislative tools that ensure the rights of learners. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (RSA, 1996b) is the key legislative tool that all policies hinge on. It appears that educators know and are willing to take responsibility for being custodians of the constitution to ensure that children's rights are protected in the school and in the community.

In thinking about the best time to implement detention, the Foundation Phase educators' group articulated their need to protect the child's basic right to eat and play: "*Maybe you want to punish the child, you keep him after school, when he comes late at home he gets beaten at home for coming late….*"

Educators in the Intersen Phase group, vehemently in agreement with each other on the contravention of children's basic rights, echoed:

> *… sometimes you hold the child during lunch, and the child does not eat, the child was hungry, and this child is from a poor family, this is the only meal s/he gets for the day, and you end up not knowing what the suitable detention is.*
> *Even during break, it is the child's right to go and play and eat, so you cannot punish a child in such a way that can be effective enough for the child to realise that she has done wrong.*

Until recently, the use of corporal punishment at home was not outlawed in South Africa. This meant that learners may have escaped corporal punishment at school, only to be subjected to it at home for transgressing home rules such as arriving late from school.

From observations, the settings where this school and other similar schools are located in South Africa, are of lower socio-economic status and, of the five school quintiles, are classified as quintile 1 (poorest schools). Fundani Primary School has been deemed a no-fee school and receives full government support, including resources for a feeding scheme (Shung-King, Orgill & Slemming, 2013). Learners are fed during the lunch break and thus detention at this time may mean that the learner misses their free lunch provision, undermining the nutrition objectives. Providing learners with lunch in the detention classroom would unfairly advantage them as they would "jump" the queue, which may be tantamount to special treatment and could be a negative reinforcement for bad behaviour.

Parents' Disapproval of Detention

Educators seemed to believe that parents were averse to the use of detention as a disciplinary strategy in the school. The Intersen Phase educators lamented that "*parents also question the use of detention, especially after school.*" This view was supported by the Foundation Phase educators, one of whom recounted an incident of when she had kept her learners behind for detention and released them with the older learners an hour later. Their parents were shouting outside the school premises, asking why the learners were held back after school:

> *For instance, yesterday I kept some children back after school, to release them when the bell rings for the older ones. And when I go out to, the women out here tell me 'why were you holding children, parents were here to fetch their children' and they were busy asking 'why are they held because it is after school?' then I asked 'where are they now?', then they said that they have left. You see now, I am in trouble whereas I was helping.*

Although this article does not focus on parent's views of detention, to provide a broader picture it is necessary to state that in an interview with parents some parents supported the use of detention as a disciplinary strategy, however, they too, were concerned about the safety of learners who stayed behind to serve detention.

In this case, one might argue that the administration of detention was undermined by a lack of parental involvement, considering that the learners were young and some of them were being fetched from school by their mothers. For detention to be introduced into a school and be appraised as a success or failure, it should be given an opportunity through appropriate processes that adequately recognise the involvement of all stakeholders.

"You Detain Yourself if You Detain Children"

The principal of Fundani Primary School, like the educators and the deputy principal, expressed his views of possibly successfully implementing detention:

> *You see, when you note the learners who are late, and then you call them by break time. You say, 'you are not going for break, you will do 1, 2, 3, 4, because you were late in the morning.' You see, most of the time it does assist to a particular extent.*

As a manager who has an interest in issues affecting both the learners and the educators, the principal illuminated a critical point about what could make detention an unpopular discipline method with the educators. Although educators did not mention this, he believed that educators were not in favour of detention, because they had to be involved in supervising it:

> *If they conduct detention during lunch time, teachers themselves will not have lunch. It also goes for after-school detention, where teachers have to stay with the children and supervise them, and in this way teachers feel that they too get detained.*

Furthermore, the learners were perceived to enjoy being detained because they found it amusing that the supervising teacher was being detained with them. In this regard, the school principal said, "*High school learners say 'it doesn't matter because we will be together.' And really you have*

to supervise them, if you detain them, you have to supervise them." This could cause the teacher to feel humiliated by having to supervise detention.

The issue of time and space contributes to the futility of detention. In under-privileged communities, the school buildings are usually used after school by the community for other activities. From observations, it was evident that in the afternoons on weekdays, Fundani Primary School classrooms were utilised as an Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) centre. This suggests that the school has an insufficient number of classrooms available for conducting detention. The school does not even have a staffroom for educators, further indicating the extent to which the school is under-resourced. The Intersen Phase educators' groups made reference to this resource limitation: "*Perhaps detention was going to work for us if we had sufficient classes because he would realise that they have all left me behind, and on another occasion, he would stay behind alone…*."

Another teacher in the group supported this: "*Yes, because classes are not enough, it is because classes are occupied by ABET. ABET classes start when we knock off.*"

The group interview with these educators was held in one of the Grade 5 classrooms where ABET classes were conducted. While this interview was in progress, ABET learners arrived and we had to move out of that classroom. This was supporting evidence that limited space for conducting detention after school hours was a challenge. Educators argued that space was the factor hindering detention, but it may also be argued that detention does not necessarily have to take place in a classroom *per se*. Educators believed that a sting in the form of corporal punishment was a solution and that it did make a difference, as learners arrived the following day having done their homework.

Educators, over and above their concerns about detention, also reflected on the effects of the use of a "time-out", which they referred to as sending a learner out of the class with nothing to do but stand outside. This discipline method is one of the methods recommended in the DoE ATCP guidelines (2000:17), defined as "the removal of the child from the situation from which he or she is unable to exercise self-discipline to a cooling down place." Educators at Fundani Primary School held the opinion that this method was not effective in deterring children's misbehaviour as "children become happy [and], tomorrow most don't write the homework because they all want to be sent out." They made reference to the use of time-out, which educators have tried for learners who were disruptive and non-cooperative in class. With the time-out, educators were also concerned that this contradicted the objective of schooling, which was learning. The principal of the school shared this need for protecting the constitutional rights of children to be in class and get the utmost benefit from attending school. Nevertheless, they used it because they were frustrated because there seemed to be no appropriate disciplinary method at their disposal. Furthermore, educators would have to use their time to support the learners in learning the content they missed while they were on time-out, which becomes an indirect detention for educators.

Discussion
The data from this study reveal that detention may not be an appropriate disciplinary method for certain cultural groups, particularly low-income and working class South Africans.

Participants singled out characteristics which were particular to South African Black, working class people as a result of their racialised apartheid history. For example, Black rural children walk long distances between school and home, exposing them to possible dangers when walking alone. Porter, Hampshire, Abane, Munthali, Robson, Mashiri and Maponya's (2010) study paint a clearer picture of the dangerous terrain, particularly of rape, encountered by learners on their way to and from school. Safety is a concern for both boys and girls, and more so for gender non-confirming learners who may be targets of harassment and community violence (Nduna & Jewkes, 2013). In South African townships and rural school settings, some children are socialised to care for one another. The older children care for and parent the younger ones. Parents and the community ensure that the older children walk to and from school with the younger ones, in a manner of "shepherding" them away from danger. This is more so in a setting where single-parent or child-headed households are the norm. Mpumalanga province, where the research site was based, has a high number of absent fathers, leaving single mothers and grandmothers to care for the children (Makiwane, Makoae, Botsis & Vawda, 2012). This is juxtaposed against learners not being fetched by parents in private and family cars, as is the case with those from privileged socio-economic backgrounds. Even for the few parents who are available to walk with their children, it is impractical to accompany their children to and from school every day, due to work commitments and their far-off employment places.

The notion of schooling for rural Black communities displays emotional and social distance (Hargreaves, 2001) on the part of the education system, lacking recognition of the multiple roles of children, namely as children, scholars, carers of their homes and siblings, nurses of their ill parents at times, and domestic labourers (Mayisela, 2017). While parents are at work, they expect children to come home soon after school to do household chores, failing which the smooth running of the

home will be threatened, and the parents may punish their children. Thus, after-school detention is impossible as it would mean putting a child in a difficult situation between home and school. For instance, a child in Porter et al.'s (2010) study reported that she could not go to school if she had not finished some of her home chores such as cleaning and fetching water before going to school. When late for school, she would receive corporal punishment, following which she "is sometimes forgiven and allowed to join the lesson in progress but at other times she is simply sent directly home as punishment, despite the fact that, in her case, this entails a long, lonely and potentially hazardous walk" (2010:99). These children mostly come from poverty-laden homes where the feeding scheme at school provides the only decent meal the child has for the day and where parents are not available to attend to school matters because they work far away, are sick or have died (Payet & Franchi, 2008).

From this study it is clear that the success of detention as a disciplinary strategy needs parental involvement. Participants noted that, due to socio-economic factors, parents were unable to support the school and the children, leaving the school to deal with the challenges with implementing detention. Conversely, detention seemed to be implementable in schools previously for White people, where parents' economic standing affords parental involvement that is in keeping with the practice of detention. This disparity has created a social construct among educators that children from affluent families are innately disciplined. This view illuminates the concept of socio-political and economic pathways towards the internalised racial and cultural identities of Black inferiority and White supremacy within the South African context.

The lack of parental involvement of predominantly Black and working-class parents perpetuates the notion that Black children are innately ill-disciplined. This way of thinking is an exemplar of what Fanon (1986) identifies as epidermalisation of inferiority complex.[ii] Furthermore, the meaning of "White children being already disciplined" also has an economic connotation. In South Africa, it refers to having access to quality education and parental capacity to provide educational resources and parenting time to groom the child's desirable behaviour. This raises the question about what educators believe discipline to be in the context of under-resourced schools, overcrowded classrooms, absent parents who are consumed by employment, and children being unguided and at risk of exposure to drugs, gambling, and truancy.

Herein lies an ethical dilemma about which is better: children being left to their own devices in a system that currently cannot care for them without the use of corporal punishment, or educators

risking being politically incorrect by using corporal punishment as a working economy that keeps the proximity between the child and the adult. Payet and Franchi (2008) argue that perhaps what the government needs to do, as an initial step, is to monitor the boundaries between adults and children so that they do not become violent and abusive. While there is merit in considering Payet and Franchi's (2008) point, there is a risk of further excluding underprivileged children from future mainstream economic development, due to the negative impact of corporal punishment they would be suffering currently and later on in life.

This study has shown that the practice of child discipline in schools is historically bound by South Africa's legacy of a violent social and governance system in the process of transformation. During apartheid, corporal punishment was a political tool used to oppress the native people and keep them in perpetual disenfranchisement. This prolonged exposure influenced the natives' internalisation of corporal punishment as their own fundamental child-rearing tool (Harber, 2004). What is currently evident is that the policies banning the use of corporal punishment have introduced a change of disciplinary tool as a social rule, but the collective psyche and the division of labour for educators, parents and children, both at school and at home, are all in contradiction with the introduced change (Morrell, 2001). This contradiction hinders transformation that is instrumental in the learning and development of any child who exists in these contexts of both home and school. The abolition of corporal punishment and the introduction of detention in schools, without the understanding of the critical activity systems involved in sustaining the use of corporal punishment, stall the development of effective and healthy disciplinary measures.

The historicity element of CHAT interrogates the deep-rooted internalised practices of the apartheid system, such as the use of corporal punishment. Therefore, eradicating such practices cannot succeed by taking superficial measures such as passing laws without challenging the bedrock of economic inequality on which these practices are founded. Corporal punishment has been abolished, rightfully so, but this study suggests that replacing it with alternatives in a cut-and-paste fashion is not an exercise that should be left to be the burden of educators alone. The success of abolishing corporal punishment and establishing transformative and non-punitive discipline alternatives requires the engagement of multiple activity systems that involve educators, the DoE, parents and their employers (business community), faith-based organisations, civil society, researchers and children as citizens with rights and responsibilities. To this end, it does not seem as if all these systems

are in sync with each other to allow ATCPs, such as detention, to be a success.

Since this study was based on a case study, these findings cannot be generalised, but a similar study can be repeated in the same or a different context. Further study on the uptake of other alternatives to corporal punishment, and parents' views on the use of detention as an ATCP is necessary and relevant.

More importantly, in line with the dynamic model of effective teaching, there is a need for discipline to be viewed as a by-product of actual and effective teaching activities by the teacher in a school setting. So, the actual educators' teaching activities determine the effectiveness of the teaching and learning, and thus of the discipline learners demonstrate in class, in the context of the broader social environment.

Conclusion

In this study I focused on educators' use of corporal punishment and their perceptions of ATCPs, with reference to detention as a discipline strategy which is highly recommended to educators. Very few studies focussed on the perceptions and efficacies of ATCPs in South African schools. This study begins to address this shortcoming. I found that educators' perceptions and real experiences of the use of detention as a disciplinary method were markedly tainted by socio-economic and contextual factors. The question then, is how strategies such as detention should be implemented in a situation where there is a lack of parental involvement to support this disciplinary system at school and even at home, due to socio-economic and geographical challenges, crime and children's vulnerabilities.

Detention is still a punitive approach to behaviour management in children, which has been found to be successful in situations of mild offences with children who are not repeat offenders. However, its shortcomings were evident in children from low-income groups where after-school detention is not practical due to children's reliance on public transport (Fluke, Olson & Peterson, 2014). In its booklet on Education Rights, the non-governmental civic organisation, Section 27, recommends positive discipline, which they define as a type of discipline that takes into consideration the emotional and psychological needs of a child (Veriava & Power, 2017).

With this study I illuminated the incongruences associated with the move to alternative disciplinary methods, and the prevailing belief in the efficacy of corporal punishment by South African educators. Specifically, it highlighted that detention as a disciplinary approach has limitations for communities in low socio-economic settings, and thus there is a necessity to focus on the educator's classroom activities for effective learning as central to the development of intrapsychological processes influencing learner behaviour.

Notes

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