

**University of Alberta**

Experiential Discipline: Informing and Reforming Discipline in Secondary Schools in Alberta

by

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A capping exercise submitted to the Faculty of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

in

Educational Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

Edmonton, Alberta

April 7, 2025

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### **Abstract**

Effective school discipline is a complex and evolving issue in modern education. As classroom dynamics, school cultures, and student populations change, disciplinary practices must also change in order to remain effective. John Dewey's philosophy of education as both experiential and social provides a theoretical framework for future disciplinary policies that are responsive, rather than reactive. Using Deweyan theories and evaluating the history of discipline in the North American school context, this qualitative study will identify issues within modern discipline policies and suggest a path forward using experiential learning as a model of effective school discipline.

*Keywords:* Dewey, Foucault, Experiential Learning, Experiential Discipline, Discipline, Discipline in North American Schools, Discipline in Canadian Schools, Corporal Punishment, Social Justice Education, Inclusive Education, and behavioural issues in education.

### **Statement of Topic**

Within the current educational context of Alberta, educators must work to recognize and respond to the imbalance of inequity within their school communities and identify areas of reform within school policies. Based on my own observations as a secondary school teacher, school based discipline policy is in need of reformation in order to create safe, respectful, and empowering school environments for school leaders, teachers, students, families, and all other community members.

Although there is an abundance of research (Colorado & Janzen, 2021; Locher-Lo, 2018) available on models of discipline in Canadian and North American schools, there is a gap identified in evaluating how a pragmatic approach — particularly inspired by the experiential learning theory of John Dewey (1997) — can inform school discipline policies in contemporary school environments. The purpose of this project is to explore the development of discipline policy in Alberta, the external pressures on the education system due to neoliberal ideologies, and recommend pathways with a pragmatic approach to develop effective disciplinary policies for an ever changing school landscape.

Experiential learning is an active process which enhances engagement and analytical skills which improves the application of learning outcomes (Dewey, 1997; Zainuba, 2025). In Zainuba's (2025) case study of experiential learning methodologies focused on three sections of post-secondary students taking business administration courses. It was determined that that students' overall scores were significantly higher in the sections that applied experiential learning practices over the control group. Experiential learning encourages students to be actively engaged in the learning process, reflect on their interactions, and recognize their position and responsibility in a democratic classroom environment (Dewey, 1997). Experiential learning not

only affects academic outcomes — it can impact behaviour outcomes as well. As disciplinary policies change alongside student needs, experiential learning can be utilized to reconstruct disciplinary practices in modern educational contexts in a way that supports students and educators.

### **Inquiries Guiding the Capping Exercise**

This synthesis of the literature is guided by the following questions:

- What is the basis of current disciplinary policies in Alberta schools and how are they implemented?
- How can a pragmatic approach emphasizing experiential learning (as defined by John Dewey) inform new discipline policies that can support positive and meaningful school experiences?

To begin my analysis of John Dewey's theories of education, as well as my exploration of past and contemporary issues in school based education, I accessed the University of Alberta library database to search primary and secondary sources. Most searches focused on finding peer reviewed articles with the following keywords: *Dewey*, *Foucault*, *Experiential Learning*, *Experiential Discipline*, *School Discipline*, *Discipline in North American Schools*, *Student Discipline*, *Discipline in Canadian Schools*, *Corporal Punishment*, *Social Justice Education*, *Inclusive Education*, and *behavioural issues in education*. The boolean phrase AND was used to connect both John Dewey and Michel Foucault to the search terms concerning discipline, education, and experiential teaching and learning. These terms were entered into the University of Alberta database, with many sources accessed from Routledge and SAGE databases and several more were from ERIC. John Dewey's *Experience and Education* (1997) and *Democracy And Education* (1997) were used as primary resources in this paper, while the remainder of the

references of John Dewey's work and Michel Foucault's work were based on secondary sources. The resources used for this paper intend to provide a historical view of discipline in North American — primarily Canadian — schools, outline contemporary issues in school disciplinary policies, explore John Dewey's theory of experiential learning, and focus on applying those Deweyan Principles to inform future school disciplinary policies.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Dewey (1997) writes that life is inherently social, and that individuals uncover identity through meaningful interactions. He notes that “[s]ociety exists through a process of transmission quite as much as biological life” (Dewey, 1997, p.3). John Dewey's pragmatic approach to education is the central lens I will be using to explore my research question. Specifically, I will be exploring how individual experience is a crucial element to learning (Dewey, 1997) in relation to disciplinary interactions. This framework emphasizes the need for choice and action to create meaningful educational experiences that develop an individual's understanding of the world (d'Agnese, 2019). Student behaviour can be unpredictable; this is congruent with Dewey's (1997) position that the educational process itself is both active and unpredictable as it relies on individual experience and the endless possibilities that accompany it. Dewey's (1997) concept of experiential learning also provides direction towards how new disciplinary policies that utilize and access relationality can be implemented and integrated into contemporary educational policies. Disciplinary practices should be embedded in the active learning process to create responsive — rather than reactive — educational policies.

These historic reactive approaches to issues in education focused on archaic disciplinary methods. To illustrate the shift towards pragmatism, a review of Foucauldian methodologies of education and discipline can be analyzed to see the shift in ideologies. In their study of Foucault,

discipline, and truth, Ryan (1991) argues that discipline and the symbolism of control relies on embedded power dynamics; a concept that is based on Foucauldian theories of discipline. The role of surveillance in modern education serves as a method of governance and exertion of power as well as an encouragement to conform to a dominant culture's values and ideologies. Within this system, the aversion to hegemonic perspectives identifies potential "abnormalities and deviants" (Ryan, 1991, p.105) and encourages obedience through the utilization of observation and supervision to "normalize" students. Ryan contends that these practices in schools promote inequalities as well as serving to create and support power structures. Building on Foucault's work, Ryan (1991) theorized a fundamental world that helps to understand administrative power, specifically when considering physical forms of discipline. Physical discipline has been used as a deterrent and as a method to govern the physical body of members of an institution. Exploitation of the physical body speaks to privilege — or lack thereof which provides insight into the purpose of discipline in school, as well as society as a whole. Ryan (1991) provides a comprehensive breakdown of the concept of surveillance and the panopticon, as well as its influences over modern education systems. When this theory of discipline is applied, students are expected to self manage through fear of an authoritarian power structure, rather than through intrinsic beliefs or values.

Understanding historical perspectives is essential as we progress towards Deweyan inspired pedagogies that focus on developing the self through experience as a reflective process. Individuals have a choice in their morality (Dewey, 1960, as cited in Holmes, 1973). The goal of education is the growth of an individual — towards self-realization and happiness. The general happiness of the greater community might not cause an individual to achieve that same state, but it can create the conditions for which that is possible (Holmes, 1973). As Holmes (1973)

suggests: “to achieve happiness one must cultivate a concern for others” (p. 277); simply offering choice does not bring about a sense of happiness in an individual, but providing access to understand how that choice has affected others may bring an individual to an emotional response. Significantly, reframing disciplinary policies in education to be more experiential in practice reflects the “central task of a successful educative process involves helping students to integrate what is learning into the narrative of their lives” (Tabensky, 2019, p. 571), by understanding how their experience connected to others.

## **Literature Review**

### **The History of Discipline in Education**

Methods of discipline began to change in the 18th century when the intent shifted from causing physical harm to the body and towards making it “productive and cooperative” (Ryan, 1991, p.106). In this new model of discipline, Foucault’s theory of Panopticism identifies surveillance as a key component of control within schools as it serves to establish practices of self—regulation amongst the students and removes the element of physical reinforcement (Ryan, 1991). Discipline serves to create functional members of society who abide by established rules and norms as North American systems of education undergo increasing marketization in the march towards modernity. This model of discipline has become paradigmatic in modern education as bodies could be used and improved for commodification rather than destroyed (Ryan, 1991).

Contemporary understandings of students’ misbehaviour, as identified by Colorado and Janzen (2021), see that when students act out this is actually a form of communication and learning, in addition to being an act of protest. Students who frequently contravene school policies are at greater risk of “segregation, exclusion, poor academic achievement, and low



graduation rates (Dufresne et al., 2010, as cited in Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 64). Canadian schools have implemented Safe Schools legislation in response to student behavioural concerns. Colorado and Janzen (2021) suggest that the blanket implementation of the policies can lead to further alienation and marginalization of vulnerable students. By labelling students' behaviour as 'deficit,' the aim of disciplinary policies become focused on curing students of their behaviour. The response from these policies feed into a curriculum of control and a discourse that responds to misbehaviours in the same way: removing students to maintain efficiency. For example, the frequent use of suspensions as a disciplinary response, which removes students from both their learning environments and other opportunities within the school without adequately addressing the student's needs or what the behaviour is communicating. The result is an increasing achievement gap for these students who are then further marginalized as a result (Colorado & Janzen, 2021) of exclusionary discipline methods.

The increase in violent behaviours at school has resulted in school administrators to engage in risk management; analyzing risk factors can result in students being labelled as dangerous and "perpetuate social inequalities" (Davis et al., 2015, as cited in Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p.66). When more focus is placed on external actions rather than the context or specific need of a student, disciplinary policies create a narrative of assimilation. Students may not understand specific policies or rules, and may not contravene them out of defiance; the zero tolerance policies of most Safe School policies do not adequately consider the diverse perspectives and norms that may also be an influence on student behaviour. This does not allow for equitable support for all students and behaviours (Colorado & Janzen, 2021). Considering these viewpoints may allow students to understand the function and purpose of specific rules and policies and consequently, the value of abiding by them.

The push to follow an eurocentric “social contract” requires students to “follow the rules and relinquish personal freedom in order to gain the benefit of education” (Colorado & Janzen, 2021, p. 67). Inevitably, if students are made to feel there is no benefit to them, then the social contract loses meaning. Students cannot be expected to have the agency to follow such a contract if their agency is not respected or valued by all stakeholders along the way. Colorado and Janzen (2021) identify the function of social reproduction that is embedded within modern education. Although the reproduction of norms and values is an inevitable part of the socialization process that takes place in schools, the transmission of power dynamics is also occurring. Discipline actions that are reactive to student behaviour play a key role in sustaining hegemonic power dynamics which is increasingly becoming an ethical issue within North American schools (Colorado & Janzen, 2021). Educators and administrators must work to identify and dismantle school policies that call for conformity rather than community.

### **Canada’s Educational Context**

Locher-Lo (2018) notes that although most school boards prohibit the use of corporal punishment towards school age children, the *Criminal Code of Canada* offers protection of physical discipline as long as the intent is to be corrective; corrective measures would include physically restraining and/or removing a child exhibiting negative behaviours. This means that physical punishment of children remains a private affair, even though the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada dismisses physical discipline as an archaic and destructive exercise (Locher-Lo, 2018). Many other provinces have had legislation in place from as early as 1973 to as late as 2009 (Locher-Lo, 2018). As of January 2025, Alberta and Manitoba still do not have provincially mandated legislation regarding the use of corporal punishment towards children. In fact, as of this writing, Section 43 of the Criminal Code of Canada justifies

the use of corporal punishment against any person(s) with the stipulation that the physical force can be deemed reasonable and corrective (Locher-Lo, 2018).

As Locher-Lo (2018) notes, better behaviour can stem from better education whereas physical corrective measures can leave a significant emotional imprint on an already vulnerable and impressionable member of society. As well, this use of physical discipline is recognized as being a cause of further behavioural problems in children. Corporal punishment contributes to a culture of approved violence towards children, despite it being an ineffective method of correction that can result in “rebellion, resistance, revenge and resentment” (U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect, 1991, p. 124, as cited in Locher-Lo, 2018). Physical punishment may result in compliant behaviour from children, but may “hinder their long term internalization of rules and conventions” (p. 82). Threats of violence can also impede a child’s cognitive functions, proving to have an effect on Intellectual Quotients, intellectual development, and executive functioning (Gadd, 1998; Turner, 2002, as cited in Locher-Lo, 2018). When exposed to corporal punishment, children may only be able to identify when an adult is unhappy with their behaviour, but not ‘why’ — this is where the education process needs to occur.

Between 1979-2016, 29 European countries legislatively banned corporal punishments outright, while Belgium, the Czech Republic, Monaco, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the Russian Federation allow physical discipline in the home, but not at schools (Locher-Lo, 2018). Locher-Lo (2018) notes that The United Nations’ *Convention on the Rights of Children* made several recommendations regarding physical and mental protection of children, with Canada pledging to address these recommendations in 1991. According to the United Nations, corporal punishment was defined as a force that was intended to cause pain or discomfort to recognize that these acts are belittling and degrading in nature. In the years following the initial

pledge, Canada took little action towards addressing the rights of children as per the United Nations Recommendations. In 2003, forty-five recommended actions were made to the Government of Canada (Locher-Lo, 2018) . By 2011, Canada was found to have made little progress, which is the same status of non-compliance Locher-Lo's review was able to report in 2018. Canadian legislation must be brought up to the international standards; abolishing corporal punishment towards children as well as the protection the *Criminal Code of Canada* currently offers it will also provide the social context necessary to address the legacy of the residential school system and the ongoing impact of violence towards children within Canadian schools (Locher-Lo, 2018).

### **Issues Around Equity and Access In Education**

Modern pedagogical approaches advocate for active resistance to oppressive ideologies to strengthen the critical thinking skills of students (Andrews et al., 2018). This movement runs concurrently with many active school policies that are hegemonic in nature. In their article examining discipline and its contributions of inequity in schools, Ryan (1991) describes discipline as a symbol of control with the intent to create docility and obedience. This suggests that dominant cultures attempt to “normalize individuals through increasingly rationalized means, by turning them into meaningful subjects and docile objects” (Coloma, 2011, p. 203). With this understanding, discipline in education is and has been used to encourage individuals to conform to the dominant culture and ideologies (Ryan, 1991; Sam, 2019; Vindevoghel, 2016).

Ryan (1991) argues that discipline and the symbolism of control relies on embedded power dynamics, a concept that is based on Foucauldian theories of discipline. The role of surveillance in modern education, such as through the use of closed circuit surveillance, serves as a method of governance and exertion of power as well as an encouragement to conform to a

dominant culture's values and ideologies. Within this system, the aversion to hegemonic perspectives identifies potential "abnormalities and deviants" (Ryan, 1991, p. 105) and encourages obedience through the utilization of observation and supervision to "normalize" students. Ryan contends that these practices in schools promote inequalities as well as serving to create and support power structures.

Education has played a prominent role in "reproducing the structure of class domination" (Chun, 2013, p. 147). However, in their article exploring hegemony and perceptions of morality, Chun (2013) posits that systems of education must now shift their focus to decentralize hegemonic ideologies to challenge disciplinary regimes that perpetuate inequality and elitism. Education reinforces the modern structural framework of society to normalize desired behaviours, rules, and practices of citizenship (Chun, 2013). Power dynamics and relationships allow for "certain kinds of knowledge to become more visible than others" (Sun & Valenzuela, 2021, p. 712) while policy demonstrates how that power is distributed. According to Sun & Valenzuela (2021), many occidental systems of education perpetuated oppression by created a "space that leaves whiteness and white privilege uninterrogated" (Sun & Valenzuela, 2021, p.712).

Exclusionary discipline practices, such as out of school suspensions are "linked to adverse student outcomes" (Welsh, 2024, p. 848) and are more likely to be applied to "students with disabilities, non-heterosexual youth, low socioeconomic students, low performing students, minoritized, and male students" (p. 848). These exclusionary practices can continue to contribute to issues of inequality, expand achievement gaps, as well as future issues into adulthood, such as incarceration (Welsh, 2024). Welsh (2024) notes that "suspension rates are linked to principal's attitudes" (p. 851) which indicates that the administration of disciplinary actions are not

equitable or based on student context, or tied into a specific rationale of disciplinary policy. They are subjective and may be obscured by either conscious or unconscious biases.

Experiential learning may serve students when it comes to disciplinary policies and practices, but it can also be an effective tool in teacher education. In a study conducted by Welsh (2024), the value of experiential learning as a factor in teacher preparation was essential in effective school disciplinary practices. Many teacher preparation programs are seen deficient in providing applicable experiences when it comes to classroom management and identifying and understanding personal bias. Experiential learning methodologies are critical to provide accessible experiences for educators to navigate through in order to more effectively respond to student needs. It can be inferred that the same way experiential learning opportunities during disciplinary measures can be considerate of student needs, teachers are able to experience personal development as well. Welsh (2024) specifies that the effectiveness of the disciplinary process is improved by the supportive and collaborative nature of the interaction between administrators and teachers. This interchange between teachers and administrators creates the environment for continuous professional learning. Although disciplinary matters are primarily focused on the students, there is opportunity to create learning environments that encourage personal growth of educators and other stakeholders. Administrator and teacher experiences in the disciplinary process are directly related to how these processes are able to effectively impact the student population.

To add to the development of equitable and responsive disciplinary policies, John Dewey's pragmatic framework supports the inclusion of student experience and choice in the development of disciplinary practices that are steeped in the learning process and allows for the students to gain knowledge to support their development and navigation of the world (d'Agnese,

2019). Through this lens, discipline becomes less reactionary and more responsive to individual needs. Policy developers must draw on “empathy, dialogic interaction, ... patience, tolerance of frustration, and even endurance” (d’Agnese, 2019, p. 711) to activate student experiences and promote growth and freedom through reflection to continue their development and broaden their understanding.

### **The Influence of Neoliberal Ideologies on Public Education**

Neoliberalism “betrays the nature of education” (d’Agnese, 2019, p. 693) by prioritizing knowing over thinking. Educational outcomes are commodified and objectified through authoritarian teaching practices that destabilize the democratic nature of education (d’Agnese, 2019) which undermines Dewey’s (1997) assertion that the democratic environment of education is crucial for development. Current educational ideologies are driving students and teachers towards workplace readiness (d’Agnese, 2019) and “inhibiting students’ abilities to self-critique, to understand the world and the ways of seeing the world that they have inherited” (Tabensky, 2021, p. 571)

Trust is essential to the social contracts to function (Webster, 2016). It is this trust between teachers and students that also contributes to the development of the autonomy and self-efficacy necessary for educators to respond to student needs more effectively (Webster, 2016). The inclusion of neoliberal accountability measures and the push towards standardization can compromise the relationship of care in education as the curriculum becomes more commodified (Webster, 2016). Neoliberal ideologies in education promotes what Tabernsky (2021) identifies as “the professional dimension” (p. 571) of education that seeks to prepare students for the workplace rather than for the world at large. Neoliberal influences on education encourage students to create the best product of their education — the highest mark — rather than focus on

the process and experience of education. Emphasizing process aligns with Webster's (2016) analysis of Dewey's concept of "ends-in-view" (p. 157), which prioritizes the education plan rather than the outcome. Through these plans and processes comes experience which helps students to navigate changing circumstances and create meaning on their path to becoming morally developed "or 'civilised' in Dewey's terms" (p. 157). Hartman's (2012) review of Dewey's philosophy notes that "our understanding of the world should be based on human activity" (p. 64); the human experience leads to an ethical understanding that forms our moral framework and thus impacts behaviour.

### **John Dewey's Experiential Theory of Learning**

According to John Dewey (1859-1952) the human experience is entirely social; interactions form situations where learning occurs. Experiences form in the intersection between continuity and interaction. Social control comes from personal responsibility students feel within the social order. Educators, however, are responsible for the selection of meaningful learning activities where students can contribute to the social organization of their environment, thus building that sense of responsibility. When social control is effectively fostered and implemented, students are more likely to self-regulate their thoughts and actions. Effectual social control decreased the need for external disciplinary measures.

Dewey (1997) believed that all experience matters, but not all experiences are equal - "every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (p.24). With this understanding, Dewey identifies the continuity aspect of experience. Traditional education neglects the value of experiential learning by aligning with neoliberal ideologies where standardization of assessments and rote knowledge transmission is emphasized. At the other end of the educational continuum is progressive education which



values student centered learning, but lacks the necessary structure to provide a rigorous and intentional educational experience. Dewey (1997) notes that experiences form in the intersection between continuity and interaction as educators must take care not to manipulate or otherwise be “disloyal” to the principle of experience by identifying what attitudes are conducive to continued growth and what attitudes could possibly stymie further progress.

d’Agnese (2019) notes that Dewey’s emphasis on the possibilities in education allow for the freedom necessary for teachers and students to develop their sense of self through experience. Dewey (1997) suggests that experience allows for consequences to be meaningful and inspire growth by providing students with the freedom and agency. Here, students experience “Deweyan transactionalism” where “knowledge lies in recognizing the relation between actions and outcomes” (d’Agnese, 2019, p. 703). The teaching practices that support this educational goal would be ones that provide attentiveness to student behaviours, actions, habits, knowledge, and social context; educators would be required to be “relocated within student experiences, rather than standing about or outside that experience” (p. 711).

According to Dewey (1997), ethics is about navigating varying issues and creating meaning in a changing world. Social workers, like educators, must engage in reflection in order to develop their perspectives based on new information. In Dewey’s philosophy, an individual’s moral character is intrinsically tied to their knowledge and understanding of the world; every experience has the potential to be a formative learning opportunity that students can apply towards their own self—development (Webster, 2016).

As policies that permit physical disciplinary practices are formed and reformed, discourse between school faculty and students takes on a new dynamic in controlling and regulating behaviour. Schneck (1987) notes that discourse is “[n]ot a meek process of interpretation, in

other words, to know — to claim knowledge, to will truth — is to make reality, discursively and violently” (Schneck, 1987, pp. 27-28). In a more recent publication, Sam (2019) identifies the role that discourse takes in shaping epistemologies and informing an understanding of policy. Discourse, of course, shapes policy and policy change, which is integral to the pragmatic and experiential process of education.

### **Experiential Learning as Discipline**

Experiential learning operates out of “safe yet transformative learning environments” (O’Flanagan & Jester, 2025, p.1) where emotional wellbeing is tied to academic success. This type of learning extends beyond traditional learning and assessment practices; it engages with student’s lived experiences and helps them build on their understanding of the world using their prior knowledge.

Experiential learning theory acknowledges external factors such as a lack of connection and feelings of stress and anxiety can disrupt student learning. O’Flanagan and Jester (2025), reviewed a survey of student satisfaction administered in the United Kingdom during the COVID-19 global pandemic. The results showed that only 48% of students were satisfied with their learning experience; this was mirrored by the 42% of respondents who reported they felt their emotional and mental wellbeing was supported in their educational environment. This highlights the critical role that experience, engagement, and student wellbeing play in the learning process. The ability to self-regulate and manage reactions and behaviours through reflection are an integral part of the experiential learning process. Emotional management is a crucial part of encountering meaningful educational outcomes and opportunities. Experiential learning shifts focus from exclusively cognitive and behavioural outcomes and considers interactions with environmental factors. As such, O’Flanagan and Jester (2025) note that

“negative emotions can obstruct learning by narrowing the field of further experience” (p.3) by lowering learner motivation and increasing student disengagement and disillusionment. The appropriate management of emotions promotes real world applications of learned outcomes and creates a sense of self awareness and self-regulation (O’Flanagan & Jester, 2025). This is congruent to Dewey’s (1997) concept of the social contract where students are able to develop and maintain a sense of responsibility for their actions as a democratic member of their peer group. They are able to understand how their interactions affect others through experience and reflection. Student ability to self-manage, demonstrated their ability to adapt emotionally to unpredictable and dynamic environments, which became “the primary predictor of successful learning outcomes” (O’Flanagan & Jester, 2025, p. 5).

Events that are considered emotional in nature are more “memorable and easily retrievable” (O’Flanagan & Jester, 2025, p. 3). This concept can produce positive or negative outcomes for students depending on the emotion the student is feeling; providing guidance as an educator to help students through negative emotions — such as when a student is involved in a disciplinary issue — can lead to a positive experience if the student is able to reflect on their experience and contribute democratically to a fair outcome. Suppressing emotions leaves students with little recourse to consider the impact of their actions and limits their ability to reflect and develop an effective understanding of their emotional responses (O’Flanagan & Jester, 2024).

Teachers and school leaders have the opportunity to engage in the experiential learning process by modelling self-responsibility and healthy social exchanges, and reflecting on their practice and interactions. In the student- teacher relationship, teacher’s are noted to be “sympathetic observers” (Dewey, 1897, as cited in Novakowski, 2024, p. 67) who support

students to develop an understanding of appropriate social responsibilities, actions, and reactions and develop the skills necessary to engage in democratic and effective social communications. Experiential learning and experiential discipline rely on students being present and aware in their interchanges with their community (Dewey, 1897, as cited in Novakowski, 2024). As sympathetic observers, educators must leverage their relationships with students to model appropriate and constructive conduct in order to influence positive behaviours in students.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

As educational policy enters a new era, continued analysis of discourse is essential to creating balance within these educational structures. Current western systems of education perpetuate dominant — and sometimes harmful — ideologies that repress alternative ways of knowing and being. These alternative lenses with which we can view the world can highlight imbalances with regard to what is considered to require disciplinary action, as well as what could be considered as appropriate disciplinary action. Further research is also needed to understand the implication of power in written and dialogical forms when it comes to educational policy as forming policy and imposing policy can be two fundamentally different practices. The distinction between spoken and written forms of discourse within policy requires careful consideration as educators continue to explore and dismantle hierarchies in education that perpetuate oppressive ideologies. These exchanges can identify how power dynamics inform and implement disciplinary policy by emphasizing how expected norms and values create inequality and oppression. The future of education relies on further research that incorporates a multiplicity of perspectives to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion rather than continuing the efforts of colonization towards modernity and capitalism.

Learning creates a sense of belonging. It is how we become socialized in the world and find our place within a broader context. Harmful modes of socialization can corrupt “social and personal conditions” (Tabensky, 2021, p. 569). In Tabensky’s (2021) analysis of Dewey’s concepts of the educational process, continuous growth and learning allows for individuals to respond to change. Education reforms the human experience and enhances consciousness of the self (Granger, 2001), which enhances one’s ability to think critically and act considerately and with intention. Tabensky (2021) notes that “[w]ithout education we could not navigate the world as conscious rational beings who are at once autonomous and social” (p. 568).

As Welsh (2024) notes, disciplinary practices are focused on developing positive school communities, increasing school based supports, and implementing restorative practices. School disciplinary policies should shift away from exclusionary practices that place students at an academic and social disadvantage and move towards policies that are student focused and intended to be congruent with their learning experiences. Experiential learning should provide the framework to shift disciplinary policies and practices from reactive to responsive. The overall wellbeing and development of members of the educational community should be the focus of educational policies. Obedience and passivity, while desirable traits in archaic school systems, do not encourage the growth and critical thinking that students need. As an educator, exploring experiential learning as a pathway to addressing student behaviour serves as a paradigmatic shift in modern education. The integration of experiential learning as pedagogical practice will serve an ever changing student population and provide the groundwork to amplify meaningful student learning experiences that enhance personal and social development.

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