

The Interrelation of Discipline, Punishment, and Education in Postmodern Philosophy

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ABSTRACT: The purpose of the study was to critically analyse the concepts of discipline and punishment in Michel Foucault's philosophy, as well as the impact on educational practices. The research methodology was qualitative and was based on hermeneutical analysis of the philosopher's texts, content analysis of the main concepts of Foucault's philosophy, and comparative analysis of postmodern concepts of power and discipline. Particular attention was paid to the mechanisms of power, normalisation, and control in the educational environment through the prism of postmodern theory. The results of the study showed that in the philosophy of Michel Foucault, discipline, punishment, and the education system were closely intertwined as mechanisms of social control. The concept of disciplinary power, represented through the panopticon, proved to be central to the formation of subjects who obeyed norms without the need for direct supervision. The study also found that the penitentiary system and educational institutions emerged as the main spaces where the principles of normalisation and surveillance were applied. In addition, it was found that the panopticon, as a metaphor for constant surveillance, penetrated all spheres of social life, forming new technologies of power and control. The results of the study showed that educational institutions functioned as mechanisms of disciplinary influence, contributed to the normalisation of behaviour, the formation of controlled subjects, and the maintenance of power structures. The findings of the study confirmed that Foucault's concepts remained relevant for understanding the mechanisms of power in education. Foucault's ideas made it possible to trace how disciplinary practices changed and took on new forms, as well as to assess the impact on the education system and social governance.

KEYWORDS: disciplinary influence, personality formation, power, social norms, upbringing

Introduction

The study of the relationship between discipline, punishment, and education in the philosophy of Michel Foucault has become important due to the transformations of social mechanisms of control and influence on the individual. Foucault showed that disciplinary power is not only used as a means of punishment, but also shapes behavioural patterns through normalisation and regulation. Education performs not only a cognitive function, but also

serves as a tool for shaping controlled social relations, which requires a critical analysis of its role. Foucault believed that discipline and normalisation are the main techniques by which power directs and focuses the individual, but at the same time are the means for exercising power in modern societies. Foucault's attention was mainly focused on all those who were marginalised by liberal society, all those who were subjected to disciplining power, and the concern was that the analysis of power/knowledge be used as a weapon to proclaim resistance.

The need for this study stems from the need to better understand the mechanisms of power that continue to define social structure and influence individual behaviour. Despite the fact that official rhetoric focuses on freedom and democratic values, disciplinary models of power do not disappear, but only adapt to new conditions. Such models penetrate the education system, where control over behaviour is exercised through standardisation, regulation, and assessment.

In this context, a number of researchers have examined the issue of discipline and punishment in education from different philosophical perspectives, including A.A. Ibrahim and P.A. Ojomo (2021), who explored the philosophical aspects of discipline and punishment in the educational process, analysing the impact on the formation of student behaviour. The authors examined how disciplinary measures influenced the development of moral and social norms, and explored different approaches to correcting behaviour through sanctions. They also expanded the discussion on discipline in educational institutions by emphasising the importance of the educational aspect of punishment and its compliance with ethical principles. They analysed the relationship between punishment, power and teacher authority, and explored the historical transformations of these concepts in the pedagogical context. I. Deslandes et al. (2023) examined religious discourses that justified physical punishment in the education of children and adolescents. The authors critically analysed the relationship between traditional pedagogical approaches and modern human rights norms, highlighting the social and ethical risks of this approach.

The legacy of Michel Foucault in the philosophy of education, in particular the concept of power and disciplinary control, was analysed by O. Irrera (2024). The author pointed out that educational institutions can shape social norms by creating certain standards of behaviour, which in turn affect the subjectivity of students. This emphasises the importance of understanding educational processes as not only mechanisms of knowledge transfer, but also as tools of social engineering that shape the worldview and personal characteristics of students. Y. Kaldybekov et al. (2024) also explored the concept of power in Foucault's philosophy, focusing in particular on disciplinary

practices that reproduce hierarchical structures in the educational environment. The authors point out the mechanisms of biopower that are important for understanding how educational institutions not only control students' behaviour but also shape the physical and mental states through the influence on the bodies and minds. They emphasise how the education system, through disciplinary control and regulation of daily practices, creates submissive individuals who are able to follow socially recognised norms. D. Márquez Arancibia (2022) examined Foucault's later concepts, in particular the approach to problematisation and its application in the educational context. Foucault introduces the idea of problematisation as a key strategy in shaping discourses that define what is normal and what is deviant. This allows exploring how certain educational discourses create specific forms of knowledge that force students to accept certain norms. The author emphasised that Foucault's ideas on discipline and punishment remain relevant for contemporary pedagogical research, where disciplinary practices still serve as a function of control and socialisation, thereby shaping not only students' intellectual qualities but also the social behaviour.

R. Curren (2025) provided a comprehensive overview of the philosophy of education, focusing on the relationship between discipline, punishment and pedagogical ethics. The author examined educational models through the prism of normative theories, analysing the impact on the social formation of the individual. M. Martini (2023) explored the relationship between the social philosophy of science and the concept of disciplinary control in education. The author turned to the ideas of Ian Hecker and Foucault, analysing how knowledge structured the educational space and regulated student behaviour. M. Díaz Marsá (2023) examined the unity of philosophy and its methodological approaches in dialogue with Foucault's ideas, emphasising the importance of critical thinking in educational processes. The author analysed how discipline and power interacted in shaping educational practices, affecting the autonomy of the individual. D. Espinosa González et al. (2021) explored the political dimension of Foucault's philosophy and its implications for the analysis of the educational system. The author emphasised the connection between discursive practices and power mechanisms that shaped behavioural patterns in educational institutions.

Despite the significant contribution of the above-mentioned researchers to the study of discipline, punishment and power in education, insufficient attention has been paid to the practical aspects of implementing alternative disciplinary approaches based on postmodern concepts.

The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between discipline, punishment, and the education system in the philosophy of Michel Foucault. The main tasks of the study are to analyse the concepts of

discipline, punishment, and normalisation in the works of Michel Foucault; to determine the relationship between disciplinary power, the penitentiary system and education as mechanisms of social control; to interpret the meaning of panopticon in the context of modern society and its role in the functioning of power structures.

The original contribution of this study is its integrative analytical strategy, which considers punishment theory, educational practices, and post-modernist analysis of power as components of a unified concept based on Foucault's concept of disciplinary power. This study illustrates how both the prison system and education function through similar strategies of surveillance, normalization, and subject formation, in contrast to studies that focus on punishment exclusively in the context of criminal law or view education as an independent pedagogical sphere. The author systematically examined how methods that originated in the criminal context, such as examinations, documentation, and hierarchical surveillance, are rebuilt in the educational environment, demonstrating that school education serves as the primary site for the internalization of disciplinary power, rather than simply a platform for the transmission of knowledge.

This holistic perspective allows us to conceptualize the education system as a crucial mediator through which contemporary power dynamics are reproduced, modified, and socially legitimized, thereby extending Foucault's analysis from institutional comparison to a broad theory of social control and the formation of subjectivity.

Materials and Methods

The theoretical research was qualitative in nature, in particular, it used a hermeneutic and critical-analytical approach. It was based on discursive analysis, hermeneutical interpretation, and content analysis of Michel Foucault's philosophical concepts of discipline, punishment, and education in the context of postmodernism. The research focused on the study of Foucault's texts, the interpretation, and analysis through the prism of modern philosophical approaches. The timeframe of the analysis covered both Foucault's classic works (since 1961) and new interpretations of the theories in connection with social processes (until 1995).

Primary and secondary sources were used to collect data. The main research materials included Foucault's texts, in particular *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (Foucault 1961), *The History of Sexuality* (Foucault 1978), *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault 1995). These works contained the main concepts related to discipline, power, and education. In addition, the research of contemporary scholars

who developed and critiqued the ideas was analysed. Secondary sources included articles, monographs, and research studies that examined Foucault's influence on contemporary social theory, pedagogy, and the justice system (Westerink 2020; Revel and Blanco 2020; Kaldybekov et al. 2024; Gili Gal 2024).

Hermeneutic analysis was the main research method used to uncover the semantic connections between discipline, punishment, and education in Foucault's philosophy. This approach helped to reveal the deeper meaning of the texts, analysed the conceptual meaning of the main terms, and assessed the role in public discourse. The analysis relied on the identification of internal logical connections in the texts, the comparison of key concepts, and the contextual understanding. In addition, the hermeneutic method allowed the analysis of how the concepts changed over time and which aspects were reinterpreted in contemporary academic literature.

The method of content analysis systematised and categorised the main concepts in Foucault's works. The terms such as "discipline", "normalisation", "panopticon", "punishment", and "knowledge/power" in various works of the philosopher were analysed. This also allowed the identification of changes in the emphasis of the research, the determination of how the concept of a disciplinary society developed, and which aspects of it were the most important for the modern understanding of power and control. The content analysis also helped to systematise the relationships between the mechanisms of discipline in education, penitentiary institutions, and other social institutions.

The results were interpreted by comparing Foucault's ideas with other postmodern concepts of power, discipline, and education. This made it possible to trace how the approaches related to critical pedagogy, theories of social control, and modern concepts of public administration. In particular, an analysis of the comparison of disciplinary mechanisms in modern educational and penal systems was carried out, which contributed to a better understanding of how power was exercised through education.

Results

Aspects of Disciplined Individual and Society

It is useful to differentiate more explicitly between three analytically distinct but interrelated dimensions of discipline in Foucauldian theory. First, discipline operates as a technique, referring to concrete practices such as surveillance, examination, ranking, documentation, and micro-penalties that regulate bodies, time, and behaviour in everyday educational routines. Second,

discipline functions as an institutional logic, embedded in the organisational structures, norms, and epistemic frameworks of institutions such as schools, where control is routinised through curricula, assessment regimes, administrative procedures, and standards of normality that appear objective and neutral. Third, discipline manifests as internalised self-regulation, whereby individuals incorporate institutional norms into their own subjectivity and begin to monitor, evaluate, and correct themselves in anticipation of external judgement. Making this conceptual layering explicit clarifies how disciplinary power does not operate solely through coercive acts, but simultaneously at practical, institutional, and subjective levels, thereby reinforcing the article's central argument that modern education is a privileged site where external techniques of control are transformed into enduring forms of self-governance

Foucault's work covers a rich variety of topics, from the early interests in psychology and madness, through the birth of modern medicine and the humanities, to the analysis of the disciplining forms of sexual history. The author explored how methods of controlling human behaviour have changed in history, from madness to the development of new forms of social discipline, such as the panopticon, which allows for continuous surveillance. One of the important aspects of the work is the relationship between knowledge and power, which is formed through disciplinary and punitive mechanisms. Concepts such as normalisation and the penal archipelago play an important role in understanding these processes, pointing to the widespread use of disciplinary methods in all spheres of life. Table 1 shows the main concepts of Foucault that characterise the views on discipline and punishment.

Table 1. The main concepts of discipline and punishment in Foucault's works			
Concepts	Definition	Foucault's works examined	Influence
Discipline	A system of norms and practices aimed at controlling and shaping the behaviour of individuals	Foucault (1975)	It is used in educational, military and penitentiary institutions to maintain control
Panopticon	An architectural and social principle that ensures constant supervision of subordinates	Foucault (1975)	Influenced the development of video surveillance and digital control systems
Normalisation	The process of shaping "normal" behaviour through disciplinary mechanisms	Foucault (1975), (1978)	Used in medical, educational and social systems to regulate behaviour
Power/knowledge	Interconnection between power structures and knowledge formation	Foucault (1961), (1978)	Shapes perceptions of the mechanisms of power in society
Carceral archipelago	Extension of punishment mechanisms to the entire social structure	Foucault (1975)	Analogy with modern mass control systems, including digital surveillance

Source: compiled by the author based on Foucault (1961), (1978), (1995).

In addition to the two issues that dominate the interests, creating the conditions for the emergence of modern forms of rationality, especially in the humanities, and understanding the complex interplay between knowledge and power, the relationship between discipline, punishment, and education also occupies a significant place, as evidenced by *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (Foucault 1995), which is devoted to this very issue. Foucault believed that power defends itself by mystifying its

control over knowledge, privileging certain forms of discourse, giving the power that, in fact, is not possessed by these forms. Knowing the origins of constructed social relations of power allows understanding the limits and risks of how to create knowledge, and thus the basis on which critical and free judgement is offered. The objectification of the human being has affected the state, where every human activity is politicised (Shahini and Shahini 2025). The observation of bodies and society as objects of manipulation and objects to be controlled has, as a consequence, been standardised and implemented through widespread forms of disciplinary technology.

Foucault viewed the mechanisms of normalising and disciplining power as complex systems that maintain and reproduce social order through the activities of a number of professional groups. Foucault included sociologists, social workers, psychiatrists, doctors, teachers, as well as ordinary citizens who, consciously or unconsciously, integrate into power structures through the use of categories and values defined by the dominant regime. The system of disciplinary power, as the philosopher argues, has gradually transformed from overt forms of punishment, such as physical punitive practices, to the hidden and distributed mechanisms of control that have become the basis of modern social institutions. The transition from physical violence to more subtle methods of normalisation, according to Foucault, was made possible by the spread of specific forms of power that not only set norms but also actively involve individuals in maintaining these forms. An important role in this is played by the practice of confession, which has become the dominant mechanism of control in modern society. This process covers various spheres – justice, medicine, education, interpersonal relations – and is manifested in the fact that people are forced to openly declare the thoughts, experiences, feelings, and even violations of norms. This mechanism acts as a kind of technology of power that not only forces compliance with social standards, but also forms a way of self-perception in which a person begins to control one's own behaviour internally (Foucault 1995).

Foucault pays special attention to those groups that are the objects of disciplinary influence in a liberal society. These include students, the military, prisoners and other individuals who are in structured social spaces where constant surveillance and control are key instruments of governance. He notes that spaces such as educational institutions, the army, or industrial workshops function according to a single logic of disciplinary influence, which involves detailed control over time, behaviour, activity, speech, and even bodily discipline. Disciplinary practices are implemented through a system of micro-fines – punishment for inattention, negligence, violation of established norms or deviation from performance standards. According to

Foucault, similar principles of control are reproduced in the modern education system, which increasingly imitates the monastic model of education, where the structure of space and social relations are organised in such a way as to form an automatic habit of obedience in students (Foucault 1995). In this context, the dormitory appears as an optimal educational model aimed at educating a disciplined individual who unconditionally follows signals and regulated rules of behaviour. Such a system creates conditions under which students not only get used to the hierarchical distribution of power, but also begin to consider it a natural and only possible way for society to function.

Throughout one's life, an individual continuously moves from one closed disciplinary environment to another – from family to school, army, workplace, hospital, or prison. In each of these environments, the mechanisms of power function through observation, evaluation, and normalisation of behaviour, and the institutions ensure the reproduction of a controlled social order. Foucault notes that disciplinary institutions create complex systems of surveillance and normalisation, where every aspect of an individual's behaviour is subject to scrutiny, and the mechanisms of power act not only through coercion but also through the internalisation of normative requirements. As a result, a society is formed in which control is exercised not only by external means, but also through the internal self-censorship of each individual.

Analysis of the Penitentiary System Through the Prism of Foucault

Foucault addressed the issue of prisons not because of considering these institutions to be the main element of the penitentiary system, but for other reasons. He pointed out that the issue of punishment, which is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon, has usually been considered from two main perspectives: sociological, which focuses on the situation of the oppressed, and legal, which analyses the mechanisms of the penal system and the principles of its functioning. In addition, Foucault also emphasised the importance of a genealogical approach, which allows tracing the development of moral technologies in society. When considering the essence of punishment, Foucault emphasised the need not only to understand what is punished, but also how the process of punishment itself takes place. He applied a similar approach to the analysis of insanity, suggesting that instead of asking what exactly is considered insanity in a particular historical period, it is worth focusing on the mechanisms that determine this division in society.

The analysis of regimes of practice involves the study of programmes of behaviour that govern both the normative prescriptions of what is to be

done (legal consequences) and the procedures for establishing knowledge (verification mechanisms). Therefore, the modern penitentiary system is largely based not on hard coercion or violence, but on methods of surveillance and information gathering. Foucault argued that societies, seeking to establish certain norms, form appropriate control mechanisms that significantly affect the processes of social regulation. One example of this is the Third Republic's attempt to overcome the problem of depopulation through legal regulation. Foucault emphasised that everyone is under the constant threat of imprisonment, as the disciplinary mechanisms of modern society permeate all spheres of life. However, at the same time, information about the prison system remains limited, as it is one of the most closed and poorly understood social institutions. Aware of this problem, Foucault, together with a group of lawyers, doctors and psychologists, created the Prison Information Group to collect information about the real conditions in prisons. Participants of the initiative wanted to find out who was imprisoned, for what reasons, what the life in prison was like, what the conditions of work, food, medical care and opportunities for returning to society after release were. Official documents did not contain such data, so the group gathered information directly from those who had experience of being in prison or were involved in this area.

In his work *To Supervise and Punish* (Foucault 1995), Foucault focused on disciplinary practices, arguing the shaping not only behaviour but also the corporeality of the individual. Discipline, in Foucault's opinion, is a mechanism of self-government that shapes human subjectivity through the imposition of certain norms. In modern societies, the authorities not only enforce prohibitions, but also create conditions under which these prohibitions become internally accepted (Dyomin et al. 2021; Volkov 2012). Punishment, therefore, becomes not only a form of retribution for offences, but also a way of constructing social reality. Foucault analysed how, in the process of punishment, the body of the offender becomes the main carrier of power. Physical suffering is no longer the main means of influence, instead, punishment consists in the deprivation of rights and restrictions imposed on the individual. He emphasised that this shift from physical punishment to the regulation of rights and freedoms reflects a profound change in power relations. The body of the offender becomes an element of the penal system, which attests to the unity between the offence committed, the legal procedure and social norms (Foucault 1995). In the research, Foucault sought to show that law is not an external force in relation to society, but directly affects the formation of social institutions and the regulation of behaviour. The disciplinary mechanisms of prisons, the army and other institutions of the nineteenth century created conditions under which people were forced to follow

strict rules that gradually became part of the personality (Tsyrfya and Bielousova 2024; Ivashko et al. 2020). The capitalist system borrowed these methods, turning discipline into the basis of a work ethic that required precision, self-control, and efficiency. Similar disciplinary mechanisms have extended to the sphere of gender relations: some feminists have argued that the concept of femininity is also a product of disciplinary power, which shapes the ideal female image through cosmetics, exercise, diet, and clothing.

A central aspect of Foucault's concept is the consideration of the body as a space where discourses of power and identity operate. Foucault's approach avoids excessive liberal humanism, which assumes the stability of the individual and one's uniqueness. Instead, Foucault explores how power relations shape certain types of identities. He argued that modern power no longer functions in an open form of coercion, and disciplinary mechanisms are hidden under the guise of scientific validity, normality, and objective knowledge. Concepts such as truth, madness, crime, and sexuality serve as instruments of social control that define the boundaries of what is acceptable in society.

As a result, Foucault viewed the penitentiary system not only as a place of physical confinement, but as an important element of a disciplinary society where behaviour is regulated through mechanisms of surveillance, normalisation and self-control. The research provides a better understanding of how power structures shape subjectivity and social relations.

Discipline Through the Education System

Pursuant to Michel Foucault's concept, the disciplinary power of the education system is manifested through various mechanisms of control, evaluation, and normalisation. One of the key instruments of such power is the exam, which combines hierarchical surveillance and normalising judgement. This practice creates a system of visibility in which students are constantly monitored, which affects the behaviour and educational trajectory. Standardised testing has a dual function: it serves as a means of assessing knowledge and is also a tool of discipline. In this context, education appears as a political tool that contributes to the formation of obedient and useful subjects in accordance with social norms. The authorities in the educational environment function anonymously, using rating systems and regulatory requirements to regulate student behaviour. Table 2 presents the main disciplinary mechanisms of education analysed by Foucault and the impact on the educational process.

Table 2. Discipline through the education system according to M. Foucault

Mechanisms	Characteristic	Influence
Exam as a mechanism of power	Combination of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement to classify and control students	Establishing rating systems, documenting performance, creating a social hierarchy
Standardised testing	An assessment system that creates constant control over students	Maintaining discipline through fear of consequences, impact on future employment
The system of visibility	Education as a space where students are constantly under surveillance.	Building internal discipline through awareness of control
Education as a political tool	Transmission of knowledge and norms that maintain or change social discourse	Defining what knowledge is legitimate and accessible
Political anatomy of the body	Control over the physical and mental aspects of the student through educational technology	Regulation of behaviour, normalisation of activity, preparation for social order
Pastoral power in education	The idea of spiritual guidance, which comes from religious traditions	Teachers as 'shepherds' who shape students' moral and social norms

Source: compiled by the author based on Foucault (1995)

Foucault argued that the creation of a normalising judgement about students' actions and abilities contributes to the formation of documentation that can be used for comparison, future employment, and for determining ranking in a group. In Foucault's opinion, the examination combines the methods of hierarchical observation and normalising judgement, which makes it possible to qualify, classify and punish an individual. Through this practice, a system of visibility is established that allows for the distinction and evaluation of individuals. Thus, the exam within disciplinary mechanisms becomes ritualised, combining a ceremony of power and a form of experimentation, the use of force and the establishment of truth. In this context, this procedure demonstrates the subjugation of those who are seen as objects of disciplinary influence, as well as the objectification of those who submit (Foucault 1995).

Standardised tests in the traditional education system, according to Foucault, are a vivid example of such a disciplinary mechanism. Such tests not only inform students, teachers, and educational institutions about being

under constant control, but also create a comprehensive rating system. Although students usually do not have access to validated tests, such tests play a crucial role in determining the place in the system. The constant reminder of being under surveillance creates a willingness to learn under pressure and constraints due to the potential consequences of certain outcomes. Foucault emphasised that any educational system is a political instrument that either maintains or changes an established discourse that contains knowledge and power. In Foucault's view, education can serve as a means by which individuals in society gain access to different forms of discourse. At the same time, it operates within the framework of clearly defined social conflicts, determining what is permitted and what is restricted. According to Foucault, the individual in modern society is seen not only as a discursive construction, but also as a product of political technologies that shape one's identity, desires, physical and mental state. He pointed out that the human body is integrated into the mechanisms of power that examine, change and reconstruct it (Foucault 1995). Thus, a "political anatomy" emerges, which is at the same time a "mechanics of power" that determines the methods of control over the body, regulating its actions in accordance with the set parameters of efficiency.

Despite the criticism of disciplinary control, teachers, according to Foucault, believe that the activities effectively promote learning, which indicates the integration of disciplinary mechanisms into educational practice. Foucault noted that disciplines define the moment of change in the political axis of individualisation, when power becomes increasingly anonymous and functional. In such a system, individuals are individuated more strongly through mechanisms of surveillance, comparative measures based on the norm rather than the traditional genealogical system. According to Foucault, modern power differs from previous forms because it is disciplinary and commanding, aimed at normalising social practices and shaping obedient, useful subjects. He believed that discipline involves a mechanism of coercion through surveillance, which ensures the visibility of controlled subjects and at the same time enhances the influence of power. In addition, Foucault noted that the modern Western state has integrated traditional techniques of power, including pastoral power, which was formed in Christian institutions. Foucault emphasised that Christianity is a unique religion that has organised itself into a church, creating a special form of power in which certain individuals acquire the status of pastors responsible for the spiritual guidance of others. This system, in Foucault's view, has the ultimate goal of ensuring the salvation of the individual in the afterlife, which may even require self-sacrifice for the good of the community.

Contemporary educational discourse increasingly prioritises learner-centred models, self-regulated learning, and the cultivation of transferable competences over the mere collection of knowledge (Bazaluk 2019; Khe-makhem 2026). From a Foucauldian perspective, these alterations do not always indicate a diminishment of power, but rather its reconfiguration. Autonomy-related practices, such as self-assessment, reflective portfolios, and personalised learning paths, may serve as instruments of self-discipline, prompting students to internalise evaluative standards and consistently evaluate their own performance. Competence-based assessment can be viewed as a contemporary form of normalisation, wherein behavioural, cognitive, and affective competencies are standardised, quantified, and compared, thereby reinforcing Foucault's assertion that power functions most effectively when individuals engage in their own regulation.

The increasing use of digital and surveillance technology in educational settings further exemplifies the contemporary significance of Foucault's concepts. Learning management systems, online proctoring tools, attendance-tracking software, and data-driven analytics enhance the transparency of student activities, converting educational settings into arenas of perpetual monitoring (Shaikh 2026). These technologies exemplify the panoptic logic articulated by Foucault, wherein control is exerted not chiefly through direct action, but through the consciousness of perpetual surveillance and data collection. Connecting these advancements to Foucauldian philosophy underscores the growing dependence of contemporary education on algorithmic surveillance that influences behaviour, motivation, and adherence. The article illustrates that Foucault's examination of discipline and power is significantly relevant for comprehending modern educational governance, effectively connecting philosophical theory with empirical issues pertinent to educational researchers and practitioners.

In accordance with the above information, Foucault viewed the modern educational system as a mechanism of disciplinary influence that shapes the identity of individuals, establishing norms of behaviour and ensuring the submission to existing power structures.

“Rediscovering” the Panopticon

Foucault emphasised that penitentiary institutions contribute to the reproduction of crime by functioning as closed environments controlled by the state. He believed that prisons not only punish, but also serve as a mechanism for demonstrating power. Foucault noted that deprivation of liberty, restrictions on basic needs and social interaction are manifestations of power in its most brutal form. The author emphasised that the prison

system openly uses repressive measures that are justified by moral and legal arguments as necessary to maintain order. Foucault also analysed the negative public attitude towards the judiciary, judges and prisons, seeing it as a perception that these institutions are instruments of the government. The struggle against the judiciary, as the author argued, is a struggle against the government itself and its repressive nature.

One of the key concepts in Foucault's research is the panopticon, an architectural concept by Jeremy Bentham that has become a symbol of constant surveillance and control. The author viewed it as a metaphor for the social order, where the authorities use surveillance mechanisms to discipline individuals. Here is an extended version of the text with a more detailed explanation of Foucault's concepts: The panopticon, as an architectural and ideological principle, allows for the exercise of control over subordinates through constant, though potentially invisible, surveillance. Its structure implies the presence of a central tower from which all rooms can be observed, but the subjects of surveillance do not know the time of being watched. This creates the effect of internal self-control, when people begin to behave in accordance with the expected norms for fear of being exposed.

Foucault emphasised that the panoptic principle is applied not only in prisons, but also in schools, barracks, hospitals, factories, and other social institutions. Such institutions contribute to the formation of a system of accounting, documentation and classification of individuals, which, in turn, ensures more efficient functioning of the power structures. Thanks to this system, the authorities not only control the behaviour of individuals, but also shape the individuals as subjects of discipline. Foucault considered the panopticon to be "an important event in the history of human thought" because it laid the foundations for new technologies of power that operate through the division of space, standardisation of behaviour, and continuous monitoring. Bentham's model offered a solution to the problem of surveillance through an architectural solution that ensured maximum control efficiency at minimum cost. However, according to Foucault, the significance of the panopticon goes far beyond physical structures: its principles influenced the development of modern disciplinary mechanisms that regulate social behaviour in all spheres of life. In addition, the author pointed out that the panopticon becomes not only an architectural form, but also a metaphor for understanding how modern society organises control and power through constant surveillance and self-censorship. This makes it possible to turn every individual into an object of self-control, as the constant feeling of being watched forces people to adjust the behaviour without the need for the physical presence of an observer. The panopticon becomes the basis for the

development of new forms of social practices that determine behaviour in education, medicine, criminal justice and other areas (Kononenko 2025).

The panoptic principle resonates with the idea of a transparent society, in which all parts of the social structure are under constant scrutiny. Modern surveillance technologies, digital databases, and algorithmic control only enhance this effect, transforming panoptic surveillance into new forms of digital discipline (Abdygalym et al. 2025; Gospodinova and Nenov 2024). Regarding the prison system, Foucault argued that instead of fulfilling its stated function of correction, it contributes to the reproduction of crime. Foucault's research has shown that people who are imprisoned for minor offences leave prison with more developed criminal skills and established social ties in the criminal environment. Prison not only punishes, but also creates conditions for the expansion of criminal networks. Foucault also analysed the phenomenon of the "penal archipelago" – a system of punishment that goes beyond penitentiary institutions and permeates the entire social structure. Foucault compared these practices to the system of camps described by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, emphasising that disciplinary mechanisms of power operate not only in prisons, but also in schools, hospitals, military institutions, and even in the labour market. Thus, modern society can be seen as an extended network of disciplinary control, in which the mechanisms of power are constantly being improved and adapted to new conditions.

Thus, the analysis of Foucault's work demonstrates the complexity of the relationship between power, justice and social control. The author argued that the prison system does not perform rehabilitative functions, but only reinforces the repressive nature of society. The panoptic model has become the basis for modern disciplinary mechanisms that regulate the behaviour of individuals through constant surveillance and control, transforming the very nature of power in society.

Discussion

The results of this study have shown that the concepts of discipline and punishment in the philosophy of Michel Foucault have an impact on educational institutions that function as mechanisms of social control. It is determined that education plays a key role in normalising behaviour through disciplinary mechanisms that support power structures. The results of this study reaffirm that the panopticon described by Michel Foucault functions not only as a model of punishment within the penitentiary system, but also as a central metaphor for understanding modern education. Educational institutions increasingly operate as spaces of constant visibility, where students'

behaviour, performance, and compliance are regulated through institutionalised mechanisms of surveillance and evaluation (Volkov 2017; Smailov et al. 2025). This interpretation is consistent with the findings of McKee (2023), who argues that disciplinary mechanisms in schools continue to mirror logics historically associated with the prison, particularly through covert and symbolic forms of punishment such as grading practices, behavioural records, and restricted access to educational opportunities. Similarly, Nian (2021) emphasises that disciplinary power does not disappear in contemporary education but adapts to new pedagogical and technological conditions, with assessment functioning simultaneously as an educational tool and a mechanism of hierarchical differentiation. The findings of this study thus confirm that discipline in education extends beyond organisational necessity and continues to perform a broader function of social regulation and normalisation.

At the same time, recent empirical and theoretical work suggests that contemporary educational systems are undergoing a gradual transformation in how disciplinary power is exercised and legitimised. Research by Ndlovu et al. (2023) demonstrates that disciplinary mechanisms in schools are increasingly framed in terms of positive discipline and social norm maintenance rather than overt coercion, contributing to the formation of compliant but socially integrated subjects. Historical analyses by Norlin (2020) further indicate that discipline has long been intertwined with moral and ethical education, suggesting continuity rather than rupture between traditional and contemporary practices. However, empirical evidence from Oben and Xu (2025) shows that even in contexts where corporal punishment is formally prohibited, disciplinary power persists in modified forms, reinforcing Foucault's claim that normalisation and control are deeply embedded within educational institutions.

Importantly, the findings also indicate that discipline and punishment in the postmodern educational space are being reconfigured in response to changing perceptions of power, autonomy, and learner agency. Rostoka et al. (2022) note that digital and distance learning environments alter traditional modes of control, shifting emphasis away from direct punishment toward self-regulation, internalised discipline, and continuous self-monitoring. From a Foucauldian perspective, these developments do not signal the erosion of disciplinary power, but rather its relocation into the subject, aligning with the later ethical turn in Foucault's work. Suchanecki (2021) demonstrates that Foucault's concept of care of the self-offers a framework for understanding how education increasingly promotes responsibility, reflection, and self-governance, thereby transforming punishment into a mechanism of self-assessment and ethical formation rather than external sanction.

This theoretical evolution is further reflected in contemporary debates on restorative justice, moral community building, and ethical pedagogy. While these approaches are often presented as alternatives to discipline, the findings of this study suggest that they should instead be understood as reformulations of disciplinary logic. Thompson and Tillson (2020, 2023) argue that punishment pedagogy is gradually giving way to models that integrate discipline with moral responsibility, critical reflection, and ethical awareness. Empirical studies by Sugiarti and Sulistyowati (2021) and Zulfqar et al. (2022) show that harsh punitive practices undermine motivation and student well-being, whereas dialogical and restorative approaches support intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement. At the same time, research by Warnick and Scribner (2020) and Warnick (2022) highlights the importance of moral communities in education, where discipline operates through shared norms, trust, and collective responsibility rather than fear of sanction.

Nevertheless, the results also confirm that disciplinary practices continue to reproduce social inequalities and patterns of stigmatisation. Varela et al. (2024) demonstrate that marginalised student groups are disproportionately affected by punitive disciplinary measures, indicating that disciplinary power remains unevenly distributed. In this context, restorative justice and social-emotional learning should not be seen as a rejection of Foucauldian insights, but as historically situated responses to the ethical and political limitations of traditional disciplinary regimes. Viewed through this lens, Foucault's model of disciplinary power provides not only a critical diagnosis of educational control, but also a conceptual framework for understanding how contemporary education reworks discipline into more reflexive, decentralised, and ethically oriented forms.

Therefore, based on the above information, it is worth highlighting that discipline and punishment in postmodern educational philosophy are viewed through the prism of self-regulation, moral education and social responsibility. The findings of this study are consistent with the conclusions of the above-mentioned scholars, who emphasise the need to transform traditional methods of disciplinary control into more humanistic and constructive forms. Educational practices are increasingly moving away from the punitive model and towards the integration of discipline into the overall process of education and personal development (Bazaluk, 2018; Brovina et al., 2024).

This work enhances and elaborates on current interpretations of Michel Foucault in educational philosophy by advancing from mere descriptive uses of his concepts to a synthetic and structurally comparative examination of disciplinary procedures. This article integrates specific Foucauldian

concepts, such as surveillance, examination, and normalization, within educational contexts into a cohesive interpretive framework that systematically links education to overarching systems of penal power. In this process, it integrates philosophical, pedagogical, and socio-political interpretations of Foucault, illustrating that educational institutions do not merely adopt disciplinary techniques metaphorically, but actively engage in the same historical logic of subject formation as prisons and other regulatory entities. This methodology enhances Foucauldian scholarship in education by elucidating the structural continuity between penal and pedagogical power, thus providing a more thorough comprehension of how contemporary educational practices operate as both sites of knowledge production and instruments of governance.

Conclusions

This study aimed to identify and examine the relationship among discipline, punishment, and the education system within Michel Foucault's philosophy, focusing specifically on disciplinary authority, normalisation, and the panopticon as methods of social control. This study illustrates that education serves not only as a venue for knowledge dissemination but also as a pivotal institutional domain where disciplinary methods traditionally linked to the prison system are redefined and normalised. Through the analysis of discipline, punishment, and education within a cohesive framework, the results directly address the specified objectives by elucidating how these mechanisms collectively foster the development of compliant yet self-regulating individuals in contemporary cultures.

The study's primary theoretical consequence is the recognition of an enduring dialectical contradiction between discipline and freedom in modern educational methods. Disciplinary mechanisms, such as surveillance, evaluation, and behavioural regulation, are crucial for organising educational processes and maintaining institutional order. Conversely, an overdependence on coercive or punitive disciplinary methods restricts autonomy, creativity, and critical reflection. Utilising Foucault's later theories and current educational discussions, the study demonstrates that contemporary education addresses this contradiction not by discarding discipline, but by converting it into practices of self-regulation, ethical accountability, and reflective subjectivity. In this context, freedom is not generated outside of disciplinary authority but is cultivated within its restructured manifestations.

The results indicate that effective educational governance relies on sustaining a dynamic equilibrium between control and autonomy, rather than favouring one over the other. Educational approaches that abolish

disciplinary frameworks jeopardise coherence and instructional guidance, whereas those that amplify surveillance and punitive measures perpetuate inequity and diminish intrinsic drive. The analysis thus endorses a conceptualisation of discipline as a malleable and dynamic mechanism that can either perpetuate domination or facilitate ethical self-formation, contingent upon its integration within educational practices.

The study affirms Foucault's significance for modern educational philosophy by illustrating that discipline and freedom are interrelated rather than mutually incompatible concepts. This dialectical relationship offers a logical framework for understanding the continuity of disciplinary power with the rise of restorative, ethical, and autonomy-focused methodologies in education. The essay provides a theoretically grounded viewpoint by directly connecting its findings to the original research aims, so contributing to continuing conversations on educational governance, subject creation, and the future of discipline in postmodern learning contexts.

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