

Concept and Meaning of Discipline

Meaning of the term 'Discipline'

The word discipline which we are referring to is in the context of academics. This should not be confused with school discipline. School discipline relates to the actions taken by a teacher of the school organization towards a student or a group of students, when their behaviour disrupts the ongoing educational activity or breaks a rule created by the teacher or school system. But we are not dealing with that concept in the present context. This is related to a field of study. The origin of this word is not clearly known. The term discipline may be used for many things at the same time and it is necessary to examine the various meanings of the word.

We shall start with an exploration of the etymology of the word discipline. Dictionaries suggest words like *discipulus* which means pupil, and discipline, and also means teaching. Whether this has any connotation of the word, we are discussing, we do not know. The term discipline is defined by the Oxford English Dictionary as *a branch of learning or knowledge*. It is technical term for organization of learning and systematic production of new knowledge. The Latin term *disciplina* meant *teaching, learning and instruction*.

The Old English Version dictionary referred to a branch of knowledge or field of study. Arthur Dirks points out that, discipline in an academic sense, pertains to the practice of study of a certain category of experience, its methodologies, how it goes about its pursuit of truth. There is fundamental theory and fact (one might call it doctrine) that informs the practice of that pursuit, but it is the pursuit that counts.

According to Moti Nissani (1997), a discipline can be conveniently defined as the study of *any comparatively self contained isolated domain of human experience which possesses its own community of experts*.

In the words of P. Bourdieu, a discipline has an academic and socially acknowledged name (that for example can be found in a library classification system). A discipline is inscribed in, and upheld by, the national and international networks of research, university departments, research institutes and scientific journals that produces, certifies, rewards, and upholds that which he calls the *discipline capital*. And a discipline is characterized by a particular, unique academic and social style. Disciplines are broken into sub disciplines and sub disciplines. This is a convenient way to organize a library, a school program, or a higher education institution.

John Walton states, *By discipline I mean a body of subject matter made up of concepts, facts, and theories, so ordered that it can be deliberately and systematically taught*. According to him, a discipline is a body of subject matter that is teachable. However, Walton's definition does not define a discipline comprehensively as it considers any body of knowledge as a discipline which has quality of teaching ability. However, there are many subjects which are taught at different levels but are not considered as disciplines.

Janice Beyer and Thomas Lord (1976) describe disciplinary fields as providing the structure of knowledge in which faculty members are trained and socialized; carry out tasks of teaching, research, and administration; and produce research and educational output. Disciplinary worlds are considered separate and distinct cultures that exert varying influence on scholarly behaviours as well as on the structure of higher education. Disciplinary communities establish incentives and forms of cooperation around a subject matter and its problems. Disciplines have conscious goals, which are often synonymous with the goals of the departments and schools that comprise an institutional operating unit.

According to M. S. Yadav and T.K.S Lakshmi (1995), discipline refers to a specific area of study, a branch of knowledge recognized by a certain distinctness it reveals in its substance and methodology. A discipline is a deliberate differentiation of the knowledge base with a specific perspective in order to gain better understanding of the phenomenon under focus. According to them, the knowledge base represents the sum total of the human understanding of environment. Disciplines are derived from the knowledge base but get formulated in recognizable differentiated forms of both substance and methodology due to further specialization, diversification and differentiation.

Bryan Turner (2001) has pointed at the ecclesiastical meaning, which refers to the order maintained in the church, and at the medical meaning of discipline, as a medical regimen imposed by a doctor on a patient to the patient's benefit. It follows that the academic discipline can be seen as a form of specific and rigorous scientific training that will turn out practitioners who have been disciplined by their discipline for their own good.

The term 'discipline' is inherited from the vocabulary of nineteenth century and is understood as a branch of instruction for the transmission of knowledge and as a convenient mapping of academic administration.

Let us derive the nature of discipline from what we have presented so far and our experience with dealing with different disciplines:

ÉDiscipline implies an order

ÉDiscipline is related to learning

ÉDiscipline is related to putting some order to learn

ÉDiscipline is making some organization with the purpose of learning

ÉIt involves some efforts made to organize teaching

ÉIt involves some efforts made to organize learning

ÉIt is related to teaching learning process

ÉIt is related to knowledge organization process

ÉIt is related to processing of knowledge

ÉIt involves deduction of more knowledge through organization of the existing knowledge

ÉIt is basically related to learning process and hence education

ÉIt is related to the learner teacher, experts and specialists

ÉIt is related to construction of new knowledge

ÉIt implies that knowledge grows and expands

ÉIt implies that knowledge is not final.



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- ÉIt involves a process of classification.
- ÉIt is a body of specialised knowledge
- ÉIt has theories and concepts
- ÉIt has specific terminology
- ÉIts specific object is research
- ÉIt has got definite methodology of research