

FACTORS AFFECTING DISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Various factors affect discipline in primary schools. In this article an attempt was made to identify these factors, how they contribute to disciplinary problems, overcoming these problems, and the way forward. The paper looked at such factors as the home, society, school (school leadership style, attitudes of teachers) government policy, lack of facilities/equipment and so on. The paper also proffers some solutions to the problem which include – positive role of parents, use of Parents/Teachers Association (PTA), Regular meeting with the prefects, use of suggestion box, moral and religious teaching.

INTRODUCTION

The issue of discipline in schools is of great concern to educators because it affects pupil education and moral well being. An understanding of discipline in its ramification shows that it is closely related to the achievement of the objectives of education.

- (1) The treatment suited to a discipline or learner to be educated, and develop academically,
- (2) Training in accordance with established rules and regulation.
- (3) Submissiveness to order, control and obedience.
- (4) Correction chastisement inflicted by way of training through suffering.

Discipline is not a matter of more stillness and quietness; rather it connotes self activities and achievement of the aims and objectives of education. The currency and appropriateness of this topic come to light when we recall that quite recently the nation was thrown into a psychological trauma of unprecedented mass failure among our primary pupils. The direction and intensity of this mass failure point to the unpalatable fact that all is not well with the way primary school pupils learn in our schools. However, there has been an increase in public attention to the problems of discipline in the country in general and in the school system in particular. Generally there is the tendency to link the problem of pupils' unrest in schools, with the problem of discipline.

Baba Fafuwa (1997) at the National conference on Discipline and Motivation in schools opined that our society is passing through a very difficult time and the incidence of indiscipline permeates our entire social, economic and political life as a nation.

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

There are several writings on what discipline is. The word cannot be given a universally accepted definition. With special reference to the school system, Adesina (2000) refers to discipline as when pupils are taught to respect the school authorities, to observe the school laws and regulations and to maintain an established standard of behaviour. Discipline behaviour according to Ozigi (2000) involves such characteristics as self sacrifice, diligence, co-operation, integrity, truthfulness, patriotism, consideration for others and sympathy. Discipline involves self-control, restraint, respect for self and respect for others. The disciplined person is guided in his behaviour, moral, and social principles, does what is right and good. The urge to do what is right comes from within him. Discipline therefore can be defined as the ability to respect constituted authority and to observe established laws and regulations of any organization or society.

Discipline is not an end in itself. It is enforced as a means of creating order which is conducive to effective teaching and learning, free from unnecessary interruptions and disturbance. It should lead pupils to develop desirable habits such as neatness, punctuality, obedience, honest, industry Osigbemhe (2002).

FACTORS AFFECTING DISCIPLINE:

The Home

What the child is when he comes to school is the handwork of the home and its environment. Parents have a crucial role to play in the discipline of their children. In addition, if the virtues of industry, honesty,

fairplay, and obedience are inculcated in the child at home, future discipline in school becomes a matter of natural growth. But if the home is broken or the parents have no time for the child because of their pre-occupation with pursuit for material well-being the teacher's task is made difficult.

The Society:

The second influence is that of the wider environment outside the home, the community or society. The child is influenced for good or bad by the language he hears, ideas he imbibes, the television, cinema he watches, the play group and their individual characteristics. Hence the saying "Evil communication corrupts good manners". Armed robbery, smoking of Indian hemp, sex abuse and other ills of society have been on the increase, schools must purposefully encourage pupils to avoid behaviours which are harmful to themselves and to society. If we are really anxious to bring up a future generation of disciplined citizens, the influence of schools on children must be made to reflect this aim. One way of doing this, is to provide supervisory boarding facilities to pupils in schools. Again the teacher's personality as well as his needs, attitudes, expectations, habits and other aspects of behaviour, is a factor in classroom discipline. Some teachers have favourites and some have "scapegoats" (pupils who are always pick on). The unfairness in treatment of pupils in the class creates problems.

Indiscipline:

Indiscipline relates to all forms of misbehaviour within the school system. It could be collective misbehaviour when it reaches the stage of demonstration and violence. This refers to pupils' unrest and protect against school management or teachers resulting in the deliberate destruction of schools property.

Indiscipline relating to breach of school rules and regulation. This refers to cases like lateness to school, absenteeism, wearing of non-uniform dresses. Cases of indiscipline relating to disrespect of school authorities. This type refers to such incidents as rudeness to teachers, using abusive language, refusal to recognise the authorities of senior students etc.

There are also many types of indiscipline including drug abuse, delinquency, drunkenness, stealing, truancy, absenteeism and persistent lateness to school.

SOURCES OF IN DISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Home and Society:

It is in the school that children acquire mastery of physical, social and intellectual skills. According to Hurlock (2002), if a child lives with criticism, he learns to condemn. If he lives with hostility, he learns to fight. However, if he lives with fairness, he learns to share justice. Ashiegbu (2001) hold parents responsible for student's discipline problems in schools. He noted that responsibility to children is in the hands of house maids who may not in themselves by disciplined. The author further stressed that children who have the unfortunate opportunity of being left in the care of maids with behavioural problems grow up to have discipline problems and carry this characteristics to schools. Uzokwe (2002) extends his blame on the causes of discipline problems to both parents and society in general.

Ikeotuonye (2002) holds the view that we the leaders and parents are responsible for the discipline problems of our pupils. Leaders and parents have lost social and moral credibility before the children who are more reflections of our behaviour problems.

The School:

The school is an extension of the home. That is the reason why it generates discipline or behaviour problem. Primary school therefore, has an important role to play in the disciplinary life of pupils in our educational institutions.

Harsh school rules and regulation can also bring about frustration in the pupils because they look at the rules and regulations as obstacles.

The School Leadership Style:

In schools, the administrator and teacher's leadership styles affect the level of discipline in the school. Udo (2003) confirms that the acceptance or otherwise of the school discipline depends largely on the style. For

example, in school which adopts extreme permissiveness, pupils often take laws into their hands, it may lead to producing pupils who are hooligans, a factor that leads to juvenile delinquency

The Teachers' Attitude:

Uzokwe (2002) blames student's discipline problems on the wrong attitude of both the teachers and the administrators. He also feels that for administrators to produce discipline pupils, they must be disciplined.

Government Policy:

On this point, Nwadiibia (2003) traced discipline problems in schools to the government. He noted that corporal punishment is no longer one of the weapons for instilling discipline in schools. Therefore mere sermonizing by teachers cannot make any appeal for change in the lives of Nigerian pupils at large.

Finally, Linder (2003) mentioned that poor home training and misbehaviour of pupils at school are from undisciplined homes. More also, many parents fail to show good example to their children. However, the principals conference of July (2002) identified certain causes of indiscipline in schools. These factors are:-

- a) Lack of facilities and equipment
- b) Authoritarian methods of administration
- c) Lack of moral and religious instruction
- d) Lack of proper communication among principal, staff and pupils.
- e) Lack of sincerity and devotion to duty
- f) Poor attitude to learning

Consequences of Indiscipline:

The purpose of discipline in the school context is to produce a breed of well cultivated pupils who will develop not only respect for themselves and the society but also respect for school authorities and regulations. Consequently, lack of discipline relates to misbehaviour in any of these areas.

Indiscipline in school will affect the development of human resources needed for social and economic transformation of the society. Indiscipline is a destructive and under serving element to progress, training or mode of life. It is a serious impediment to national development. Indiscipline allows both pupils and teachers to pervert the aim of education, examination, public morality and retards progress. In a school where there is indiscipline, there is bound' to be chaos, confusion, disorderliness, underdevelopment, and ineffective teaching-learning process.

Socially, it affects our personality. It does not make individual to be responsible in the way he dresses, interact, and even speak. Economically, it affects productivity. It is an impediment to the development of human resources needed for national development.

THE WAY FORWARD

To check discipline problems, the teacher must be able to identify trouble makers in the class, those with bad habits and reform them where possible before it is too late. To do this, he must provide opportunity for constant interaction with his pupils, establish good human relations, create conducive atmosphere for teaching and learning. A disciplined teacher produces a disciplined student. One of the aims of a school administrator is to have a quite, smooth and efficient school. He may be tempted to believe that one can only achieve this by exercising strong disciplinary control which is only possible through enforcement of school rules and regulation and use of punishment for those who break the rules. The people who belong to these schools of thought would welcome an authoritarian type of discipline. Any enforcement based on fear can only produce negative results and will not lead to the development of those traits of character that make for good citizenship.

To handle discipline problems, the school demonstrator must however formulate a set of school rules to guide the pupils in what they arte expected to do or not to do. One way to make the enforcement of the rules easy is to explain the reasons for making a rule, particularly if it is on that pupils do not like. If they are made to understand the reasons behind the rule, they are more likely to co-operate in obeying it. Each student should have a copy of the school rules and copies should also be displayed on the notice boards.

- The school administrator and members of staff should try to set a good example for the pupils to emulate. Learning good manners will also come directly or indirectly through the pupils-participation in social and extra-curricula activities and through formal teaching religious instruction.
- All members of staff should work purposefully together to teach and inculcate virtues of discipline in and outside the school.
- For the purpose of discipline the services of a counselor is essential actually, to teach the pupils the meaning and importance of self-responsibility, self-discipline and control, above all respect for constituted authority in human lives. The school counselor can also be an effective communication channel between pupils, parents and authorities.
- To wage a successful war against indiscipline in our schools, all hands must be on deck. We must all be involved; there must be total revolution in our ways of life and sense of values. The homes, schools, and the society must close ranks and devise concrete ways of solving this problem of discipline. The following are some of the ways discipline can be improved upon.

POSITIVE PARENTAL ROLE:

The positive role of parents at home in inculcating discipline in their children will help to some extent the good up-bringing of a child which will reflect in their behaviour and attitude at school. Thus parents should try to show good and exemplary life to their children at home.

USE OF PARENTS/TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (PTA)

It is important for parents and teachers to summon frequent meeting to tackle issues affecting the behaviour of the pupils at school and to see that the welfare of the student are in line with the school rules and regulations in particular and to the school values in general.

Training of School Administrators.

Greater attention would need to be given to the training of educational administrators who can be trusted with the effective management of human beings and who possess a very clear understanding and appreciation not only of schools as social institutions but problems of behaviour and development.

SUGGESTION BOX.

The school authority should provide a suggestion box where pupils are free to identify problems and offer solutions. Any students whether senior or junior should be free to make use of suggestion box. But no student should use the box to assassinate the character of the principal, teachers or fellow students.

REGULAR MEETING OF THE PREFECTS.

This is another method to prevent riots and indiscriminate demonstration in schools. The frequent meetings among the prefects will provide a forum for a full discussion of the problems that are agitating their minds. At the meeting, such grievances should be identified and solutions suggested should be communicated to the staff and the principal of the school.

GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMPROVE CAREER PROSPECTS IN TEACHING.

For the teachers to play their roles most effectively, government must see that the teachers are paid salaries as at when due. They should be allowed to go for in-service training to improve on their qualifications where they are lacking. When teachers are made to feel proud of their profession they will be in a better position to inculcate and maintain discipline in their pupils.

MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TEACHING

This should be encouraged to arrest the problems of discipline in schools. Any staff involved in aiding and abetting student's indiscipline should be adequately disciplined.

PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURAL MATERIALS.

The government and other stake holders should provide more infrastructural conducive to teaching and learning. Government should as a matter of importance enact a policy that no new school be opened until

the existing ones are adequately staffed, equipped and furnished. Schools should also limit their enrolment to ensure strict discipline. This to some extent would instill discipline in our schools.

CURRICULAR CONTENT.

If the curriculum is suited to the age, ability and interest of the pupils, it is more likely that it will foster more learning and the attainment of its objectives compared to a situation, where the curriculum content is too difficult, too easy or boring. The learners cannot master fundamental skills or who finds regular school work very difficult, causes mischief for the attention and satisfaction he desires.

Some primary schools have adopted innovative methods. Some have large open spaces. Large group, small group or individual instruction can occur. Teachers work in terms or individually. An instructional material centre. Where individual method is stressed and pupils are encouraged to participate in group activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Irrespective of religious and ethnic learning, we as a nation, should believe and practice certain codes of behaviour. It sounds funny for us as politicians, soldiers, educators, etc. to eulogise social justice, moral integrity, sanctity of life, as the precepts of our social contract, only to default in them when faced with situation demanding moral decisions. In the light of this, the following recommendations were made:

1. We must therefore be committed to certain ways of life and be seen to practice same both in our body politic and in schools. No amount of lip-service to the proclaimed ideals of War Against Indiscipline (WAI) will convince our primary school pupils of our sincerity without our positive examples.
2. The writer here appeals to our leaders in public life to live up to the expectations and urge them to use all the resources of government to effect social reform in our undisciplined school system, not only in the primary schools.
3. As professionals in the field we must recognize our potentials to effect change and reforms. It is almost becoming conventional that whenever there is a national crisis, the schools not only get the blame but invariably the nation turns, round to it for the solution of the same problems. Schools are compelled today to assume greater responsibility for social reform and hence the constant call by almost every government for a change of curriculum content of schools "to suit our needs and aspirations", and as such teachers who are in daily contact with the pupils must accept a good measure of responsibility of discipline in the pupils. Adequate provisions must be made for the complete development of the individual ensuring that the pupils are always fully occupied with "worthwhile activities". What is advocated here is a realization that discipline is not achieved out of the classroom only by the prefect or labour master but must be taught to the pupils in the home, the classroom, in the playing field, everywhere and at all times of their lives.
4. The authority must meet out punishment to erring pupils; punishment given to pupils must be applied within the dictates of reasons. The teachers and the administrators as professionals and experts in their own right must be credited with the capability for doing a good job. Parents should co-operate with the teachers through their support of the teacher who discipline the pupils that misbehaves rather than molesting the teachers for doing a good job.
5. The government should allow the spirit of discipline to reign in schools by owing up and fulfilling her obligations to the teachers by away of paying their salaries promptly, providing teaching and learning equipment, and infrastructures. It is the opinion of the writer that it is a serious mark of indiscipline on the part of government if she fails in these primary obligations to her subjects.
6. Finally, the rank and file of the teaching force must review their positions with respect to dedication, loyalty and appropriate behaviour in the school because the discipline of the pupils is what the teachers make.

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