

MANAGING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: THE STUDENTS' AND TEACHERS' PERCEPTION ON DISCIPLINARY STRATEGIES

Amoah, Samuel Asare, PhD

Institute of Educational Development and Extension,
Centre for Continuous Education
University of Education, Winneba.

Francis Owusu-Mensah, PhD

Institute of Educational Development and Extension, CETDAR
University of Education, Winneba.

Laryea, Prince

University of Education, Winneba

Abena Gyamera

Ghana Education Service, New Juaben Municipal, Koforidua

ABSTRACT: *Strategies adopted for ensuring discipline has been a very challenging encounter. This study therefore explores procedures involved on how teachers carry through their respective roles in managing indiscipline and how students perceive such involvement in Effutu Municipality. A case study design using qualitative approach was adopted for the study. Thirty six (36) respondents comprising twelve (12) teachers and twenty-four (24) students from two (2) Public Junior High Schools were purposively selected. Data was gathered through interviews which was analysed thematically. The study findings revealed that, teachers used judgemental to subjective behaviours as well as evaluating the disciplinary measures to interpreting it as the appropriate measure to stop misbehaviour. Teachers start using verbal appreciation and stopped their habit of de-motivating students. Additionally, in place of punishment, they preferred to encourage those students, who were not showing interest in classroom activities. It is therefore recommended that teachers should cultivate the habit of involving students in rule setting in order to promote ownership of the rules and to encourage them to take more responsibility for their own behaviour and also employ cooperative disciplinary measures as compared to punitive and harsh disciplinary measures could be used to inspire children.*

KEYWORDS: Scolding, Discipline, Student Behaviour, Judgemental, Evaluating

BACKGROUND

Discipleship involves obedience and willing submission to a rule of life without which a learner will not attain his/her goal. Discipline is readiness or ability to respect authority and observe conventional or established laws of the society or any other organisation. It can also be defined as the means by which children are trained in orderliness, good conduct and the habit of getting the best of themselves (Adesina, 2009). Traditionally, we distinguish between two kinds of discipline, external discipline and self-discipline which were also called free

discipline. As the name implies, external discipline is an external imposition of restrictions and restraints on a person, backed by some sanctions (Mensah, 2009). Since it is external to the individual, external discipline may often meet with opposition and in the school situation students may submit unwillingly to its influence. The sanctions applied in connection with external discipline involve various forms of techniques for enforcing compliance like reward and competition. External discipline is not an end in itself, but a means to achieve a higher level of discipline, namely, self-discipline. Through self-discipline a person cannot self-mastery. External discipline promotes the development of the moral sense.

A current view in Ghana is that the process of socialisation necessarily aim at the promotion of discipline in the society. The teacher's main role, is that of an agent of socialisation. This role is ambivalent partly vicarious and partly autonomous. The teacher's role is vicarious in the sense that he/she performs his/her functions precisely as a delegate of the state or government, church, school board and family. Hence, for stability and progress of society, it is necessary for each new generation to learn and understand the society's culture, skills and behaviour patterns which is done by the teacher.

Although society is responsible for the enculturation of its citizen, where socialisation is largely informal it has little involvement with professional teachers. Within the context of formal education, however, the teacher's role is greater. Whenever, he engages himself with the complex task of transmitting knowledge and skills, cultural heritage and values, the teacher acts in his own right as a professional (Mensah, 2009).

Thus, the effectiveness of the teacher's role in directing the behaviour of the tutees will depend upon the acceptance of his leadership role. Students therefore have a negative opinion of the ability of their teacher, which they think will be difficult for them, to adopt desirable patterns of behaviour as required. In this case, a teacher can hardly serve as a role model for his or her students. This situation is most unfavourable for proper moral development. For if the teacher fails to inspire good behaviour in his students through persuasion and co-operative ventures, he or she may be compelled to abandon such rational methods and resort to coercion and punishment.

Statement of the Problem

The misbehaviour of children is common in all schools although most schools manage to keep this within tolerable limits. Occasionally, however, poor disciplinary management within the school can cause a more general breakdown in order. Riak (2007) stated that there have been frequent complaints about the decline in the standard of discipline in many schools today, despite all the effort by the school authorities to enforce discipline. He said while the general public is deeply concerned about the problem, it has not been able yet to identify the basic cause or to find a satisfactory remedy to the problem.

The underlying principle concerning the imposition of school discipline is that it should be administered in a manner consistent with the child's dignity and in accordance with applicable international laws on the Rights of the Child. Article 28(2) of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) to which Ghana is a signatory provides that,

State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present convention.

In addition, the children's Act of Ghana, section 13(2) states:

No correction of the child is justifiable which is unreasonable in kind or in degree according to the age, physical and mental condition of the child, and no correction is justifiable if the child by reason of tender age or otherwise is incapable of understanding the purpose of the correction. Although officially in Ghana many schools have extremely rigid code of behaviour, in practice, many teachers are unable to manage students behaviour due to their inability to enforce discipline. On the other hand teachers use unorthodox styles which sometimes are primitive and unacceptable. In schools, strictly maintaining order in the classroom tend to divert the teacher's attention from instruction, leaving little opportunity for concentration and focus on what is being taught (Mensah, 2009).

The Ghana Education Service and the Ministry of Education in conjunction with other stake holders such as the Ghana National Association of Teachers have developed rules which are supposed to regulate discipline of school students, however, scolding as have been used as another disciplinary measure do not bring about desired change. Most teachers resort to the use of corporal punishment, other than involving students in dialogue in ensuring discipline in the schools. The study, however, explores the perception of teachers and students on other disciplinary strategies that could be adopted for better moral behaviour.

Purpose of the Research

The study specifically aimed at exploring the perceptions of teachers and students on disciplinary strategies that can be adopted to manage indiscipline.

Research Question

The research question of the study is: What disciplinary strategy (ies) do teachers and students perceive to be appropriate in managing student's indiscipline in the Efutu Municipality in Ghana.

LITERATURE UPTAKE

Much of the early research on discipline was inspired by psychoanalytic theory. Although specific details vary, psychoanalytic theorists in general have argued that frustration by parents leads to feelings of hostility on the part of their children. The hostility is repressed, however, because children fear that its expression will lead to punishment, particularly in the form of loss of love or abandonment. To maintain the repression and to elicit continuing teacher approval, children adopt rules and prohibitions as well as a generalized motive to emulate the teacher and to adopt the teacher's inner states (Siegal & Covera, 1984). One of the teacher behaviours incorporated is punishment after transgression, now transformed into self-punishment or guilt that resembles early anxiety about punishment and abandonment. It is, then, fear of guilt that motivates children to act in accord with what have now become internalized societal standards of behaviour, standards maintained completely independently of external sanctions or rewards (Siegal, & Cowen, 1984).

Psychoanalytic theory had found the major motivation for internalization in the concept of identification with the aggressor. Combining concepts from psychoanalytic and learning theory, they suggested (a) that teacher attributes are acquired through secondary reinforcement value because they are paired with experiences of physical caretaking and (b) that the child can therefore recreate pleasant experiences by being like the teacher. Hoffman (1970) demonstrated that teachers who relied solely on object-oriented or power assertive approaches such as withdrawal of privileges, force, physical punishment, and threat were less likely to be successful in promoting resistance to temptation, guilt over antisocial behaviour, reparation after deviation, altruism, and high levels of moral reasoning— all regarded as indexes of the internalization of moral values— than were teachers who withdrew love by ignoring, isolating, and indicating dislike of their children. The most influential teachers, however, were those who tended toward a greater use of reasoning or induction (often in combination with power assertion). Of particular importance was *other-oriented induction*, reasoning that draws children's attention to the effects of their misdemeanours on others, thereby sensitizing them to events beyond the personal consequences of their actions.

Contemporary Views to School Discipline

The modern concept of discipline therefore advocates that all those who have the responsibility should find creative ways of disciplining children in order to help them develop healthy lifestyles that are a reflection of respect for human rights (Dadzie, 2008).

However, Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) developed a concept for scolding as a disciplinary measure. They proposed a spiral model comprising four steps: planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

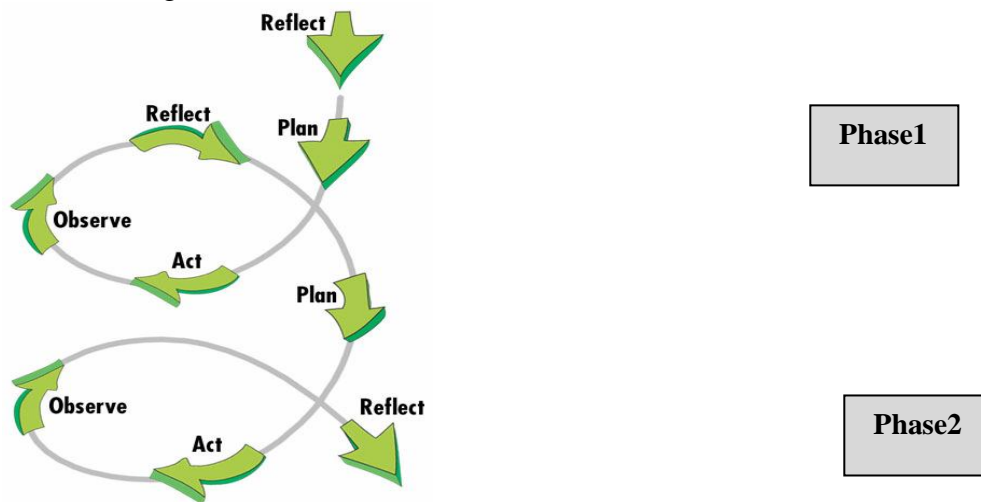


Figure 1: Kemmis & McTaggart (1988)

Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) however stated that in reflecting (Identification of the problem).

Reflecting on disciplinary actions of students' misbehaviour, Hatton and Smith (1995) believe that a powerful strategy for fostering reflection is to engage with another person in a way which encourages talking with, questioning, in order to examine plan, implement, and evaluate. It is a technique which can be structured to provide a safe environment within which self-revelation can take place. Through this students will be able to distance themselves from their actions, ideas, and beliefs, holding them up for scrutiny in the company

of peers to take risks. Such, creates an opportunity for giving voice to one's own thinking while at the same time being heard in a constructively critical way.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Case study was adopted for this study because it lends itself to investigations of an individual group, institutions or other social units. The social unit may be a person, a family, a social group or a social institution of a community (Babbie, 2007). The choice of a case study by the researcher was to ensure a form of qualitative study which involves relatively small-scale studies for in-depth investigations, with the aim of understanding social phenomena from participants' perspectives, using interactive strategies in real life situations.

Population and Sample

In this research, the population comprises all the Junior High School (JHS) teachers and students in the Effutu Municipality in Ghana. The Effutu Municipality has Nineteen (19) public Junior High Schools in three Circuits namely West, East and Central. At the JHS level there is an estimated 3,100 students of which 1,796 are males and 1,304 are females. The JHS teacher population in the municipality stands at 189 (Effutu Municipal Directorate, 2012/2013). Hoberg (1999:61) states that the first question that a researcher should ask himself/herself concerns the number of participants to be included in the sample. The sample for this research was twelve (12) teachers and twenty-four (24) students from two selected JHS schools.

Sampling Techniques

The researcher used both probability and non-probability sampling techniques to select the sample that is the purposive and stratified sampling techniques. Probability and non-probability sampling, according to Powell and Connaway (2004), enhances the likelihood of accomplishing this objective and also provides methods from estimating the degree of probable success. The two schools used in the research were purposively selected. In each school, the researchers used purposive and simple random sampling to select the respondents. Since teachers were directly in charge of the classrooms and were therefore directly responsible for managing behaviours or otherwise of the students through the use of various disciplinary measures, they were selected for the research.

Stratified and Simple random sampling techniques were used in selecting the students. In Stratified sampling, the population was first organized by class. The various classes (JHS 1 to JHS 3) formed the groups, after which the researcher selected the individual subjects from the classes using the simple random sampling technique since; each student once fallible is likely to be a recipient of the teacher's disciplinary measure in class. From each class, names of students were assigned numbers and accordingly drawn until required number is achieved.

Instrumentation

Two main instruments of data collection were adopted for this study. These were interviews and observations. In this study both teachers and students selected were interviewed. Thirty-six (36) individual interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guide. Semi-structured interviews used were because they offer a versatile way of collecting data and can

be used with all ages. Moreover, it allowed the interviewers to use probes with a view to clearing up vague responses, or asking for elaboration in case of incomplete responses (Welmann&Krugar, 2001).

Observation, as a method of gathering data, involves systematically watching, noting down points and sometimes interacting with the phenomenon. Babbie (2007) observes that, by going directly to the social phenomena under study and observing it as completely as possible, researchers can develop a deeper and fuller understanding of it. The researchers used non-participant observation to observe disciplinary measures adopted by teachers in response to supposed misbehaviour on the part of the students as well as the spontaneous response of the students to the measure used.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted in one of the JHS schools in the municipality precisely within the central circuit that is not included in the sample. The aim was to identify any ambiguities in questions and to fine tune the questions. It was also to find out the extent to which teachers were comfortable in answering some of the questions. Four (4) students and two (2) teachers were involved in the pilot study. Observations were done in the classrooms of the two teachers interviewed.

Trustworthiness of Research Instruments

Triangulation enhances the strengths and weaknesses of one's data collection techniques, as the strengths of one approach can compensate for the weaknesses of another. After the interviews, observations were conducted to cross-check some responses given by both teachers and students. To an extent some questions earlier asked were rephrased differently in latter questions so as to check the exact views of respondents based on the consistency of the responses.

Member checking was also used to determine the accuracy of the instruments. Member checking according to Creswell (2009) implies that the researcher takes back parts of the polished product such as the themes. The researchers had another interactions with the respondents to ascertain the trustworthiness of the data collected.

Data Analysis

Data was analysed through thematic approach. Thus, data obtained from individual interviews and observations were analysed by identifying common themes from respondents' description of their experiences. Similar ideas were grouped to form sub-themes.

RESULTS/FINDINGS/DISCUSSIONS

The study, identified that an angry rebuke or reprimand was one remarkable disciplinary measure teachers in both schools (School A and School B) used in managing school indiscipline. From re-reading of the transcripts, a trend was identified in the teachers' and students' discussions which led to the pairing up of their views which connotes scolding behaviours of teachers. These scolding categories (That is judgmental to supportive, and evaluative to interpretative scolding behaviours) are used as templates to describe what happened in the analysis and provide insightful account. It also shows the individual teachers' comments which depict scolding behaviours within which they operated.

Table 1: Scolding Behaviours identified by teachers and students

Scolding behaviours		Participants/ comments
Judgmental	to	Judgmental
Supportive		Supportive
Evaluative	to	Evaluative
Interpretative		Interpretative
		<p>Scolds instructively, seek for clarification,</p> <p>Empathetic and offers options in scolding</p> <p>Prefers consistency of scolding</p> <p>Always concludes on initial attempts.</p> <p>Scolding based on disciplinary measures in the school</p> <p>Self-evaluation and similar observations of disciplinary measure used</p> <p>Prefers giving thought to ideas well before responding.</p>

Source: Fieldwork, 2014

Deliberately judgemental to supportive considerations: From the data analysis, the teachers' views displayed how they were dealing with the on-the-spot student indiscipline as they shared their views on the disciplinary measures adopted due to the identified indiscipline based on how reflective the individuals concerned behave (Amoah, 2011).

It was revealed that teachers often made judgemental comments about students' misbehaviour at first contact with such misbehaviour. In support a female teacher in School 'A' expressing her opinion on a students' performance in her lesson on first contact said:

By your judgement how did you find your performance? To me it is not the best of performance because you did not impress me as a teacher. You are blockheaded.

Additionally, a male student in JHS 1 shared,

My teacher told me, when I did not perform well in her lesson, 'What kind of brain do you have?' and she really shouted at me and this made me cry.

On the same lesson, it was observed that after getting the feedback from the student, the teacher continued by saying, *always try to open up to tell us about your problems for us to be able to support you.*

These excerpts indicate how teachers concluded and justified students behaviour. Whereas the teacher reflected on what she observed, the indication is that she was also expecting the student at that instance to come out with his own thoughts on his actions. Seeking clarification or justification in such a situation becomes a two-way affair between the observed (student) and the observer (teacher). Any alternative offered, therefore, is dependent on the views expressed by the two respondents. If such professional considerations can be shared through communication, it is reasonable to conclude that respondents try to deal with identified problems on the spot.

On the flip side of judgemental scolding behaviour, a male teacher in School 'B' after reflecting seemed to believe that, since students' future was of concern to him, he felt students must be an active part of the choice of teachers' disciplinary measures. The teacher explained this in the excerpt,

I think the students at times are supportive enough to let you know what seemed wrong with a teachers' choice of scolding utilised in the classroom. And so I am always thinking, what can

I do to choose the appropriate disciplinary measure to manage students' misbehaviour rather than resulting to the traditional way or form of discipline in the classroom which to an extent may affect behaviour negatively or positively. We need, as teachers, to actively engage students in dialogue to find the reasons behind their misbehaviour and the kind of disciplinary measures to utilise to ensure effective classroom management... (a male teacher in School B)

Another teacher in School 'A' added that

Shouting or yelling at students for not putting up a good behaviour sometimes happens unconsciously. And some colleague teachers may resort to such scolding behaviours because students' misbehaviour can sometimes be irritating, hence the yelling. But in as much as one may not condone the existence of irritating behaviours of students, sometimes, showing empathy and offering alternative actions, like dialoguing with students on why such misbehaviours is quite effective.

It can be inferred from the teachers' comments that if they moved from judgmental scolding behaviours to focusing on the most convenient and suitable disciplinary measure to ensure effective classroom management, giving support, it would build an effective teacher-student relationship.

A male student in School 'A' further added

My Maths and English teachers dialogue with me whenever I do not perform well in their lesson. Even though they sometimes yell at students when they go wrong, by and large they show empathy and suggestive ways of improving our performance in their lessons. This is not so of some teachers who always use the cane to correct us.

Female student in School 'B' remarked

Though the cane makes some of us change, when teachers are supportive and yell at us sometimes, it makes us change and it makes me more responsible for my actions other than the usual inflicting of pains that leaves scars on my skin.

The study observed that such judgmental and supportive behaviour ways were influenced by the human's personal factors that included teachers' prior experiences and emotional sentiments. Here, issues relating to students' misbehaviour and conduct coming from teachers' experiences informed their thinking and behaviour. Finally teachers thinking about striving to accommodate varied students' misbehaviours and managing the challenges in the classroom related to their emotional attachment were what the study identified as the supportive scolding behaviours.

Evaluative scolding behaviour to interpretative scolding behaviour

Teachers weighed disciplinary measures as they explored alternative solutions to misbehaviours exhibited by students as they examined their own, other teachers and the school's views on discipline. Initially, it was gathered that the teachers had difficulty with their explorations, however, with time they could examine in-depth their own and other teachers' viewpoints on addressing the issue of school discipline.

A male teacher claimed:

Teachers' ability to gage the appropriate disciplinary measures in an argument and then exploring alternatives by giving evidence for their choice was something most teachers engaged in.

Some teachers make both summative and formative assessment about disciplinary measures observed in classroom management. However, others were more concerned on appropriate disciplinary measures that impacted on positive behaviour of students in the school. Teachers believe that the consistency, with which they provide ideas, by following already established disciplinary measures in analysing disciplinary issues, can help develop better understanding.

We sometimes evaluate our choice of disciplinary approach based on established school disciplinary measures that can bring out understanding with sufficient evidence rather than mere assessment of what approach may work best (a female teacher added).

Another female teacher said:

From my personal opinion, I think before one considers what disciplinary measure to use, one need to move away from evaluating what measure to use to rather interpreting the measure most reformative for the observed misbehaviour. One can only be at the better position to interpret what is observed if the one can self-evaluate his/her actions well and the misbehaviour.

Even though the frequency and regularity of teachers' choice of disciplinary measures offered support for the established school disciplinary measures, a female teacher said,

I need to understand carefully what I think about what misbehaviour has been exhibited before assessing it with what the school disciplinary measures are in relation to the said misbehaviour, if even it will take me a whole day to do it I will do that.

The teachers were selective and engaged in making summative evaluations based on their own thinking of what was right. They self-evaluated and advanced their choice of disciplinary measures to other similar observations as they reviewed the school's disciplinary codes to develop better understanding. In the end they evaluated appropriate measures rather than simply carrying out one step disciplinary measures.

IMPLICATION FOR SCHOOL COUNSELLORS

School counsellors, trained in preventive programming, can be essential resources for teachers and administrators who wish to learn strategies for creating classroom and school environments more conducive to fostering the affective growth of students. For example, Knoff (1985) developed a successful model for an in-service discipline training program in which school counsellors served as consultants to help school staff assess their knowledge and attitudes about behaviour problems, to examine their own philosophies and styles of discipline, to learn about other disciplinary approaches and programs, and to develop and evaluate disciplinary interventions. This approach emphasized the role of the school

counsellor in intervening with school staff to educate them about all aspects of school discipline programs, not just the behaviour management component.

CONCLUSION

Discipline is necessary for effective management, if the goals of the school are to be accomplished. In an effort to prevent and resolve students' discipline problems and ensure efficient functioning of schools and as such classrooms, there must be reasonable disciplinary policies and procedures. Disciplinary measures are therefore expected to be reasonable and properly meted out to offending students on account of the offence committed. It is expected to be moderate and commensurate with offence committed. Judgemental to subjective behaviours as well as evaluating the disciplinary measures to interpreting the appropriate measure to stop misbehaviour was mostly used by Teachers. Teachers start using verbal appreciation and stopped their habit of de- motivating students. In place of punishment, they preferred to encourage those students, who were not showing interest in classroom activities. Reflecting on students' misbehaviour and ensuring the appropriate measure devoid of physical pain creates a harmonious teaching-learning environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is therefore recommended that:

- Teachers should cultivate the habit of involving students in rule setting in order to promote ownership of the rules and to encourage them to take more responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Cooperative disciplinary measures as compared to punitive and harsh disciplinary measures should be enforced by educators to inspire children to make smart choices and develop positive behaviour.
- Circuit Supervisors of Ghana Education Service on their monitoring exercise should interact with students on teachers' disciplinary measures and procedures. Since harsh and psychologically unhealthy measures on students goes a long way to affect them and the entire purpose of education.

FUTURE RESEARCH

From the study, the researchers suggest an investigation to be conducted on the influence of teachers' personal beliefs and experiences in discipline and the kind of disciplinary measures used in the classroom. This is because, in the course of this research, some teachers continually made reference to how they were treated as children and the extent to which, in their view, these had helped them manage some of their challenges.

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