

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AS A TOOL TO ENHANCE PUPILS ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

School discipline is crucial to the learning outcomes in children at the primary school level. This paper is focused on school discipline as a tool to enhance pupils' academic performance at the primary school level. The lack of discipline among pupils has been a source of concern amongst educators. The paper explained the concept of discipline and the relationship it has with academic performance. The paper discussed the forms of school discipline which included preventive discipline, supportive discipline and corrective discipline. The paper further emphasized the significance of school discipline and the challenges encountered in ensuring discipline in schools. The paper concluded that school discipline plays a great role in enhancing school discipline. Based on these suggestions were made amongst which was that teachers in public primary schools should employ the different forms of discipline in the classroom to be able to manage the class effectively and help pupils perform excellently well.

Keywords: School Discipline, Preventive Discipline, Supportive discipline, Corrective discipline, Academic Performance.

Introduction

In educational institutions, success is measured by academic performance or how well pupils cope with their studies; how they accomplish different tasks given to them by their teachers and the extent to which their educational goals are achieved. As an outcome of education, academic performance refers to the ability to achieve when one is tested on what one has been taught (Otoo, 2017).

Lack of learners' discipline in many public schools throughout the world has been a matter of great concern for school management and educators and to a lesser extent for learners themselves, parents and the general public. Despite the commitment of the government to provide resources and improve school conditions, and minimize school strikes, cases of pupils' indiscipline continue to be a major problem in the learning institutions and have hampered the educational progress of affected learning institution. Pupils' indiscipline is manifested in various ways and takes different form in various schools such as commotions, disturbances, class boycotts, neglecting to do assignments, mass indiscipline, riots and violent strikes that may lead to rape, death, and destruction of school property.

Concept of School Discipline

School discipline relates to the actions taken by a teacher or the school organization towards pupils, when the pupil's behavior disrupts the ongoing educational activity or breaks a rule created by the school. Discipline can guide the

children's behavior or set limits to help them learn to take better care of themselves, other people and the world around them. School systems set rules and if pupils break these rules, they are subject to discipline. These rules are the expected standards of the school, punctuality, social conduct, and work ethic. The term "discipline" is as to the punishment or the consequence of breaking the rules. The aim of discipline is to set limits restricting certain behaviors or attitudes that are seen as harmful or against school policies, educational norms and school traditions... The focus of discipline is shifting and alternative approaches are emerging due to notably high dropout rates, disproportionate punishment upon pupils and other educational inequalities.

School discipline is the system of rules, punishments and behavioural strategies appropriate to the regulation of children and the maintenance of order in schools. Its aim is to create a safe and conducive learning environment in the classroom. School discipline has two main goals: (1) ensure the safety of staff and pupils, and (2) create an environment conducive to learning. Serious misconduct involving violent or criminal behavior defeats these goals and often makes headlines in the process.

Approaches to school discipline range from positive to punitive measures, how school discipline is handled has a great impact on the learning outcomes and environments of schools. To make the teaching and learning process effective the whole environment of the classroom should be conducive, favourable. In other words, it means teaching children appropriate behaviour goals or the ways to deal with certain limitation or boundaries so as perform every task within the limits of the institution, school country.

Discipline is the ability to establish good relationship with children to organize classroom routine so that they promote whatever learning is to take place, combined with a quick and lively understanding of individual personality so that pupils with problems can be guided and helped. It involves not subordination but aims at co-ordinating all the elements of personality and creating a harmonious unity in which they all co-operate freely and without hindrance. Traditionally, discipline in school administration meant punishment that is pain and fear. To some, school discipline can connote something negative as obeying orders blindly, kneeling down, doing manual work, fetching firewood and water for teachers and parents, caning and other forms of punishment. Rakunlan & Malathy (2012), associates this as physical discipline that leads to threatening condemnation to a child. According to Okumbe (2018), school discipline is the action by management to enforce organizational standards. This means that the individual must be trained to have self-control, respect, obedience and good manner. Okumbe (2018), Galabawa (2011), see discipline as an activity of subjecting someone to a code of behaviour that there is a widespread agreement that an orderly atmosphere is necessary in school for effective teaching and learning to take place.

Griffin (2014), points that the aim of school discipline should be to endow each learner with habits such as self-respect, dignity and integrity that he will help him observe the norms of good conduct when not under compulsion or supervision and will carry them eventually into adult life. Sound discipline is an essential ingredient in the creation of a happy and friendly school community. Learners learn to the best of

their abilities in an orderly and safe environment. The environment should not be intimidating and threatening to the learner. Njorege & Nyabuto (2014) stated that if discipline is not taken into consideration, the school environment will be dangerous and the educational process may be disrupted. Various studies have conducted research on issues pertaining to schools' academic performance, such as Mosha (2010). These have pointed out some factors that lead to varying levels of performance in schools, including availability of teachers, availability of teaching and learning materials and language communication.

Cornelius-Ukpepi, Esu, & Ndifon, (2017) talks about school discipline as one among aspects that influence performance in schools. School discipline is an essential element in any educational institution if the pupils are to benefit from the opportunities offered to them. They argued that it is difficult to maintain order and discipline in schools where teachers have no space to sit, prepare and mark students' work. In other words, some parents believed that children who were insubordinate were alienating themselves from God, and teachers were thought to be the perfect authority figure to ensure alienation did not occur (Parker, 2017). During this time corporal punishment was viewed as necessary to produce children who conformed to the norms of society, beat out sin, and ensure learning occurred (Parker, 2017). The book of Proverbs in the Bible advocates the use of a rod, i.e. corporal punishment, to save children's souls from death. Hence, teachers began administering corporal punishment for acts of wrong doing by their charges (Conte, 2010).

Preventive Discipline

Teachers with effective management strategies establish expectations, guidelines and rules for behaviour during the first few days of class. Clearly explaining expectations is an essential component to preventative discipline. The goal of preventative discipline is to provide proactive interventions to potential disruptive behaviours by clearly explaining to pupils what behaviours are not appropriate. The most basic component to preventative discipline is a concise outline about classroom expectations for pupils as well as for teachers; pupils need to know what is expected of them for the remainder of the class. Such guidelines might include rules regarding talking, homework or language use in the classroom. A preventative discipline strategy also establishes the types of consequences that will follow a forbidden act or behaviour. Preventative discipline strategies create a safe, non-confrontational classroom atmosphere in which students feel that they understand what is to come.

Preventive Discipline involves teachers establishing expectations, guidelines and rules for behaviour during the first few days of class. Clearly explaining expectations is an essential component to preventive discipline. A preventive discipline technique includes guideline regarding talking in the class, homework or language use in the classroom measures taken to preempt misbehavior by keeping pupils engaged. Academic performance refers to the ability of pupils to study, remember facts and be able to communicate their knowledge verbally or through writing (Mwaniki, 2012). Grades are most often a tallying or average of assignment and test scores and may often be affected, by factors such as attendance and an

instructor opinion of the pupil as well. Grading systems vary greatly by country and school, common scales include a percentage form 1-100, lettering systems from A-F, and grade point averages (GPA) from or above. These grades are greatly dependent on how the child is able to discipline his or herself to do the right thing.

Supportive Discipline

Supportive discipline are measures taken to assist pupils with self-control by helping them get back on task while corrective discipline are measures taken when pupils are not following classroom or school rules. Supportive discipline is distinct from punishment in that it provides pupils with suggestions and option for correcting behaviour before a consequence is necessary. Reminders, redirection and nonverbal communication are all examples of supportive discipline.

Even the best laid preventative discipline strategies may fail periodically throughout the school year. When a teacher offers a verbal warning or a suggestion for correcting behavior while a pupil is disobeying an established classroom rule, the teacher is using supportive discipline. For example, if a pupil is wandering around the class after a teacher has announced it is time to sit down, the teacher may say, "I made the announcement that it is time to sit down. Find your seat so we can get started or I will need to hold you after class". The pupil has been given the option to accept or avoid further punishment; the behaviour has been redirected through a teacher's supportive discipline strategy. Reminders, redirection and nonverbal communication are all examples of supportive discipline.

Pupils do not automatically know how to behave in all settings and situations. Therefore, teachers must make sure to teach acceptable behaviour through use of classroom discipline. However, the starting point is for the teacher to have written discipline plan that clarifies rules, positive recognition, and corrective actions. Rules states exactly how pupils are to behave. A disciplined pupil is that pupil whose behaviours, actions and inactions conform to the predetermined rules and regulations of the school (Ali, Dada, Isiaka and Salmon, 2014). However, discipline ideally means more than adhering to rules and regulations and entails the learner's ability to discern what is right or wrong (Gitome, Katola & Nyabwari, 2013).

Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline refers to a set of consequences delivered to pupils following an infraction. There is a wide degree of variation among corrective discipline strategies, some more effective than others. For example, engaging in a verbal altercation with a pupil is a corrective discipline technique, but it may escalate a volatile situation and undermine your authority as a teacher. Corrective discipline technique includes engaging in a verbal altercation with a pupil. in a time out According to Ehiane (2014), punishments are expected to enforce compliance when pupils are under the care of teachers. It was stated that punishments in a school system are expected to teach pupils the relationship between their behaviors and the outcome or accountability for their mistakes. However, what really occurs on the ground is that unwanted behaviours are on the increase despite the presence of these punishments. Ehiano further posited that teachers are worried about the aggression being directed to them by both pupils and their parents. This has resulted into some pupils being expelled, others suspended,

forced to do hard labour at school, chased out of classes all of which seem to affect their academic performance. Some forms of punishments like corporal punishment could lead to physical injury if teachers are not careful in its administration. This would lead to being absent from schools and consequently reducing the academic performance of the injured pupils. When a pupil has failed to redirect his/ her behaviour after repeated attempts at supportive discipline, a teacher may opt for a corrective discipline strategy. Corrective discipline strategies should be adapted to the pupils age or grade level, though placing students in a time out may be effective for kindergarten, high school students are much less likely to comply with such provisions.

Consistent application of consequences is an essential component of corrective discipline strategies Baumard (2010), shared the same opinion but argued that punishment is a means of controlling disruptive behaviour. He further stated that if punishment is the logical result of misconduct, the pupil is likely to accept it without resentment. Teachers need always realize the appropriateness of punishment before initiating it. Uniform punishment can be an effective way of controlling pupils' behaviour if pupils, teachers and school administrators know and understand that punishment is firm, fair and consistent. Ideally, schools set discipline for the proper governing of the various lifestyles of pupils. The teacher has an obligation of issuing a warning before initiating the disciplinary actions. Disciplinary action is more likely to be interpreted as fair if it is preceded by a warning. Furthermore, state the problem specifically by giving the date, time, place and individual involved and any mitigating circumstances surrounding the violation. Also allow the child to explain his/her position regardless of what facts you have uncovered, due process demands that you give another person an opportunity to state his position. Likewise keep the discussion impersonal and penalties should be connected with a given violation not with the personality of the individual violator. Besides be consistent by fair treatment of individuals demands that disciplinary actions be consistent. Inconsistency allows rules lose their impact, moral will decline and your competence will be questionable, finally take progressive action and penalties will become stronger if the offence is repeated.

Effective School Discipline Skills

These are skills required by teachers to ensure discipline exists in schools According to Nakpodia (2010), the essence of effective discipline can be summarized by the following guides to behaviour management such as quick response, provision of warning, accurate record keeping and fair hearing. Respond immediately means the more quickly the disciplinary action follows an offence, the more likely that the person responds positively. Also provide a warning this mean the teacher has an obligation of issuing a warning before initiating the disciplinary actions. Disciplinary action is more likely to be interpreted as fair if it is preceded by a warning. Furthermore, state the problem specifically by giving the date, time, place and individual involved and any mitigating circumstances surrounding the violation. Also allow the child to explain his/her position regardless of what facts you have uncovered, due process demands that you give another person an opportunity to state his position. Likewise keep the discussion impersonal and penalties should be connected with a given violation not with the personality of the individual violator. Besides be consistent by fair treatment of individuals' demands that disciplinary actions be consistent. Inconsistency allows rules lose their impact, moral will

decline and your competence will be questionable. Finally take progressive action and penalties will become stronger if the offence is repeated.

Challenges in Enforcing Discipline in Schools

- 1) **The Nigerian Society:** The conduct of individuals within the Nigerian society leaves less to be desired. The children view adults live in a disorganized way, people drive against traffic, uniform men collect monies on the road from drivers, people dumping waste on the median of roads, people engaging in fights in public spaces and other known vices. The above scenario makes it extremely difficult when teachers try to enforce discipline in schools.
- 2) **Political Factors:** The actions and inactions of the political class have a great impact on the values the children will pick up. Benebo-solomon (2015) opined that when politicians are given funds to carry out certain projects within the communities and end up embezzling the money it has an effect on the child and his environment.
- 3) **Parental Factors** The Child's first teachers are the parents and caregivers. They are saddled with the responsibility of inculcating morals in the children under their care.

Due to harsh economic realities parents leave their children to make ends meet thereby leaving the moral upbringing of their children to others especially teachers at the primary school level.

Suggestions on the Way forward

- 1) **Living by Example:** The children are very observant hence the need for all individuals around the child should always act and do right at all times
- 2) Parents should endeavor to inculcate in their children the right values that they grow up with, set standards at home, find time off their busy schedules to interact with their children.
- 3) Politicians as leaders in the society should set good example for the children to follow. Promises made to the electorate should be kept so as to build confidence in the children.

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