DISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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Abstract
Discipline is an indispensable tool for effective achievement of any educational purpose and objective. It is a key that unlocks acceptable norms, values, behaviours and performance needed in educational institutions, particularly in the primary schools. It also helps to maintain a healthy school climate that will enhance teaching-learning exercise. Although, school is designed for educational purposes, lack of discipline can obstructs both national and school educational goals. Presently, attention of many scholars and researchers have been drawn to the study of school discipline at higher institutions of learning in Nigeria. However, maintaining discipline in primary level of education form the basis of the national primary education goal. It is, therefore, imperative to examine the nature of discipline in primary schools in Nigeria. This work will examine the nature of discipline in schools, benefits of discipline, preventive disciplinary approaches, roles of school administrators in maintaining discipline and so on.
Key Words: Discipline, Indiscipline, Primary education,

INTRODUCTION

Discipline is exact opposite of indiscipline. According to Ibenegbu (2017) indiscipline in school is the violation of school rules. In the words of Kayode (2017) indiscipline refers to a situation in which people do not control their behaviour or obey rules. This is to say that indiscipline is a behaviour or activity that contradicts the laid down rules and norms in the school. Indiscipline is the lack of controlled behaviour or disobedience to order. For better understanding, it is also necessary to briefly explain the terms school and discipline in order to perceive more clearly the concept of school discipline**.**

School is a vital educational institution where people receive formal education that enables them to imbibe the acceptable values, skills, behaviours and knowledge of the society so as to be groomed into useful living (Okeke-James, Igbokwe,Anyanwu and Obieneme, 2020). School is viewed by Nwagwu (2017) as a social organization charged with responsibility of developing human resources and capacities with knowledge, skills and values needed by society. The above definitions imply four

ideas: Firstly, school is designed for academic development. It is a distinct environment for acquisition of theoretical knowledge and practical skill. Secondly, the school is designed for social development. It is also an establishment where learner's personal development and interpersonal discovery are explored. This is to say that a school provides the learner with an opportunity to know and work with other people, at such learners are trained to build strong relationships with others in the society. Thirdly, a school is a location designed for learner's psychological development. In other words, school is a place for grooming learner's mental and emotional development. Fourthly, school is created for behavioural development. The school is set aside to teach the students how to act and exhibit the acceptable character and behaviour of the society. In a sort of summary of the above, Okeke-James, Anyawu, Igbokwe and Emengini, (2020) stated that the basic aim of any school organization is to achieve high academic performance and good behaviours of its students.

Supposedly, the school is a strategic environment that brings the teacher and learner together with a vital aim of imparting knowledge, skill, behaviour and character to a learner. In the school organization, both the teacher and learner perform distinct roles for the functionality of the school. The teacher is assigned to plan, design the class objectives, organize, coordinate and evaluate the learning process of the learners. For the teacher to effectively design and achieve this onerous task, it demands some level of discipline in the class. Students, on the other hand are obliged to learn and submit to classroom and school regulations. School, therefore is a distant environment reserved for impartation of knowledge, good conduct and discipline.

On the other hand, discipline according to Kayode (2017) is the willingness of a student to exhibit proper conduct, a great sense of responsibility, passion for order and zeal to discharge duties promptly and efficiently. In the view of Thompson and Kleiner in Ezeugbor and Anozie (2019) discipline helps to direct the behaviour of school members towards achieving the goals of organization. According to Ezeugbor and Ebeatu (2018) discipline is a training to act in accordance with rules. This is to say that discipline is gained when rules and regulation of the school is adhered to by its members. Accordingly, discipline can be said to be an act of instructing learners to adhere to a code of conduct, school rules and regulations in the schools.

From the above definitions of the terms school and discipline, one can rightly say that school discipline is aimed at maintaining order, respect, dignity and control in the school.

NATURE OF DISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary education is the foundational schooling earlier given to children which serve as basis for further academic advancement. According to National Policy on

Education (FGN,2013) is the education given to children aged 6 to 12years. Its objectives according to NPE include to:

- ❖ inculcate permanent literacy and numeracy and ability to communicate effectively;
- ❖ lay a sound basis for scientific, critical and reflective thinking;
- ❖ mould character and develop sound attitude and morals in the child;
- ❖ develop in the child the ability to adapt to the changing environment;
- ❖ to provide opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable the child function effectively in the society within the limits of the child's capacity;
- ❖ provide the child with basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparation for trades and crafts of the locality

From the objectives three and four above, it is clear that discipline is among the national primary educational goal. Therefore, maintaining discipline at primary level of education is cogent objective to pursue.

THE BENEFITS OF DISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Discipline in the primary school provides the followings benefits:

1. It establishes order and harmony in the school. Discipline aid to set the code of conduct for school members.
2. It helps to facilitates self-control, self-direction and sense of responsibility to the pupils.
3. It helps to maintain a conducive teaching-learning atmosphere devoid of distraction in the school.
4. School discipline facilitates healthy social and emotional development of pupils.
5. In primary level of education, school discipline serves as proactive measure of instilling long lasting behaviour guide where other levels of child's academic development can be easily built.
6. Discipline at primary school helps to address underlying factor of misconduct in pupils that may escalate as the pupils advances in age
7. It encourages satisfaction, decreases stress and burn out among teachers.
8. Discipline helps to reduce social anxiety disorder among pupils
9. It helps to build good school reputation
10. School discipline help to establish a basis for self-disciplined, control and acceptance

COMMON ACTS OF INDISCIPLINE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

The following are examples of common indiscipline exhibited by primary school pupils: fighting, disobedience, dishonesty, failure of learners to do homework, arrogance,disrespectful to teachers, untidiness, out of seat , non-punctuality, idleness,

impolite, distracting others ,throwing pens, inattentive in the class, noise making, playing rough, stealing and lying.

EFFECTS OF INDISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Indiscipline in the primary school poses the followings challenges:

1. Indiscipline behaviours hinder national, school and classroom educational goals. In the classroom setting, pupils' indiscipline behaviour causes distractions and can make it difficult to assist others pupils with learning needs. This is because Indiscipline disrupts calmness needed for effective teaching and learning exercise in the class.
2. It makes orderliness and harmony difficult to be accomplished in the school. Indiscipline behaviours do not bring about the orderly behaviour, regular and systematic arrangement expected in the school. This can bring discord and chaos in the school which will make school objectives unachievable.
3. It makes school unsafe and unhealthy for both staff and pupils. Acts of indiscipline can robe pupils of the protection and security provided for them in the school. It can as well pose a threat to lives and properties in the school,
4. Pupils that engage in indiscipline behaviour prevent themselves and other pupils from learning. Classroom distractions are inevitable in the school where indiscipline prevails.
5. Indiscipline in primary level of education corrupts good morals and manner in the pupils. Undisciplined pupils ruin the efforts of the school administrators by perverting good morals instilled in the school pupils.
6. Indiscipline when not controlled at this level of education will increase anti-social behaviour among pupils when they are out of school. It is obvious that various unacceptable behaviours exhibited by students in higher institutions of learning are traceable to poor management of pupils'' indiscipline behaviours in primary schools.

PREVENTIVE DISCIPLINARY APPROACH/ MEASURES TO PUPILS' INDISCIPLINE IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Preventing school discipline problems is better than attempting to deal with them when they occur. It is essential that proactive disciplinary intervention be kept in place to prevent disciplinary problems among pupils in the school. Disciplinary measures should form part of the school objectives. It is also important to notify every parents and guardian about the disciplinary approaches available in the school, so that they can support and uphold it. Some of the preventive disciplinary approach/ measures essential in primary schools include:

1. **Guidance support services:** The school should employ the services of guidance and counseling personnel. Some of the services to be provided by the guidance support personnel include: encouragement, support and helping pupils succeed. This approach is aimed at helping the pupils to

recognize their mistake and findings ways to change the pupil to positive behaviour. It also aids in identifying pupils' with special needs, handling pupil's personal and family challenges and making them understand the consequences of falling to meet school discipline policies.

2. **Alternate classroom placement:** Changing classroom seating arrangement is a good preventive disciplinary measure to manage pupil's inattentive behaviour in the class. It is expedient that form teachers monitor the pupils' behaviour while alternating classroom placement. This is to ensure that inattentive pupils do not sit close to their friends. This measure also will go a long way to identify and handle pupils with emotional and social needs
3. **Written/Oral communication to parent/guardian:** This is a preventive disciplinary measure that is safe, convenient, open and of easy access to obtain or pass information to parent or guardian about their children behaviour and performance in the school.
4. A**ttendance taking at school dismissal time:** This preventive disciplinary measure facilities confidentiality of record, quick retrieval of records and allows for easy accessibility of records for discipline purposes.

DISCIPLINARY ROLES OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

Maintaining discipline in the school is an important role of an effective school administrator. School administrators are the academic and administrative head in the school. Thus, they are expected to draft school rules and regulation from the government policy book. The administrator is expected to interpret the stated government disciplinary policies, set them in achievable objectives for easier implementation in the school. School administrators are also to take appropriate disciplinary decision in the school. These can be achieved by school administrators through:

a. **School supervision:** The school administrator is to oversee that discipline is maintained in the school. He is to monitor the teachers and students to make sure they comply with discipline rules set for them. The principal should:

- ✓ Set the standard of behaviour and performance in the school
- ✓ Support staff in disciplining the students
- ✓ Set the disciplinary penalty for breaking school rules
- ✓ Publicize the school discipline policy to the teachers, parents and students
- ✓ Monitor classroom discipline policies
- ✓ Ensure quality control in discipline service delivery of teachers
- ✓ Ensure dissemination of school disciplinary information
- ✓ Ensure that the statutory and disciplinary records are properly documented to maintain accurate information on school discipline.

b. **Building good interpersonal relationship with both students and staff:** The school administrator should encourage free communication among and with school members. He should also build strong supportive system with school staff and require regular disciplinary reports from them. The school administrator should also motivate students to develop self-discipline. The school administrator can establish the basis for interpersonal relationship among school members by:

- ✓ Interacting freely with school members on disciplinary matters
- ✓ Sharing ideas on best disciplinary practices for effective performance and school behaviours
- ✓ Accommodating divergent views for discipline implementation in the school
- ✓ Being impersonal in dealing with discipline matters. That is handling discipline problems without favoritism or nepotism.
- ✓ Delegating disciplinary function to staff. The school administrator should in some cases entrust disciplinary functions to subordinates with clear authority specification.
- ✓ Adopting leadership skill that will give students right to disciplinary knowledge and etiquettes.
- ✓ Maintaining school climate that allows safety, trust, respect and discipline to strive.

c. **Healthy management of school conflict**: Poor conflict management poses a threat to discipline in the school. Attainment of school objectives can only be achieved when the school administrator employs effective strategies for curbing conflict and its devastating effects on school members. Omoyemwense and Fayeye (2017) outlined conflict management strategies expedient for school management to include:

- ✓ Collaborating: this involves involving other stakeholders in resolving school conflicts
- ✓ Negotiation: this involves handling conflict through dialogue
- ✓ Participatory decision making: this strategy depicts involving partners in the process of resolving the disagreement

d. **Organizing discipline conference on every academic session**: The school administrators should make plan for workshop, orientation that relate to school discipline. This can be achieved by:

- ✓ Engaging the services of discipline experts and marshal in intimating dangers of indiscipline behavours in and outside the school
- ✓ Encouraging teachers to share their personal ideas, experiences and observation in discipline problems and benefits

e. **Maintaining good relationship with parents whose children are students in the school:** It is important that school administrators maintain a cordial relationship with parents and guardians. This will enable school administrator to get information about students' behaviours at home, with such knowledge are guided in taking disciplinary decisions. In the school, the administrator should employ a democratic leadership style, where healthy and open school climate are encouraged. This can be achieved by the principal by:

- ✓ Allowing free flow of disciplinary information.
- ✓ Intimating the parent and guardian with discipline policies and plans in the school.
- ✓ Notifying the parents about performance and observed behaviours of their children in the school.

f. **Setting up disciplinary committee:** There is need for school administrator to set disciplinary team that will be responsible for handling discipline matters in the school. This committee is to aid in drafting and implementing the school discipline policies. The disciplinary committee can achieve their assigned task by:

- ✓ Collating disciplinary information about school members.
- ✓ Prompting actions on discipline from information gathered
- ✓ intimating discipline ideas to the team
- ✓ Setting control measure to monitor the discipline team objectives
- ✓ Supplying the needed resources to enable the team function effectively and efficiently.
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Disciplinary roles of the Teachers

Teachers are the crucial agent in implementing discipline policies made by the government and school administrators. Teachers have statutory authority to discipline students' misbehavious in the school. They are to pay close attention to the students' physical, emotional, psychological and behaviourial needs in the school. They also serve as the information mediator between students and the school administrators. Thus, they are also the role models needed to support the students in abiding to the school rules. The teacher should endavour to maintain classroom discipline by providing a healthy, supportive, interactive and encouraging classroom. It is the duty of the teacher to discover the best discipline method to hold and sustain interactive and enthusiastic classroom environment. An effective teacher can achieve this role by:

- ✓ Teaching students good behaviours
- ✓ Building confidence in the student
- ✓ Using teaching methods that makes students excited to learn and study
- ✓ Identifying students' individual problems
- ✓ Designing classroom rules to reflect the classroom objectives

- ✓ Intimating the students with the classroom rules. The teacher should endavour to make the classroom rules simple, precise and open for review. The teacher should draw the classroom rules from the general school rules and regulations.
- ✓ Pasting the classroom rules where it will be boldly seen by the students
- ✓ Outlining the consequences of defaulting any of the stated classroom rules
- ✓ instilling self-discipline and personality development in the students

CONCLUSION

School discipline is essential for effective achievement of school educational objectives. The term school discipline has been interpreted as punishing indiscipline behaviours in the school. However, school discipline is more than punishment rather comprising orderliness, creating opportunity for students to learn direction and build self-control. Also, the achievement of academic excellence and quality education depends largely on how disciplined a school is

Finally, it is important to note that poor discipline in schools does not only manifest in ill-disciplined learners, but is also exhibited by undisciplined educators who are not serious about, or committed to, their task and calling. To this regards there is need for joint efforts of education stakeholder towards ensuring discipline in the school.

WAY FORWARD

It is therefore recommended that:

1. The government should set the general standard for school discipline
2. The government should devote time to maintain school discipline through adequate supervision
3. The government should support discipline by giving financial and facilities support to schools
4. The school administrators should cultivate the habit maintaining school discipline by involving the parents, teachers and students in school matters.
5. School administrator should set the standard of school behaviours.
6. School administrator should set disciplinary committee to assist in handling the discipline problems in the school.
7. Teachers should maintain uniformity in application of school and classroom rules.
8. Teachers should respond to student behaviour aptly through proper advice, relationship and guidance.
9. Teacher should ensure positive reinforcement for acceptable behaviour
10. Teachers should help the pupils to internalize and adhere to school rules and regulations
11. Teachers should properly melt out punishment tomisbehaved pupils according to the offence committed..
12. Parents should also be actively involved to promote school discipline

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