

Discipline Problems and Leadership Qualities in Management of Discipline in A Secondary School

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Abstract: The present study is case study which focuses on the discipline problems in the New Rays Secondary School, Mauritius, and qualities of principal as a leader in managing the problems. From the study it was found that the most of the indiscipline problems found in the school are **lateness, not completion of homework (95%), 'flirting' (90%), 'not wearing proper uniform' (85%), and 'theft and bullying' (80%). 'using of foul language and answering back to teachers' (70%), 'misuse of books in the library' (60%), 'misbehaving in class' (55%), and 'swearing and bunking classes (50%), 'absenteeism' (40%) and 'exchange of pornographic CD's (25%) as expressed by the teachers. According to the students the high level of indiscipline problems at New Rays Secondary school are 'not completion of homework (93%), 'misuse of books in the library' (87%), 'flirting' (83%), 'not wearing proper uniform' (80%). After that come the average level indiscipline problems; 'answering back to teachers' (70%), 'theft and bullying' (67%), 'using of foul language' (63%) and 'lateness' (60%). Under the low level of indiscipline problems we can note 'swearing (50%), bunking classes (40%), 'absenteeism' (37%) and 'exchange of pornographic CD's (33%).**

I. INTRODUCTION

Education in its broadest, general sense is the means through which the aims and habits of a group of people lives on from one generation to the next. It refers to the processes through which the relevant knowledge, attitudes, values and skills are transmitted and developed in children. As such it focuses on the development of the cognitive, social and emotional skills which are necessary for moral thinking, action and feeling. Education appears to be the most appropriate vehicle to help change and build a worldview that is more in line with the aspirations of people in the context of globalization with its market compulsions, increased cultural contact and accelerated pace of technological change. It concerns thus the practices and strategies that socializing agents use to equip children with the resources to undergo issues about right and wrong in their everyday life. The notion of discipline within education is thus to help students become autonomous decision makers, but at the same time, to create an attachment to fundamental values like respect and responsibility.

Sound discipline and safety underpins every aspect of the school life. For successful teaching and learning to take place it is essential that good discipline exists in every classroom in particular and in the school as a whole in general. Apart from influencing the teaching and learning environment, disruptive behaviour can also affect the learners' safety, readiness to learn as well as future behaviour (Levin and Nalon, 1991). According to Charles (1996) ill discipline can destroy the possibility of a safe and orderly environment and thereby hamper the core purpose of the school.

Tauber (1995) believes that indiscipline can be reduced by the combined effort of the educators, management, parents, students and the community. Learners need to be guided to take responsibility for their own behavior. The ultimate goal of strategies for management and discipline in the future is to empower students to develop self-discipline and self-control (Fennimore, 1995). Within a secondary educational

institution, the Principal is the empowered authority and shoulders the responsibility for the smooth and effective running of the school. The Principal plays an important leadership role in establishing and maintaining school discipline both by effective administration and by personal example. Effective principals are liked and respected, rather than feared.

Cunningham and Cordeiro (2000) and Tirozzi (2001) assert that the Head of school is at the centre of all school improvement initiatives in teaching and learning and ensuring a secured atmosphere where discipline prevails. Therefore, he/she is a change agent for school success, and expected to explore and judiciously utilize the resources for continuous improvement in organizational performance and maintenance of discipline. By implication, if the principal is not vision-oriented and productive in regard to his/her responsibilities, improvement of school achievement will remain a dream for a long time. Ramharai and Mariaye (2006) sharing the same idea indicate that the factors enhancing school and classroom discipline is a complex matrix of both internal and external variables involving, on the one hand, pedagogical efficiency, teacher personality, leadership and management styles of the Head, parental collaboration, students' expectations of school and education, teacher-pupils relationship and school culture. Students to comply with a code of behaviour/conduct, the school will have its set of Rules and Regulations which are meant to enhance the smooth running of the school. (2009, **School Management Manual**).

Need and importance of the study

In meeting with challenges of the vision of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources of providing World Class Quality Education (Ministry of Education, Culture and Human Resources, 2005) and making Mauritius a Knowledge Hub, the leadership of the principals will

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become the main factor in ensuring the success of the school both in academic achievement and discipline at the school. The action of the minority of learners who misbehaved for whatever reason have a negative influence not only on their learning but also on the learning of the peers and creates a stress for the educators and principals in managing the learning process (Fontana, 1994).

In fact, teaching and learning become more meaningful where positive ethos and good discipline prevail. According to Hill and Hill (1994) learners learn to their best of their abilities in an orderly and safe environment. According to DiGiulio (2000) a chaotic classroom distracts the learners, preventing them from attending, focusing and concentrating, wastes time and hinders the learners from achieving their educational potential.

In order to attain the national vision of equality, quality education and discipline in school, all the stakeholders have to join hands together to provide a nurturing environment to counteract or deal with problem of indiscipline and violence at school. This denotes that parents, educators, the management, the community and the learners are called upon to involve themselves in the day-to-day issues that relate to keeping order in schools. (Dekker, 1993; Savage, 1991). In this background the study was found to be important and essential.

Statement of The Problem

“A case study on Discipline problems and leadership qualities in management of discipline in New Rays co-educational secondary school (Mauritius).”

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are to,

- Identify and describe the different forms of indiscipline and violence in the school, the leadership qualities adopted by the Principal in the management of discipline at school.
- Examine the attribution of students and teachers about the issue of indiscipline and violence.
- Explore the strengths and weaknesses of distributed leadership as a tool for maintaining discipline.
- Look at the mechanisms that exist in schools to deal with problems of indiscipline and violence.
- Examine the perceptions of educators with regard to a disciplined environment.

III. METHODOLOGY

As study is concerned with an analysis of how positive discipline is managed and maintained in a specific co-educational secondary school under the effective leadership of the Principal, qualitative approach was used.

Population and sample

The New Rays secondary School, Mauritius has a total population of 825 students and 60 educators. The participants were carefully selected to represent the multiple voices within the school setting adopting purposive sampling technique.

30 students who are members of the Students Council were selected. Besides, these students were chosen as from Form III up to Upper Six due to their level of maturity. There are 3 Form three classes that is III Red, III Blue, III Green and as from form IV to Upper Six, the classes were divided into three broad categories: Science, Economics and Art/ Technical. Two pupils, who are students' council members were chosen as sample from each section.

10 Educators form part of the Disciplinary Committee, who are assisting the management in maintaining discipline in the school. They are five male and five female educators. They provide pastoral care to students with behavioural problems and also from time to time counsel students about the rules and regulations stipulated in the school discipline policy. It is to be noted that these 10 Educators are the senior staffs of the school not in terms of their age but in terms of their duration of posting. They are here for the past seven years since the creation of the school in 2003.

The Head of school is a dynamic person who has started his career as a Principal in the newly created New Rays co-educational school. He is serving the same institution for the past 8 years.

IV. RESEARCH TOOLS

The data was collected using instruments which allowed for breadth and depth analysis of information. The tools selected for gathering data in this research are focus group interviews, individual interview, questionnaire, official document consultation and observation of students in and out of the class.

Analysis and interpretation

I. level of Discipline at New Rays Secondary School

Table-1 Number of indiscipline cases at New Rays 2003 to 2010.

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
No. of indiscipline cases	15	21	28	33	34	32	33	30

It is worth noting that in the target school most of the teachers responded that severe indiscipline problems like violence, alcoholic drinks, smoking, gambling and damage to school property are not present at New Rays Secondary school. Among the high level of serious problems at New Rays we can note **'lateness'** in first position (100% teachers' responses). Then come **'not completion of homework'** (95%), **'flirting'** (90%), **'not wearing proper uniform'** (85%), and **'theft and bullying'** (80%). For the average level of indiscipline problems we come across **'using of foul language and answering back to teachers'** (70%), **'misuse of books in the library'** (60%), **'misbehaving in class'** (55%), and **'swearing and bunking classes'** (50%). At the lower level we can find indiscipline problems like **'absenteeism'** (40%) and **'exchange of pornographic CD's'** (25%).

II. Forms of Indiscipline Problem at The School

Table-2 Rating Forms of Indiscipline Problems at New Rays

Types of Indiscipline Problems	No of teachers Respondents: Total (20) %	No of students Respondents: Total (30) %
Exchange of pornographic CD's	5	10
No proper uniform (Boys don't tuck their shirt inside trousers)	17	24
Bullying	16	20
Damage school Property	Nil	Nil
Theft	16	20
Using Foul language	14	19
Gambling at school	Nil	Nil
Flirting	18	25
Answering back to teachers	14	21
Physical violence	Nil	Nil
Swearing/Writing swear words in desks/toilets	10	15
Misuse of books in library	12	26
Bunking classes	10	12
Lateness	20	18
Absenteeism	8	11
Consumption of Alcoholic drinks	Nil	Nil
Not completing homework	19	28
Misbehaving in class/school bus	11	19
Smoking within school	Nil	Nil

According to the students the high level of indiscipline problems at New Rays Secondary school are **'not completion of homework'** (93%), **'misuse of books in the library'** (87%), **'flirting'** (83%), **'not wearing proper uniform'** (80%). After that come the average level indiscipline problems; **'answering back to teachers'** (70%), **'theft and bullying'** (67%), **'using of foul language'** (63%) and **'lateness'** (60%). Under the low level of indiscipline problems we can note **'swearing'** (50%), **'bunking classes'** (40%), **'absenteeism'** (37%) and **'exchange of pornographic CD's'** (33%). From the students' responses it was observed that there were no severe indiscipline problems as damage of school property, gambling at school, physical violence, consumption of alcoholic drinks and smoking within school.

III. Indiscipline Problems Faced by The Management, Teachers and Disciplinary Committee Members at New Rays School:

- Answering back to Educator
- Absenteeism
- Late coming to school
- Not completing homework

IV. Measures Adopted To Deal With Indiscipline At New Rays

- The school discipline policy
- Close monitoring of discipline by the teaching and non-teaching staff
- The Disciplinary Committee

- Parental Involvement in keeping discipline
- Rewards for positive behaviour
- The community involvement in keeping appropriate discipline
- Positive values are promoted
- Self-discipline is promoted by assigning students key responsibilities
- Suggestion box as an aid to curb indiscipline.

V. The Principal Characteristics and Qualities as A Leader in Managing Discipline as Responded by Teachers.

Table-3 The Principal Characteristics and Qualities as A Leader in Managing Discipline as Responded by Teachers.

Characteristics of Principal	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
No of teachers Rating (20)				
Takes all decision alone and impose on staff	0	1	1	18
Takes disciplinary action at right time	18	2	0	0
Supervises discipline closely	19	1	0	0
Takes immediate actions to indiscipline	10	0	0	0
He is objective in all decisions	19	1	0	0
Let educators have a say in disciplinary action	17	3	0	0
He is emotional in certain disciplinary sanctions	16	3	1	0
Seeks the help of educators in the management of discipline	19	1	0	0
Promotes respect among staffs and students	20	0	0	0
Is very strict regarding discipline, students are afraid of him	0	4	6	0
Sanctions are fair and consistent	18	2	0	0
Is a goal oriented leader	20	0	0	0
Is oriented towards quality education	20	0	0	0
Ensure the safety and security of students and staff	20	0	0	0
Involve resource persons to educate learners about drugs abuse, truancy, violence	18	2	0	0

Most of the teachers (20) responded that Principal takes immediate actions to indiscipline problems. The principal's instructional leadership is deduced here as he is a goal oriented leader who assures quality education and always promotes respect among staffs and students. 18 teachers expressed that the Principal never takes decision alone and impose them on the staffs. 6 teachers said that the principal is rarely very strict regarding discipline and students are afraid of him. Instead he is objective in all decisions (19) and seeks the co-operation of the teachers to handle indiscipline problems (19). We can infer from the teachers responses that the Principal demonstrate distributive leadership qualities as he let educators have a say in disciplinary actions (19). Moreover he involves resource persons to educate learners about drugs abuse, truancy, and violence (18).

Table-4 Teachers Responses on Principal's Leadership Styles in managing discipline

Teachers Responses	Instructional	Transformational	Distributed
(20)	12	11	14
In Percentage	60 %	55%	70%

From the above table and teachers' responses it is explicit that the Principal of New Rays Secondary school demonstrates from time to time a combination of instructional, transformative and directive leadership in the management of discipline in his school. Out of 20 teachers 14 (70%) have rated that the Head of school exhibits distributive or shared leadership regularly. 11 teachers (55%) indicated that the Principal portrays transformational leadership and 12 teachers (60%) pointed out the Principal displays instructional leadership in the maintenance of discipline at New Rays.

V. FINDINGS OF THE RESEARCH

From the data obtained through the Principal, teachers and students, there is no doubt that many of the causes of behaviour problems in schools lie well beyond the scope of the school.

- It must be acknowledged that poverty, lack of social support, peer group influence, mass-media and poor parenting are contributory factors. However, the principal and teachers in schools can have little or no influence on these issues and must therefore seek, within the limited resources available to the school, to do their best to ensure an orderly learning environment where all children can fulfill their potential.
- The Principal and the disciplinary committee members assert that the causes of indiscipline can be at various levels. One can be the child has not been disciplined at home or the child is too disciplined at home and vents frustration at school. Second, it can be the playful nature of the child. The immaturity of the child, bad relationship with friends and teachers can be also the cause.
- The study found that by placing the learner at the centre of the management of discipline in schools and focusing on teacher and learner esteem, a disciplined environment is not only "desirable but also achievable." If certain effective measures are collaboratively taken by the staff and the management, indiscipline can be curbed within the school setting.
- Parental involvement, disciplinary committee, positive rewards, positive values, community involvement and close monitoring go in that sense. When parents and educators possess a mutual appreciation of the role each has to play in the education of their children, a disciplined culture is nurtured.
- Participants in this study concurred that the involvement of parents in the school impacts positively in the management of discipline. Teachers and the principal unanimously maintained that they were happy and committed to the school when they received strong support from parents. Most of the rules and regulations were voted by the parent and teacher association and this is playing a crucial role in promoting the positive ethos of the school.
- A school's code of behaviour should be based on values and overall aims such as respect, fairness, inclusion, the promotion of self-discipline and the importance of listening to all members of the school community.
- All the participants believed that indiscipline can be reduced by the combined effort of the educators, management, parents, students and the community. Learners need to be guided to take responsibility for their own behavior.
- Empathetic approach and learner supportive positive atmosphere in learning situations go in long-way in enhancing students' self-esteem, self-concept and self-confidence. When teachers encourage learners to work either individually or in small groups, they overcome the students' inclinations towards indiscipline. Instead, students enjoy learning and value healthy competitions among peers during co-operative learning.
- The participants of the study pointed that the ultimate goal of strategies for management and discipline in the future is to empower students to develop self-discipline and self-control.
- Within a secondary educational institution, the Principal is the empowered authority and shoulders the responsibility for the smooth and effective running of the school. The Principal plays an important leadership role in establishing and maintaining school discipline both by effective administration and by personal example. Effective principals are liked and respected, rather than feared. They walked around, greeting students and teachers, and informally monitor possible problem areas.

VI. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS:

Clarity of policies, rules and regulations

In order to promote good behaviour, it is necessary for schools to have policies on the issue of discipline which would include the details of school rules and expected behaviour, as well as the consequence of deviant behaviour.

Effective Communication

Good in-school communication is seen as a vital part of dealing with pupil behaviour; where communication works, problems are seen to arise less frequently. It is seen as essential to allow all staff access to information in order to develop a good school ethos with class teachers being better informed of changes of pupil circumstances. To decrease disruptive behaviour, rules and the consequences of breaking them must be clearly specified and communicated to staff, students, and parents by such means as newsletters, student assemblies, and handbooks. Good communication encourages involvement of staff and a feeling of being valued.

Rewards should be fair

Praising individual children was the form of reward most frequently used by teachers, and it is suggested that this strategy was most effective when students understood why they were being praised, and the approval for their work was valid.

Transforming the heart of misbehaving child.

A good teacher should be a good human being and only a good human being can become a good teacher. Therefore, guidance and counseling leads to the peaceful resolution of problems as no ill feelings that may lead to aggressive behaviour will be harboured.

Training.

The management of the school as a staff developer should make provision for teacher development programmes to equip teachers to deal with discipline problems. Consequently, discipline management becomes easier and the teaching learning process goes on smoothly.

VII. CONCLUSION

The real essence of education is assisting learners to learn to exercise self-discipline, self-control and self-direction, teach them about a reasonable degree of social conformity and in that sense the Principal has to demonstrate an array of leadership qualities viz instructional, distributed and transformational. All this is possible by the collaborative efforts of all the stakeholders: management, parents, students and the community.

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