

Review

Disciplining of student's vis-à-vis the duties/responsibilities of vice principals in secondary institutions in Oyo State: Yesterday and today

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This paper focused on how Nigeria's teeming youth requires a high level of seriousness from all stakeholders: the student, school administrators, teaching staff, parents, educational agencies and the government. There had been much emphasis on the need for everyone to understand and play specifically assigned roles, and to ensure that the posterity is not marred by foundational flaws in child discipline. It had been noted that all the stakeholders are significant to the sustainability of discipline in secondary institutions; a continuous and effective exposition for each category is significant to the achievement of remarkable success. This study reviews the unavoidable responsibilities of vice principals in the disciplining of students in Oyo state. The importance of comparing the past and present forms of discipline in a bid to fabricate a better future for the next generation was also considered. The paper stresses that inculcating the foundation of discipline in students can only be successful if educators know the implication of failing to guide their wards to the threshold of success. Hence, the need to squarely face and resolve any observed decay and decadence of norms and values in our secondary schools with vice principals playing a significant role.

Key words: Vice principal, teachers, Nigeria, students, caning, Oyo State, child abuse.

INTRODUCTION

Instilling discipline in students of secondary institutions is one of the most significant assignments of a vice principal. This must be done in accordance to the laws of the nation, state and the school. The term discipline is often used for the administration of punishment to students when an offence is committed, that is, when a Vice principal is said to be disciplining a child, he is meting out punitive measures to the student that had exhibited contrary behaviours to the norms. This may not always be the case, discipline also refers to the trait of behaving well and in the confines of the school rules and regulations; that is a situation where the vice principal takes the position of a leader who carefully guides the students through the rules and regulations for moulding them towards their immaculate future. Whether administrative or academic, a vice principal must be loyal to the state and the principal of the school, he must first discipline himself to be able to pass the good traits to his students. The knowledge and ability to differentiate

"good" from "bad" is very essential in the appointment of vice principals. He must be ready to explore all credible avenues to ensure that these students conform to the expectations of their parents, the state and other stakeholders. This is the only way they can become good leaders of tomorrow:

"School discipline refers to regulation of children and the maintenance of order ("rules") in schools. These rules may, for example, define the expected standards of clothing, timekeeping, social behaviour and work ethics" (Nakpodia, 2010).

The issue of discipline in our secondary institutions cannot be overemphasized, every school vice principal must meticulously fashion out effective methods of training students with a focus on the future. The methods should be credible, and in conformity to the constitutions of the land too. It is not good to have good rules and

regulations which the students does not comply with neither is it acceptable to abuse or terrorize children in the name of discipline. Depriving students of certain laxities and luxuries of life is not for punitive measures only but to constructively help them develop self control and uprightness from juvenility. There is need to groom these youthful minds into enviable maturity which is necessary for the goodwill of Nigeria's future. Weak school management allowing students to indulge in their youthful lusts as they will or may result in juvenile delinquency.

It had been proved that *"when students notice certain biological changes signaling maturity in the course of their growth and development, they tend to misbehave by faulting school rules and regulations"* (Yarosan, 2004). As such, vice principals must be ready to face the demands of discipline as they fall due. The intermediary role of the vice principals are very significant in Oyo State, just like it is in every other state of the federation. There must be an excellent rapport between the vice principals and the principals so that issues of student discipline would not generate destructive arguments. This kind of rapport exists where the vice principal displays high level of maturity and is ready to support the principal at all times in the maintenance of law and order in the school.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY DISCIPLINING?

Disciplining is the act of instilling discipline, it summarizes the various activities required to successfully prepare a child for the future. The term "discipline" may sometimes be used equivocally to mean:

1. Develop (children's) behavior by instruction and practice; especially to teach self-control.
2. Punishing offenders in order to gain control or enforce obedience in them.

The two must go simultaneously, that is, custodians of children in the secondary schools must be up and doing, always ready to instill discipline in their students by instructing them through practice to teach them self control. Where students refuse to obey laid down rules and regulations, the administration of punishments becomes necessary to show the culprit that there is need for urgent turn around for the better.

WHO ARE THE STUDENTS?

Anybody enrolled in an educational institution for the purpose of study is a student. Formerly, the population of secondary school students consists more of teenagers, who must have passed through the complete foundational instructions received at primary schools. Oyo State currently has over 335 public and 57 private

secondary schools. These secondary schools now enroll children as early as age nine, depending on their academic excellence at the primary level of education. This not only increases the need for Nigeria's secondary school administrators to help in disciplining the young intakes but also to instill the discipline meticulously by considering the different situation of each child.

DUTIES / RESPONSIBILITIES OF VICE PRINCIPALS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS

The role of a vice principal is similar to that of a principal; both are leaders in their institution but one is on the higher administrative cadre than the other. Every vice principal must prepare to face the numerous responsibilities of a leader in the school setting, not forgetting that loyalty to the government and the principal is a major lesson to the students he hopes to discipline. It is true that *"principals, vice-principals and teaching personnel are faced with a tedious task of keeping the students' attendance, record books, cumulative report cards, and students' performance in cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains"* (Oredein, 2008), showing that all of them have similar and significant roles to play but at different levels and capacities. The product is very important but focus must first be on the raw materials so that they are not wasted, the students are raw materials in this case; they must be handled with proper care so that the intended outcome of their coming to school may be achieved.

The duties of every stakeholder may be similar; they are carried out in different capacities, with the Principals at the top of the ladder, followed by the vice principals, the teaching personnel and then the students. Vice principals have so much to do to make sure everything goes on well in their institutions, they must be prepared to serve as intermediaries between the lower and the upper parts of the organogram. Vice principals must also prepare for the next level which is certain for every diligent educator, whether it is convenient or not, there will come an opportunity to act in the office of a principal. Thus, performance at such times is dependent on how well the vice principal had prepared ahead for the task.

WHY MUST STUDENTS BE DISCIPLINED BY VICE PRINCIPALS?

"The power of teachers to discipline students in the school stems from the doctrine of teachers acting in in-loco parentis, that is, on behalf of the parents with respect to the education of their children" (Nakpodia, 2010). The term which originated from a Latin word means *"in place of"* vests corresponding responsibilities of parents on principals, giving them the privilege of rights to mould children characters, with a focus on their mental

and physical development. Gazette (1988) was quoted in Nakpodia (2009), expressing that discipline is very important in schools to foster of the spirit of national consciousness. The students spend more time in schools than at home and as such must be well trained by their teachers. The aim of discipline is therefore not to victimize or abuse the children but to assist them become well adjusted and useful to the society.

THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

Having understood that being a highly ranked teacher bound by *In-loco parentis*, vice principals has the responsibility of imagining and creating an excellent future for the children by using them as the raw materials required for the intended outcome. The vice principal's attitude is also significant to determining the outcome of student discipline. A vice principal must be

1. A good role model,
2. Ready to aid the principal,
3. Organized,
4. Responsible,
5. An excellent communicator,
6. Self motivated,
7. A good administrator, manager and leader,
8. A good listener,
9. Observant,
10. A continuous student who continues to update his knowledge.

COMPARING DISCIPLINE IN THE PAST AND PRESENT DAYS

The world will continue to change, a reason why secondary school administrators must also learn to adopt and adapt new methods and approaches designed to make the world a better place. In the past, teachers had a free hand to decide whether to cane a child or not. Nowadays, things are different, some states in Nigeria are beginning to enforce the "no caning" policies just like in other developed nations of the world. Caning used to be an official school punishment in many parts of the world in the nineteenth and twentieth century but has now been outlawed in Europe; it still remains legal and prevalent in many other countries. The cane selling business was a big business in the 90's, many secondary school principals' used to order tons of canes weekly, then mass caning was the norm. This had changed tremendously since the world is now frowning at indiscriminate caning of children. There is no doubt that caning coerces the children to conform to rules and regulations, but its use had been noted to cause several human right violation problems when not controlled. Students must see the reason for being punished and not

that they get just punished for another individual's offence. Some of the arguments for banning or restricting caning in schools are based on the premise that:

1. It is a source of injury and physical violence on children,
2. It teaches the children to be violent and possible bullies,
3. Teachers sometimes cannot control their rage while using the cane,
4. It does not aid learning nor serve as a deterrent for bad behavior.

In the past, the teachers use cane and various punishments when students offend. The government supported the use of corporal punishment in most parts of the world. Students are caned and punished without an opportunity to report abuse and teachers were never prosecuted for inflicting injuries on children.

But today, the teachers must weigh every offence and the student's history before punishing for an offense. The government now frowns at indiscriminate caning of children. Children now receive sympathy from humanitarian organizations and the press to report any abuse and teachers may be prosecuted for inflicting injuries on children or indiscriminately caning children. While some parents supported the "no cane" policy, others opposed it; they expressed fears that the level of discipline in secondary schools may be jeopardized if such a bill is passed by the legislature.

THE WAY FORWARD FOR OYO STATE

Children vary in character; the punishment best for student A may not be effective for B. This corroborates Watkins and Akande (1993) in their statement that "*deep-level processing in Nigeria is encouraged in a classroom environment in which the teacher enforces strict behavior standards that force the students to focus on their learning tasks but also in which the teacher is interested in the students and uses a stimulating variety of instructional methods to arouse their curiosity*". Every school vice principal must ensure that descriptions of punishments are well matching to the degree of student offences. There is no need to employ mass punishment of students except in a case where they all committed the offence. A teacher does not necessarily need the cane to ensure compliance from students except where it had been proven beyond reasonable doubt that there is need for it.

In such cases, the caning must be done in the presence of the principal, or vice principal when the former is absent. The use of cane demoralizes some children and may make others violent and worse off. It is the responsibility of school administrators; the principal and vice principal to cooperate and study the peculiar

situations of these children for the administration of corresponding punishments that can help reformative developments. Discipline and education cannot be separated; they both go together but must not be destructive. Chemhuru (2010) explained that *“punishment denotes ways in which an individual may subject others to join his views by means of physical coercion, for example through the infliction of pain or restriction of movement or by psychological coercion, for example withdrawing food, shelter and the like”*.

PARENT TEACHERS' COLLABORATION

Teachers act in *“in-loco parentis”*; they are acting on behalf of the parents and must have an established relationship with parents. This will make their work easier as the home and school will be able to teach the same standards to the students (Okotoni and Okotoni, 2003). Vice principals must endeavor to attend PTA meetings regularly, as it is a place where such issues concerning many students can be discussed with the parents. The inputs of parents in the education of their wards is very significant (Avse, 2010), it will ensure the sustainability of disciplines instilled in the school. There are times when parents disagree with the modern day assumptions that caning might become anti productive in our schools, it is yet better to stick with the rules of the state except in a situation where there has been a legislation stating otherwise. Let us not forget that the state has legitimate and substantial interest in maintaining order and discipline in schools and therefore would go to any length to enforce it.

METING OUT THE RIGHT PUNISHMENTS

To be able to measure appropriate punishments to students when they offend, vice principals and principals alike must try to understand what happened and the right way to apply discipline. It is going to be a great help if the school authority can know if the student:

1. Is a first offender,
2. Is from a broken home,
3. Is to blame for the offence,
4. Has control over the issue,
5. Has literate parents or not,
6. Had he been abused before,
7. Is by peer groups.
8. Is getting excessive parental care

Answering these questions will help to determine the severity of punishments to be administered.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNICATION AND FEEDBACK

A student must be well informed of why he is being punished before and after he is punished, so that he does not misunderstand it for bullying. There must be regular follow ups on this student to confirm if the punishment was effective or not.

CONCLUSION

The way the world perceives discipline is changing, reward systems are now preferred to caning and severe punishments. Governments and humanitarian agencies are moving in to protect the rights of students. All these make it more difficult for Nigerian teachers to decide whether to discipline children or not. It had been found out that some teachers beat students in hiding while others do not beat them at all just to avoid litigation. There must be a way forward since students must be disciplined for a better future. Lateness, stealing, bullying, noisemaking, disobedience are few examples of common offences in Oyo State secondary schools. These may be corrected without caning or brutalizing; some examples of punishments used instead of cane include school detention, cleaning of toilets, weeding, and digging of pits. Any punishment to be administered must also consider the age of the student.

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