

School Violence And Guidelines For Establishing Disciplinary Committee In Schools

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ABSTRACT

The school is an open system that influences its environment and is being influenced by it too. Thus, the existence of violence in the society culminated to its existence in the school system. This paper examines the concept of violence, cases and types of violence in schools, factors associated with it, the need for discipline in schools and the guidelines for establishing disciplinary committee in schools. It also suggests some of the expected functions of disciplinary committee in order to promote and encourage discipline among pupils and teachers thereby reducing/terminating the occurrence of violence in our schools. It concludes that violence in educational institutions poses a lot of challenges to the stake holders in education and thus all hands must be on deck to help put students on the right track of non-violent behavior so that the educational objectives would be achieved. [Report and Opinion. 2009;1(3):64-68]. (ISSN: 1553-9873).

Key Words: School Violence, Factors associated with violence, Disciplinary Committee, Non – Violence Behaviour, Educational Institutions.

NOTE

INTRODUCTION

Life is dynamic and so nothing in it is static. Dynamism of life is what makes it interesting, challenging and puzzling. Even though it is often said that nothing is new under the heaven, but it must be said that old things are usually painted in new colour, or given new name, status or appear in a new way or dimension and as such regarded as new. Every society started from the primitive state and goes on changing (improving) until it reaches full modernization (development). As such, things keep on changing until there is nothing to change but a kind of re-appearance, recoding or re-colouring of old things in the modern time.

The school life in the society is dynamic as well. It does not remain static for life. For example, in the primitive society, school life was peaceful and calm. However, in the developing society school life is not as peaceful. A lot of changes in form of acts of indiscipline such as violence are features of schools in the developing society.

Concept of Violence

There are as many definitions of violence as the write up on violence. Protector (1980) defines violence as “very great force in action or feeling or rough treatment”. Brehm, Kassin and Fein (2002) see violence as extreme act of aggression. Violence has its root in aggression, hence those authors define aggression as “behaviour that is intended to injure another person who does not want to be injured”. Stanko (1999) observes “we usually associate violence and its use with individually motivated action, although a great deal of violence is committed by individuals on behalf of others”.

Roget's Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases (1982) has a very long list of synonyms of violence. Among the list are these few ones, “vehemence, frenzy, impetuosity, destructiveness, boisterousness, turbulence, commotion, uproar, riot, row, roughness, rough handling, thuggery, terrorism, brute force, cruel

act, brutality, barbarity, savagery, terrorism,” to mention but few. From this list, it can be safely inferred that violence is an act of wickedness. It is wickedness in thought and personified in human relations. It is man inhumanity to man.

Explanation for Violence

Researchers have been concerned about how to account for the violence of individuals. Four broad explanations are identified. These are:

- Biological Explanation: This has to do with parental traits transmitted to their offsprings. It is natural as it is inherited through the genes of the parents.
- Psychological Explanations: This is the state of mind of an individuals while some are kind others are sadistic. It is interesting to note that individual can precondition his state of mind towards what he wants it to be.
- Sociological Explanations: This is as a result of societal influence or environmental influence. The influence of society on an individual can never be overemphasized. No one exists without a society and as such the societal life (culture) becomes the individual life afterall.
- Political Explanations: This is rooted in the system of governance by the ruling class. The system of governance goes a long way to make or mar the individuals in the society. (Stanko, 1999).

Violence in School

Violence is not a strange incidence in school. It is as common as any other offence. Violence is one of the acts of indiscipline found at every level of education be it tertiary, secondary and primary though at varying degrees. There is hardly any week or month when cases of violence at secondary or tertiary level of our education will not be reported in the dailies. Even though, the type we find in tertiary institutions may not be the one in primary schools but a great deal of violence is committed in primary school as well.

Types of Violence in Schools

The following among others are types of violence common in schools.

- Student to Student
- School to Student
- Student to School Authority
- Student to Teacher and vice versa
- Teacher to Teacher
- Teacher to School-head and vice versa

Cases (examples) of Violence in Schools

The following among others are examples of violence in primary and secondary schools.

- Assault (by choking, biting, grabbing, hitting and throwing) on mates and staff members.
- Bullying
- Fighting
- Oppression and brutality to others
- Use of profane, vulgar or abusive language
- Rioting, vandalism/destructive demonstration in school (Wolfgang, 2005)

Factors Associated With (Causes of) Violence

Below are some of the factors associated with violence among students in schools.

- Home Background - Parental violence (examples), child abuse
- Hereditary - Parental traits, individual differences
- Group Size - Large/Small Groups
- Physical Environmental Effects
- Media Effects - Scenes of violence on television, video, radio to mention few
- Injustice - Insult, provocation, retaliation

- Embarrassment and Humiliation
- Frustration
- Alcoholic Effect

The need for Discipline in Schools

A well disciplined child is a trained child and vice versa. Any training without discipline is no training in the real sense of the word. As such, formal education without adequate discipline is worthless.

Discipline is very important to life. It is a very necessary condition for any venture to be successful. Huge investment in education is not worthwhile without discipline. All investment in education will go down the drain without proper discipline of recipients.

Discipline is often thought of in term of the verb. As such, it is often thought of in term of meting out punishment to an offender. However, it is in term of noun that it is being used here. Discipline as a noun is defined as “readiness or ability to respect authority and observe conventional or established laws of society or any other organization” (Adesina, 1980). *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1980) defines discipline as “training of the mind and body to produce obedience and self-control”. Discipline can therefore be seen as means whereby individuals are trained to be law abiding, orderly and ensure peaceful coexistence within a community. It is a training which when it becomes part and parcel of a person’s life it becomes his way of life, as such, persons with that way of life are usually described as being disciplined.

Two types of discipline are identified. These are self-discipline or internal discipline and imposed or external discipline. External discipline is regimental and much feared. It has all implications of order, punishment, laws, regulations, fear and intimidation. Individuals who are under its influence usually feel deep loss of freedom. Self-discipline or internal discipline, on the other hand, accords its owner respect, self-control and self-restraint. A self-disciplined child or individual is refined, cautious, considerate and systematic in his approach to achieve goals.

Disciplinary Committee

As its name implies, this is a committee set up for the maintenance of discipline in school. The committee ensures that children in school are law abiding, orderly and peaceful in the pursuit of educational objectives/goals in the school community. The need for discipline in school necessitates the setting up of disciplinary committee. The facts that indiscipline has become the order of the day in many communities also make the establishment of a disciplinary committee in school imperative. That the school children are expected to be ideal in behavior makes the establishment of school disciplinary committee a must. The need for conducive teaching and learning environment in schools makes the establishment of disciplinary committee in school a necessity. Conducive teaching and learning atmosphere is often thought of in terms of physical environment. However, no matter how appropriate and adequate the physical environment may be without conducive interpersonal relationship with a sense of security and feeling of safety, the teaching and learning will not be productive.

Guidelines for Establishing Disciplinary Committee in Schools

Certain factors are necessary for consideration before constituting a disciplinary committee. These factors are guides so that the committee will be well constituted to help it perform at optimal level. The following are suggested guidelines for establishing school disciplinary committee.

Membership

This should not be too large or too small in number. It should be commensurate to the size of the school. The bigger the school, the larger the size of the committee. Membership should not be less than five (5) and not more than ten (10) as the case may be. However, the bigger the school, the larger the size of the school. The head of school should be the chairperson of the committee. Membership should include at least one or two teachers from each of the two levels of the school i.e. lower and upper classes. The senior prefects (boy and girl) and other related prefect(s) is (are) also member(s). PTA Chairman/Secretary can be ex-officio.

Tenure

The committee exists for just one year. It should be reconstituted every year to give room for new prefects and perhaps other experienced teachers being transferred from or to the school.

Inauguration

The committee should be formally inaugurated at the beginning of each session in the assembly. Membership should be known to all pupils. The terms of reference, justification or need for such a committee should equally be spelt out for the students.

Terms of Reference

These should also be spelt out for the committee. These should be the framework that will guide the committee in their day to day operation and performance of their duties. The terms of reference if prepared by the Ministry of Education should be used. But if there is none from the parenting ministry, the head of school and other teachers can prepare the terms of reference for the committee.

Constitution

This is also necessary in order to give full details about the committee, its functions, its powers, limitations, and expectations.

Authorization

There is the need for backup authority for the committee. The Ministry of Education should be contacted for this. Equally important is the fact that the Parent Teacher Association or the Community should be aware of this committee and its terms of reference.

Suggested Functions of Disciplinary Committee

The following among others are suggested functions of Disciplinary Committee.

- To serve as model in terms of character training and behavior for students
- To assist the students in conforming with school rules and regulations
- To help students develop self-discipline/internal discipline
- To administer punishment commensurate with offence committed by any student.
- To liaise with the school and law enforcement agents in case of difficult student
- To set up some school rules and regulations for the students to obey
- To promote and encourage good behaviours among the teachers and students.
- To ensure peaceful coexistence among and between teachers and pupils respectively thereby creating a conducive school environment.

An elementary school in United States of America has the following regulations for students according to the Comprehensive Educational Centre (1992)

- Do not forget things
- Bring an umbrella on rainy days
- When entering or leaving the classroom, open and close the door quietly
- Use the toilet at the beginning of the break period and do not soil anything
- Don't waste drinking water and pay attention to hygiene
- When leaving your home or returning home, make appropriate greetings to your parents.
- Carry the things that you will need in the school yard before the start of classes
- Do not say or do things that will be unhelpful to you and others
- Always inform the school if you will be absent or late, or if you will return home early
- Do not buy things on your way to and from school
- Work hard to keep the school clean
- Take care of things like school property, plants in the school ground and so on.
- Do not sing vulgar and coarse songs.

It should be emphasized once again that school rules and regulations are necessary in order to reduce incidences of violence in schools. However, the rules must be understood by the children, the rules need not be too many so that students can memorize them if possible and they should not be too difficult (Draconian law) to abide by.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

RESULTS

**DISCUSSION
CONCLUSION**

The wave of violence across and all over the world, especially in educational institutions poses a lot of challenges to the educators or educationists and the wind blows no one any good. There is the need to rise up against the culture of violence in our schools. The existence of violence in our schools will affect negatively the values of education being transmitted to and acquired by the students.

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