

# **DISCIPLINE: AN EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRACTICE AMONG PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN**

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## **Abstract**

Traditionally, with respect to school discipline, educators have had two distinct aims: to help create and maintain a safe, orderly, and positive learning environment, which often requires the use of discipline to correct misbehavior, and to teach or develop self-discipline. Both aims are equally important and should always be included in the development and evaluation of school discipline practices. Therefore, this paper x-rays the meaning of discipline, development of self-discipline, goals of effective discipline. Also the developmental approaches to effective discipline were equally looked at and conclusion drawn.

## **Introduction**

### **Discipline**

Discipline has been defined in various ways. According to Adesina (1980) discipline is teaching students to observe school laws and regulations and to respect authorities. Nakpodia (2010) opined that discipline is instructing students to follow certain codes of conduct to promote orderliness in the school. Discipline means to instruct and train a person in a particular code of conduct. When the word “discipline” is applied to the raising and instruction of children, it refers to the system of teaching and nurturing children to achieve competence, self-control, self-direction, and caring for others (Howard, 1996). The Canadian Pediatric Society (2004), described discipline in the following way:

*Discipline is the structure that helps the child fit into the real world happily and effectively. It is the foundation for the development of the child's own self-discipline. Effective and positive discipline is about teaching and guiding children, not just forcing them to obey. As with all other interventions aimed at pointing out unacceptable behavior, the child should always know that the parent loves and supports him or her. Trust between parent and child should be maintained and constantly built upon.*

However, discipline plays an important role in stimulating resourcefulness of individual. Human capital development through education could be achieved when proper discipline is provided to increase human knowledge, enhance skills, productivity and resourcefulness to thrive.

### **Developing Self – Discipline**

Self-discipline is seen in socially and morally responsible behavior that is motivated primarily by intrinsic factors, not solely by the anticipation of external rewards or fear of punishment. Research shows that self-discipline promotes positive relations with others and a positive school climate, fosters academic achievement, and promotes self-worth and emotional well-being. Strategies for developing self-discipline are commonly part of evidence-based programs for character education and for social and emotional learning. Such programs include the following strategies:

- Implement curriculum activities that teach social, emotional, and behavioral competencies. Multiple evidence-based packaged programs exist for teaching social, emotional, and behavioral

competencies (Bear, 2010). In addition to or as an alternative to adopting a packaged program, schools should consider infusing lessons and activities for developing self-discipline throughout the existing curriculum, such as in social studies, literacy, and health education.

- Provide multiple models of social and moral problem-solving and responsible behavior. Multiple models of targeted behavior, social cognitions, and emotions should be included in the school's curriculum (e.g., literature, videos) and, more important, in the real life of the classroom and school.
- Provide multiple opportunities for students to apply skills of social and moral problem-solving and responsible behavior. Such opportunities would include class meetings in which classroom and school-wide problems are addressed; meaningful student government activities (eg., helping others in the community); programs and activities for conflict resolution, peer mediation, service learning, and cooperative learning; and sports and extracurricular activities.

### **Goals for Effective Discipline**

According to Canadian Paediatric Society (2004), the goals for effective discipline are to:

- Protect the child from danger
- Help the child develop self-confidence
- Support the child to develop self-discipline
- Help the child to develop a healthy conscience
- Assist the child to develop an internal sense of responsibility and control
- Assist the child to develop appropriate values
- Foster acceptable and appropriate behavior in the child
- Enable the child to respect the parent's authority and the rights of others.

### **Developmental Approaches to Effective Discipline**

Canadian Paediatric Society (2004) stated developmental approaches to effective discipline as:

- Some desirable behavior patterns emerge as a result of normal development (e.g. sleep-wake pattern, eating, crawling and walking) and the caregiver need only notice and encourage them to strengthen and refine them.
- Other desirable behavior patterns (e.g., sharing, good manners, empathy, study habits, and behaving according to principles rather than seeking immediate rewards as in lying and stealing) must be taught because they are not part of a child's natural repertoire.
- Teach socially desirable behavior patterns by modeling and shaping these skills, and by paying attention to them and encouraging them when they occur.
- It is easier to stop undesired or ineffective behaviors before they occur than to correct or develop new, effective behaviors. Consequently, it is important for parents to identify positive behaviors and skills that they want for their children and make a concerted effort to teach and strengthen these behaviors and skills.

## **Discipline during Infancy**

Infants need a schedule around feeding, sleeping, play and interaction with others. This schedule helps regulate autonomic functions (like sleeping and walking) and provides a sense of predictability and safety. Infants should not be over-stimulated. They need to be allowed to develop some tolerance to frustration and the ability to self soothe.

- At the earliest stages of development, discipline strategy is passive and occurs as infants and caregivers gradually develop a mutually satisfactory schedule of feeding, sleeping and awakening. Over the first few months, the infant's biological rhythms tend to become more regular and adapt to family routines.
- Discipline of infants should not involve techniques such as time-out, spanking or consequences.
- Signs of discomfort, such as crying and thrashing, are modified as infants acquire memories of how their stress has been relieved and learn new strategies to focus their attention on their emerging needs.
- Parental discipline at this stage consists of providing generally structured daily routines, while at the same time being prepared to recognize and respond with flexibility to the infant's needs.
- As infants begin to move around and initiate increasing contact with the environment, parents must impose limitations and structure to create safe spaces for them to explore and play. Parents also need to protect them from potential hazards (e.g., by installing safety covers on electric outlets and removing dangerous objects).
- Communicating verbally will prepare the infant for later use of reasoning. While they may not fully comprehend what is being said, infants are sensitive to cues from their caregivers. However, parents should not expect that reasoning, verbal commands, or reprimands will be effective in the management of behavior of infants and toddlers.

## **Discipline and the Early Toddler (one or two years)**

It is normal and necessary for toddlers to experiment with control of the physical world and with the capacity to exercise their own will versus that of others. Consequently, parent tolerance is recommended.

- Disciplinary interventions are necessary to ensure the toddler's safety, limit aggression, and prevent destructive behavior. Removing the child or the object with a firm "No" or a very brief explanation (e.g., "No – hot") and redirecting the child to an alternative activity will usually work. The parent should remain with the child at such times to supervise and ensure that the behavior does not recur, and also to ensure that the parent is not withdrawing love.
- Early toddlers are very susceptible to fears of abandonment and should not be kept in time-out away from the parent. However, occasionally, a parent may become so frustrated with the child that he or she needs a period of separation from the child.
- Early toddlers are not verbal enough to understand or mature enough to respond to verbal prohibitions. Therefore, verbal directions and explanations are unreliable forms of discipline for early toddlers.

## **Discipline and the late Toddlers (two to three years)**

- Sometimes the child's frustration at realizing their own limitations leads to temper outbursts. These outbursts do not necessarily express anger or willful defiance. The caregiver needs to show empathy, realizing the meaning of these outbursts.
- At the same time, it is important for the caregiver to continue to supervise, set limits and routines, and have realistic expectations of the child's achievement capabilities.

- Knowing the child's pattern of reactions helps prevent situations in which frustrations flare up.
- Redirect the child to some other activity, preferably away from the scene of the temper outburst.
- When the child regains control after a temper outburst, it will help the child if the parent gives some simple verbal explanation and reassurance.
- The older children grow and the more they interact with wider, and more complex physical and social environments, the more the adults who care for them must develop increasingly creative strategies to protect them and teach them orderly and desirable patterns of behavior.
- Consistent structure and teaching (discipline) will enable children to be able to integrate the attitudes and expectations of their caregivers into their behavior.
- This transition to increasing responsibility can be more challenging with children who have developmental disabilities and may require additional or more intense strategies to manage their behavior.

### **Discipline for Preschoolers and Kindergarten-Age Children (three years to five years)**

At three years to five years of age, most children are able to accept reality and limitation, act in ways to obtain another's approval, and be self-reliant for their immediate needs.

- However, they have not internalized many rules, are gullible, and their judgment is not always sound. They require good behavioural models on which to pattern their own behavior. The consistency should apply not only in the rules and actions of the primary caregiver, but also in other adults who care for the child.
- Reliance on verbal rules increases, but still the child requires supervision to carry through directions and for safety.
- Approval and praise are the most powerful motivators for good behavior.
- Time-out can be used if the child loses control. Redirection or small consequences related to and immediately following the inappropriate behavior are other alternatives.

### **Discipline and School Age Children (six years to 12 years)**

Around the age of beginning school, rules become internalized and are accompanied by an increasing sense of responsibility and self-control. Responsibility for behavior is transformed gradually from the primary caregivers to the child.

- The child's increasing independence may lead to conflict between parent and child.
- School-age children tend to act autonomously, choose their own activities and friends and, to some extent, recognize other than parental authority.
- Continue to supervise, provide good behavioral models, set rules consistently. However it is also important to allow the child to become increasingly autonomous, when appropriate.
- Parents continue to make the important decisions because school-age children cannot always put reasoning and judgment into practice.
- Use praise and approval liberally, although not excessively, to encourage good behavior and growth into increasing maturity. The use of appropriate motivators (rewards) should be encouraged (e.g., Buy a keen reader his or her favourite book).
- Acceptable means of discipline include withdrawal or delay of privileges, consequences and time-out.

## **Discipline in the Teenage years**

The transfer of responsibility from the primary caregiver to the child is especially noticeable during the transition to adolescence.

- Conflicts can frequently occur because the adolescent increasingly tends to adhere to the peer group, challenges family values and rules, and distances him or herself from parents.
- Parents can meet these challenges by remaining available, setting rules in a non-critical way, not belittling the adolescent, and avoiding lectures or predicting catastrophes.
- Contracting becomes a useful tool.
- Despite their challenging attitudes and assertions of independence, many adolescents do want parental guidance and approval.
- Ensure that the basic rules are followed and that logical consequences are set and kept in a non-confrontational way.

## **Challenges of Discipline in Education**

Mba (1995) observed that indiscipline has posed a serious problem to schools, home and the society at large. In identifying these problems, Okunamiri and Aduba in Onafeghara (2004) enumerated the following factors as constituting constraints to achievement of discipline in education

- ❖ Teacher's Poor Attitude to work
- ❖ Autocratic leadership style of the teacher
- ❖ Poor funding
- ❖ Inadequate teaching and learning equipment and facilities
- ❖ Ineffective teaching
- ❖ Rigid rules and regulations
- ❖ Secrete cult

All these constitute serious challenges to effective discipline to emanate in our institutions.

## **Conclusion**

Discipline in education tends to curb human excesses and thereby increase effectiveness in teaching – learning process. An effective school has effective discipline and for us to achieve human capital development, effective discipline in education must be achieved. In other words, discipline is very essential for quality education that will enhance human capital development.

## **Recommendations**

For effective School discipline to thrive the following recommendations were made: Teachers should involve the learners in the teaching-learning process to enforce discipline in the classroom. If there is no sharing of ideas, experiences, responsibilities in the class, the teacher cannot enforce discipline.

Our physical environment should be properly ventilated and lighted; it should be free from noise and other forms of distractions for an effective human development to occur.

Government should provide enough funds to procure facilities for effective teaching and learning. Dilapidated building should be renovated and teaching and learning materials provided for effective human capital development to thrive.

Teachers should improve on their method of teaching through encouraging and supporting human development programmes that will increase human knowledge.

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