

Collaborative disciplinary measures between teachers and pupils in improving academic performance: a case study of Mmofraturo girls' school, Kumasi

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Abstract

Indiscipline in general adversely affects academic work and this has led to a decline in academic performance of pupils in Junior Secondary Schools in Ghana. This study was conducted to assess the extent of indiscipline in Mmofraturo Girls' School and its adverse effects on pupils' academic performance so as to provide solutions. The study sample included pupils and teachers of the Junior Secondary School Department. The study used mixed method of data- observation, interviews, test items, examination records and questionnaires for teachers and pupils. Results showed that pupils' misbehaviour included talking, lateness to class, absenteeism and rudeness. Others were eating in class, quarrelling, deliberate refusal to answer teachers' questions, carelessness and inattention. With respect to teachers, laziness, lateness/absenteeism, poor teaching methods and unfriendliness were some common attributes. Other behavioural problems associated with teachers were discrimination, use of abusive language, flirting with pupils, improper dressing and lack of self-discipline. Varieties of interventions were employed to improve the situation. They included guidance and counseling, setting of rules and conduct in class, remedial tuition, adequate preparation by teachers before lessons, self discipline and use of polite words by teachers. There was a need for consistent in-service courses on classroom indiscipline in Junior Secondary Schools. Instituting a vibrant guidance and counseling unit in all Basic schools to deal with disciplinary problems was necessary.

Keywords: basic school; school discipline; pupil's performance; guidance and counseling

1. Introduction

Informal or traditional education forms an integral part of the moral upbringing of children in Ghanaian societies. With this process, every adult plays an active role in shaping the character, attitudes and behaviour of children in a community. Discipline was enforced through punishment of wrong doing and praise and rewards for good conduct.

Also, some valued attitudes and skills were imparted through observation, practice and imitation of the ways of the elderly by the young. It is characterized by its lack of reading, writing and planned systematic instruction. It has no specially and artificially created places such as schools where teachers and pupils meet for the purpose of teaching and learning.

Education takes place in the society itself but falls short in many aspects which led to the introduction of formal education. With formal education, classrooms are created for formal instruction and serve as a place where the teacher and the learner come face to face for the purpose of teaching and learning. The aims and objectives of the formal education included: numeracy, literacy and socialization (Annor, 1993).

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However, if the classroom atmosphere is so tensed up, with the teacher and the learners locked up in perpetual conflict, their relationships with each other will become sour and their effort will be totally wasted.

It is now well understood that academic standards have fallen generally as compared to the 1960s and late 1970s. It would be recalled that during those periods, teachers were given the necessary support and encouragement by parents and society as a whole and so had total control over children with regards to their upbringing. In contrast, the above supportive acts had been substituted for unnecessary confrontations and defense of wrong doing by parents and the society. This has led to the poor academic performance of pupils in Ghana.

Classroom discipline is the process of organized and effective classroom; a classroom in which the abilities of individual children are given due opportunity for development and where teachers can fulfill their functions as facilitators of learning. It also provides opportunity for pupils to acquire sensible and enjoyable techniques for monitoring and guiding their own behavior (Fontana, 1985). He again identifies some forms of teacher-caused misbehaviour as a result of the personality characteristics of teachers and how they present themselves to pupils. Some of these are the physical appearance of teachers, how they prepare their lessons and present them and how they talk to pupils. Also how they use rewards and punishments, and their personality types are all sources of misbehaviour in the classroom. He also suggested that if there is something about the teachers' dress or hairstyle that is likely to attract ridicule from the class, then discipline problems might arise. This view was shared by the Vice President of the Republic of Ghana, Alhaji Aliu Mahama on Monday, November 29, 2004 Edition of the Daily Graphic as he called on teachers who are considered to be role models to pupils to lead exemplary lives so as to inculcate in their pupils the virtues of humility, integrity, punctuality and discipline.

Classroom management refers to all of the things teachers do to organize pupils, space, time and materials to maximize effective teaching and student learning (Wong and Wong 1998). Research has shown that effectively managed classrooms and high student achievements are linked. Wong and Wong (1998) identified two objectives of classroom management: (a) enhancement of student involvement and co-operation, (b) establishment of a positive working environment.

Wong and Wong (1998) stated that behaviour management and classroom management are interrelated. Self discipline is the goal of all behaviour management. All activities are individualized based on each child's behavioural needs. Behaviour management has two objectives: (i) decrease antisocial and disruptive behaviours; (ii) increase appropriate prosocial behaviours.

These ideas were shared by President John A. Kufour of the Republic of Ghana in the editorial of the Daily Graphic of Monday, December 8, 2003, where he deplored the acts of indiscipline that some pupils have adopted in destroying school property through violence. Dealing with indiscipline is not a gimmick but it is a practical action that is required.

Indiscipline in schools is certainly a matter of immediate concern to the teaching profession and how teachers respond to pupils' indiscipline constitutes a significant aspect of their daily experience within their classrooms and schools. Policies concerning discipline in the schools should support teachers in dealing with misbehaviour in the school. This is because dealing with indiscipline can cause teachers great heart searching as well as doubts about their professional competence (Keane, 2002).

Most pupils occasionally and overtly challenge authority. Pupils who lose control and swear, speak disrespectfully or adamantly defy teachers and present them with real-life proficiency tests. In order to avoid the pitfalls of an overblown emotional response to pupils' outbursts and insubordination, Fischer (2006) recommends that the best remedy is to adopt a pro-active approach which requires that the teacher must be pre-emptive, know the pupils in class, have an action plan ready, learn from past errors, earn pupils respect, and enforce discipline with a fair and even hand.

Discipline in schools is the responsibility of everyone and not only a matter for teachers (Speakes, 1996). This is due to the recent resurgence of concerns with the

supposed escalation in cases of indiscipline and record exclusions that have been much publicized by the press and the media and hence the importance of effective classroom discipline cannot be discarded.

This neglect of effective instruction on the dynamics of classroom organization and effective strategies for dealing with problems of discipline is alarming in view of the fact that it causes a great deal of trouble for both experienced teachers and teacher trainees who go on teaching practice. The teachers of today's children must be able to deal effectively with management problems, as well as known successful instructional techniques. Both areas are vital to successful teaching and learning since each supports the other.

In the light of the forgone, finding an integrated and collaborated approach to enhance performance by eliminating indiscipline is a necessity in Mmofraturu Girls' School, Kumasi.

The case study was conducted as with the aim of assisting Mmofraturu Girls' School to improve upon their academic performance by eliminating classroom indiscipline.

2. Materials and methods

The study was conducted using teachers and pupils of Mmofraturu Girls' School. In all sixty (60) respondents were selected, 10 pupils in B.S. 7B, 10 in B.S. 7D, 10 in B.S. 8B, 10 in B.S. 8D and twenty teachers including the Headmistress and her Assistant. The study used structured questionnaire for collecting data for the study. Two different sets of questionnaires were constructed for the pupils and teachers. The questionnaire was pre-tested twice and the necessary correction effected.

To establish the relationship between misbehaviour and academic performance, the researcher selected randomly from B.S 8 pupils 4 each from different ability groups (above average, average and below average pupils). The researcher then monitored their performance during the study. This was done to compare their pre-intervention performance in 13 subjects in end of term examinations totaling 1300 with their performance at the post-intervention stage to ascertain the effectiveness of the interventions.

3. Results and discussion

After establishing the fact that indiscipline was a problem in the school, pre-intervention measures were taken to ascertain the possible causes and its effects on academic performance. The researcher made use of the following:

Interviews, observation and interaction before, during and after classes, compilation of Basic Education Certificates Examination Results, questionnaires were also sent out to both teachers and pupils to answer.

The findings from the pre-intervention activities necessitated the need to design an intervention to help improve the academic performance in the school.

Based on the pre-intervention findings, variety of strategies were employed to improve the situation. These are summarized as follows:

- (i) the teachers set rules of conduct in class and outside class.
- (ii) class work and assignments were graded in time.
- (iii) parents of some deviant pupils were invited to the school.
- (iv) the teachers were punctual and regular in class
- (v) remedial tuition was offered to needy pupils
- (vi) the teachers prepared well for all lessons and used variety of teaching methods and appropriate teaching/learning aids.
- (vii) the teachers were self-disciplined and mindful of their language (viii) guidance and counseling sessions were organized.

A total of 35 sets of questionnaire out of the 40 representing 88% were retrieved for analysis and interpretation.

Table 1: Ages and Classes of Students of the study

Age (years)	Class				Total	Percentage (%)
	7B	7D	8B	8D		
10 – 14	9	7	7	5	28	80
15 – 18	1	2	3	1	7	20
Total	10	9	10	6	35	100

The study showed that out of the total of 35 pupils, 19 were J.S.S.1 (B.S.7) pupils while 16 were J.S.S.2 (B.S.8) pupils. Eighty percent (80%) were between 15-18 years. All pupils were adolescents. It is expected that their behaviour will reflect largely the behaviour of adolescence (Table 1).

Table 2: Specific Behaviour Perceived by Pupils to be Improper in Class

Behaviour	Percentage (%)
1. Behaviour that disrupts class work	72
2. Disrespectful behaviour	18
3. Behaviour that is defiant and aggressive	6
4. Immoral behaviour	4
TOTAL	100

The study revealed that the most common forms of classroom misbehaviour (72%) were of the type that disrupted class work. Talking, inattention, moving about in class and lateness to class were the most occurring misbehaviours or acts of indiscipline. These made teachers reluctant to teach and it adversely affected academic work (Table 2). Disrespectful behaviours such as rudeness, deliberate refusal to answer teachers' questions was second constituting 18%. Behaviour that is defiant and aggressive (6%) and immoral behaviour (4%) ranked third and fourth respectively (Table 2). The above behaviours were impediments to effective teaching and learning. It was evident that a teacher who is not respected by his pupils will never give out his/her best.

Although defiance, aggressive and immoral behaviour towards peers were of little concern (constituting 10% in total) they had a bearing on academic work. This is because pupils channel most of their attention and take sides on such issues than their academic work and it takes quite some time and effort to put pupils under control when they occur. About 91% of respondents agreed that indiscipline in class might sometimes result from the teachers own behaviour. However, nine percent of pupils disagree.

Table 3: Forms of Teachers Misbehaviour

Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1. Teaching / studies Related behaviour		
a. Laziness	7	20.0
b. Lateness / Absenteeism	5	14.3
c. Poor teaching methods	5	14.3
d. Digression from relevant topics	4	11.4
Total	21	60%
2. Interpersonal Relation behaviour		
a. Unfriendliness	4	11.4
b. Unnecessary punishment	2	5.7
c. Discrimination	2	5.7
d. Use of abusive language on pupils	2	5.7
Total	10	28.5%
3. Self Compartment behaviour		
a. Over familiarity with pupils	2	5.7
b. Flirting with pupils	1	2.8
c. Teachers who lack self-discipline	1	2.8

Total	4	11.3%
TOTAL	35	100%

Pupils were of the view that teacher/studies related behaviour ranked foremost with 60%. This was followed by interpersonal behaviour (29%) and then self-comportment behaviour (11%) (Table 3)

Unacceptable teaching /studies related behaviour included laziness (20%), late/absenteeism (14.3%), poor teaching methods (14.3%) and digression from relevant topics by teachers. (11.4%) These are major issues because they adversely affect academic work due to fact that less of the subject or topics are covered over a given period. Interpersonal relations behaviour consisted of unfriendliness (11.4%), unnecessary punishments (5.7%), discrimination (5.7%) and use of abusive language on pupils (5.7%) and all summed up to 29%. These attributes will make pupils tend to dislike the teacher and this will affect the level of interest by pupils for subjects or topics taught by such teachers and adversely affect teaching and learning. Consequently, academic work or performance will be affected.

Self comportment behaviour comprised of over familiarity with pupils (5.7%), flirting with pupils (2.8%) and teachers who lack self discipline (2.8%) as the main components. These also affected academic work because those teachers involved in the above acts did not see any need to apply the appropriate discipline measure to their favourite pupils when they misbehave and thereby created avenues for indiscipline by other pupils in the classroom.

Out of the twenty (20) sets of teachers' questionnaire administered 18 which represented 90% were retrieved for analysis and interpretation. The responses have been presented in tables for discussion.

Table 4: Age Distribution of Teacher Respondents

Age Range	Number	Percentage (%)
20-24	-	-
25-34	10	55.6
35-44	6	33.6
45-54	2	11.1
55+	-	-
TOTAL	18	100

The given responses indicated that most of the teachers (56%) were relatively younger between 25-34 years, 33% within the age range of 35-44 and the remaining 11% in the range of 45-54. About 67% of the teachers were females; while only 33% were males. It can be deduced that the dominance of the female teachers had some effects on the level of discipline. This is because females are most often not considered to be good disciplinarians and are indifferent about disciplinary issues when is outside their homes.

Table 5: Academic Qualification of Teacher Respondents

Qualification	Number	Percentage (%)
'A'-3-year Post-Secondary	12	66.7
Diploma	2	11.1
Bachelors Degree	4	22.2
Masters Degree	-	-
TOTAL	18	100

All teacher respondents were professionally trained. Majority (66%) of the teachers were 'A'3-year Post-Secondary certificate holders; Over 20% were Bachelor Degree holders and about 10% were Diploma holders (Table 5). The study showed that 44.4% of the respondents had between 1-3years teaching experience, 33.3% had taught for 4-9years and 22.3% for over 10years.

Table 6: State of Discipline in Mmofraturo Girls' School

Response	Number	Percentage (%)
Very good	-	-
Good	4	22
Average	9	50
Poor	5	28
Very Poor	-	-
TOTAL	18	100

It can be deduced from Table 6 that the state of discipline in the school was average as indicated by majority (50%) of teachers. On a whole the views of teachers on the state of discipline in the school confirmed those of the pupils. About 68% were of the view that the state of discipline in the school translated into classroom discipline which was also considered to be average. According to Wong and Wong (1998), the level of management or discipline of pupils and pupils achievements are linked and so the researcher saw the need to improve upon the level of discipline to bring about an improvement in the level of performance of pupils in the school.

Table 7: The Frequency of Occurrence of Misbehaviours in Classroom Settings

Behaviour	Rating of Occurrence		
	1st	2nd	3rd
Rudeness	1	-	-
Deliberate refusal to answer question	2	3	10
Eating in class	1	-	-
Defiance of authority	-	-	-
Moving about in class	-	-	-
Disobedience	-	-	-
Sleeping in class	-	-	-
Inattention	4	5	-
Absenteeism	-	-	-
Talking	10	6	2
Lateness to class	-	4	3

Table 7 showed the importance teachers and students attached to the various forms of misbehaviours and how they influenced discipline and academic work. Unauthorised talking in class during lessons was highest, inattention followed in the second position and deliberate refusal to answer teachers' questions was third. Both teachers and students ranked talking as first. However, lateness; absenteeism and inattention changed positions as second and third in the opinions of students but vice versa with regards to teachers.

As to whether teachers at Mmofraturo Girl's school were aware of the fact that some of the behaviour problems that occurred in class might have been caused by teachers, about 92% of teachers claimed that they were sometimes the cause of indiscipline while only 8% respondents did not subscribe to this view. This means that both students and teacher placed a very high value on teaching /studies related behaviour as the most serious problem areas as far as classroom discipline was concerned.

The response of teachers with regards to three (3) ways of improving classroom discipline yielded many divergent views. Teachers suggested measures which appear to be punitive in character.

After a critical survey of classroom indiscipline among B.S. 7 and B.S.8 pupils and observing the apathy of most teachers from especially extra-curricular activities in Mmofraturo Girls' School, intervention measures were spelt out to check indiscipline and all teachers were entreated to become committed to improve upon discipline and consequently academic performance of the students.

The teachers set rules of conduct in class which were known by all and enforced in the classroom, example no speaking of vernacular in the classroom. The teachers were strict, fair and firm when dealing with all the pupils. For those pupils who were lazy in doing class exercises and those who were not submitting their work for marking, changed after sometime because just after every exercise their books were collected, marked and brought to them the next day. Pupils who failed to submit their homework at the right time had their homework rejected.

Furthermore, the teachers invited some parents to the school and reported the misconduct of their wards to them. Pupils who proved deviant were punished immediately. If they failed to do the punishment they were then reported to the higher authority who will invite their parents. Some parents on this occasion tried to discipline their wards in the presence of the entire school at assembly and this led to improvement in discipline and consequently improved academic work. The teachers were always regular and punctual in class because they observed that, when there is no teacher in the class, pupils tend to misbehave so they were always hanging around the classroom five minutes before their time so that as soon as a teacher left they entered to teach.

It was noticed that some pupils misbehaved in class when a relevant topic is not well understood. In order to prevent the misbehaviour, teachers went over the lessons for pupils to understand. Also teachers used remedial teaching to assist needy pupils.

The teachers in trying to minimize classroom indiscipline tried as much as possible to avoid the use of any abusive language. When teachers use any vulgar language on pupils they become furious and some may want to react by gestures or words. When this happens it leads to some level of indiscipline. As an intervention or a preventive design, the teachers were mindful of the way they dressed to school, and were self-disciplined which helped some of the pupils to change their misbehaviour in class. Tactfully counseling deviant pupils was another intervention the teachers designed. As much as possible the teachers used most of their free periods in talking to some of the pupils who were found to be indulging in pre-marital sex and academically poor pupils.

When pupils realize that teachers were serious, competent and can handle lessons well, they also became serious in class and so as an intervention design, all teachers showed seriousness and competence in class work. They also made their lessons interesting and enjoyable to prevent pupils from boredom and to encourage them to be active participant. As much as possible, the teachers refrained from unnecessary digression to avoid long laughter in class, which is also a sign of indiscipline in the classroom. Guidance and counseling session were occasionally held for the whole class and pupils were encouraged to express their views or opinions. During these sessions, teachers talked to them on their own experiences.

The class prefects were given full authority to maintain order in the classroom. With all the aforementioned intervention and implementation most of the pupils were seen to have improved upon their academic performance as compared to the previous year. This fact came up because the scores of randomly selected pupils from the different ability groups were compared with their performance in the previous year (2005/2006). During the comparison it came up clearly that the average total score for 13 subjects of the above average pupils in end of term examination in 2005/2006 academic year was 744/1300 as against 827/1300 in 2006/2006 academic year.

The average score per student per subject was 57% (Grade 5) for the 2005/2006 while that for 2006-2007 was 64% (Grade 4). There was therefore an appreciable improvement in academic performance of the pupils after 6 months of implementation of intervention measures. In Agriculture the average total score in 2005/2006 was 70% (Grade 2) as against 75% (Grade1) in 2006/2007.

It can be deduced that the commitment and the interventions put in place accounted for the improvement in performance by pupils in Agriculture. This means that if pupils are disciplined and teachers are also committed it will improve academic performance in the school as noted by Wong and Wong (1998) that effectively managed classrooms and high student achievements are linked. It can also be said of the trend that improvement in academic performance would be achieved as the days

go by with constant adherence to the interventions put in place by every teacher in the school.

It was evident from the results that there was the need for pupils and teachers to realize that collectively they constitute the most important factors as far as indiscipline was concerned, and that they could only solve the problem of indiscipline if only they could strive to understand each other and play the mutual roles that were expected of them.

4. Conclusion

The findings from the study have proven that classroom indiscipline is a reality in Mmofraturo Girls' School. That, of all forms of indiscipline, it was those that disrupt class work and those that were directly related to teaching and learning that both pupils and teachers are worried about because it affects academic performance. The most hurdles against the realization of effective discipline were poor interpersonal relations between the headmistress and the teachers. The challenge of discipline in the school was overcome through cohesion between the teachers and the headmistress and between teachers and pupils. It could be concluded that issues of behavioural challenges in the school and classroom could easily be managed by disciplined teachers.

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