



Exploring Teachers' Disciplinary Problems in some Selected Secondary Schools in Niger State

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ABSTRACT

The study is on teacher disciplinary problems in secondary schools. A qualitative method was used so as to get an in-depth impression of the respondents on the phenomenon. Four participants were selected based on their vast experience in the educational sector and an interview was conducted to elicit information from the participants. The result indicated that (a) It is essential to administer discipline because it enhances productivity (b) the common disciplinary problem in school is insubordination (c) the principal has a great role to play in the discipline of the teachers being the leader of the school. The study, therefore, recommended that there is the need for disciplinary measures in our schools so as to improve productivity, the teachers need to be sensitised on the implications of insubordination and the principals need to have mandate and power to tackle disciplinary problems emanating from Teachers.

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INTRODUCTION

Academic Considering the importance of discipline in our educational system, it has become necessary for every school leader to be acquainted with the technicalities on how to tackle disciplinary related problems emanating in our schools. Without discipline there is no how any achievements can be recorded, this is in line with Paul Falcone (1997) who pointed out that "The objective of any disciplinary system is to create and maintain a productive, responsive workforce". So, discipline is very important particularly in education sector, because the teachers are employed to serve as human resources with the aim of teaching the students so that the students after graduating will become beneficial to the society, this means that the teachers are the engine room that the whole system relied on for its success.

If the teachers put in their best the education sector will prosper, and if they became lazy, refuse to perform their duties effectively and efficiently the education sector will be backward and the aim will not be achieved. As Gus Welty (1989) pointed out that, Misconduct and other offensive behaviours often lead to decreased levels of productivity as they affect individual performance of the employee. Teachers in schools should also

have it in mind that, the students always see them as model whatever they do the students will try to copy, if they exhibit a good character and behave in a discipline manner their students will become disciplined.

Despite the facts that discipline of teachers is not an easy task for principals because teachers may come from different places with different cultural background, so as a principal you will see different characters and attitudes and you will see different disciplinary problems, so it is left for you as a leader to know various kinds of techniques in handling any disciplinary problems that may emanate from the staff so as to keep the school moving in order to have a good atmosphere for teaching and learning, so as to achieve the educational goals and objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are so many write up on Disciplinary problems in schools few were reflected in this work starting with the definition of Discipline. Richman (2008) who sees Discipline as catalyst for change and a "bull's eye" toward which employees should aim in refocusing their behaviours and bringing them within the targeted range. Macmillan Dictionary (2007) defined discipline as the practice of



making people obey rules of behaviour and punishing them if they do not.

In regards to disciplinary problems, Dana 2011 described Insubordination as refusing to take order from the superior officer. If a teacher refused to take instruction from his principal it can be regarded as insubordination. South African labour guide (2011) Insubordination may be described as resistance to or defiance of authority, disobedience, refusal or failure to obey reasonable and lawful instructions, insolence, cheekiness, rudeness, bringing the employer's name into disrepute, and rebellious. Other contributors include Webb & Norton (1999) Fulmer (2002) who dwelled on different disciplinary problems in school such as; sexual harassment, theft, alcoholism and so on.

Richard et al (1999) Commented on the essence of discipline in the organization, school inclusive, the writers also emphasised on the need for principals to know procedure of administering discipline so as to safeguard the school. Vic (2009) highlighted on the role of the principal as to lead and manage the planning, delivery, evaluation and improvement of the education of all students in a community through the strategic deployment of resources provided by the Department and the school community. In addition, the principal has to also administer discipline where necessary.

Purpose of the Study

The study is on teachers' disciplinary problems in schools. Disciplinary problems among teachers in schools is consider to be a problem in our education sector, the extent to which this problem is affecting the performance of our teachers and the standard education is disturbing, hence there is the need to make a study so as to point measures to tackle this problem. The study has the following objectives:

1. To describe why teachers discipline is necessary in schools.
2. To explain the common disciplinary problems among teachers.
3. To explain the measures to be taken by principals in handling disciplinary issues.

This study will be significance to school principals in having better understanding of disciplinary problems in schools. It will also be useful to teachers in having more ideas in common offences committed in the school with

the aim of avoiding it. The study will also be significant to any individual who is willing to know about disciplinary problems in schools.

METHODOLOGY

The nature of any research mostly determines the appropriate procedure and method to be adopted in conducting it for the purpose of attaining the intended goal. This research intends to investigate on techniques for teacher retention in secondary schools. The nature of the study will demand eliciting details information from the respondents about their understanding on the research questions as stated in chapter one.

This study is on Teachers and disciplinary problems in schools so a qualitative method will be used for the study. Creswell (2007) stated that qualitative research is a means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. The purpose of qualitative studies is to describe a phenomenon from the participants' points of view through interviews and observations. The intention of the researcher is to listen to the voice of participants or observe them in their natural environments. (Field & Morse, 1992).

The essence of participants in any research is to help in solving the problem under investigation. Selection of participants in this research was based on the potential of each participant's ability to contribute to researcher's understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The purpose of small sample in qualitative research according to Merriam (1998) is not to achieve statistical generalisation, but rather to gain the perspective of the participants. Merriam also added that the small size will enable the researcher to have an in depth understanding of the research phenomenon.

Based on the above argument a total of 4 participants were selected for this study. Two out the four participants are principals who are undergoing their Ph.D at IBB University, Lapai, while the remaining two are current Principals who have been in the teaching profession for the past 20 years.

The most common form of data collection in qualitative research is interview. The researcher used an in-depth interview as means of data collection. Natasha et.al (2005) commented that in-depth interview. Semi-



structured interview guided the researcher in soliciting for information from the participants. According to Social Science Research Centre (SSRC) (2011) highlighted that Semi-structured interviewing follows all the principles of unstructured interviewing, except that the informants are not expected to move too far beyond the scope defined by the interview guide. The researcher recorded every bit of the participant's response using tape record and manual writing. This is in line with Mason (1996) who suggested that, the researcher has to listen, remember what has been said, observe and pick up verbal and non-verbal cues and use note taking and tape recorder. Ary et. al (2006) emphasised that the most efficient way to collect data is by using audio tape recorder as it is much less distracting than taking notes and it also provides a verbatim record of the response.

Data collection and data analysis is an on-going process and can extend indefinitely (Merriam 2001). The researcher coded the result which was later transcribed and analysed. According wilhelmina & Rhonda (2001) who viewed that coding will enable the researcher to manage data by labelling, storing, and retrieving it according to the codes, they added that the codes created depend on the study, setting, participants, and research questions, because the codes are the researchers' way of beginning to get at the meaning of the data.

The researcher coded the participants as Mr A, B, C and D for easy analysis of data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Why is Teachers discipline necessary in schools?

When asked about discipline all the participants are aware of the concept "Personnel Discipline" Mr B went further to explain that personnel discipline in education is the act of forcing the teachers to act in accordance with the school rules and regulations and find a means of administering penalties on any teacher that violated the rules. When asked why do we need discipline? Mr A stated that discipline in schools is very important because without discipline there will crises and infact nothing will even move in the school, he added. He went further to say that discipline can help in organizing the teachers to conduct their selves in an orderly manner, which will lead to the achievement of the schools aims and objectives. Teachers are like parents they are

expected to be more discipline than any other person, the students, the community and the society attached respect to them so their discipline is even more than necessary. Mr C is with the opinion that No discipline No progress, which is line with Gus (1989) who opined that with discipline everything is possible. Mr C commented further that if teachers are discipline the school rules and regulations will properly be maintained and this will create a healthy learning environment where the students will learn perfectly.

To Mr D. proper discipline in school save the principal time, if teachers are discipline the principal will easily co-ordinate the school, he can confidently assign responsibilities to teachers or delegate certain authority where necessary. He commented further that the principal can be confident that even if he is absent the school will not collapse. But if the teachers are not discipline, the principal cannot have the confident of delegating power and this will add extra responsibilities to the principal and his role as the school head. Mr B has a different opinion with others. To him every school need teachers that discipline, because effective teaching can hardly take place when there are cases of indiscipline, teachers that are not discipline hardly commit themselves to their job. He said that discipline teachers can improve productivity of the school, if a teacher after knowing his responsibilities does his work diligently and follow or obey the school rules and regulations, then he will become productive. Lastly, he shared the same opinion with Mr A in the area that teachers can conduct themselves properly if they are discipline. The students always consider their teachers to be their model whatever they do the students copy, so if the teachers are not conducting themselves then the discipline of the students is bound also to be affected.

Looking at the opinions given by the respondents on the importance of discipline among teachers, I will want to add by saying, education is a sensitive sector, it is the bedrock of development in any nation, so if the education system is not working in proper shape other sectors are bound to be affected. Students that graduate from secondary schools are product of university who in future will become something in life, so if their teachers are not discipline it will definitely affect the product that is the students and once the students were affected the entire



system will be affected. Discipline of the teachers is very necessary because they are key to the success of education.

What are the common disciplinary problems in schools?

Respondents have different views regarding disciplinary problems in our education. The researcher started with the view of Mr A stated that there are so many disciplinary problems exhibited by our teachers in schools but the one that is the most touching is; Insubordination. To him this is very common among teachers, when asked to comment further he said Insubordination is refusal to take the command of the leader, in schools it can be referred to as teacher refusing to take order from the principal. This is in line with Dana (2011) who defined Insubordination as refusing to take a command from superior officer. Mr A went further to highlight that in his school he usually faces this kind of problem of insubordination were by teachers will refuse to take certain order from him, he added that sometimes some teachers may even be confrontational with him, although "I have so many ways of tackling them" he added. In his conclusion he lamented that some teachers are very stubborn, so as a leader you must know how to tackle them if not, they will attempt to destroy your administrative strategies.

Mr C is so worried on how teachers are involving themselves on issues like sexual harassment. He added that sexual harassment is one among the common disciplinary problems in schools. He said "You will see some irresponsible teachers' friending their own students, sometimes they do it secret while some even make it open. If as a teacher you are friending your student, how can you assess her objectively". Some teachers also are found friending their co teachers, all these are unethical. Mr B commented on teachers' absenteeism from duty as part of disciplinary problem. He added that some teachers will not come to school in time, some will come and leave before time while some will not even come, and all these are act of indiscipline. To him, this may be as a result of laxity from the school principal which he further said some teachers are bribing their principal to cover them. While some may absent themselves because they have backing from somewhere like the Ministry of Education. To Mr D the issue

of indiscipline in schools is a problem, he narrated his experience with one of his teachers who always come to school late. He tried and corrected the teacher by giving him responsibility in the school that warrant him of coming at all time.

Other important disciplinary problems identified by the respondents includes; use of abusive language by some teachers to their principals or within colleagues, stealing other peoples' property, and Alcoholism.

In my own opinion, we know that no one is perfect, we are bound to commit an offence, but there are offences that a teacher shouldn't even think of, offences like: stealing, sexual harassment, alcoholism and some other grievous offences, a teacher is a model so she/he must behave in orderly manner because students are watching every bit of their teacher's attitude.

What are the roles of principals in handling teachers' disciplinary problems?

Principals in every school are seen as the head who monitors and control the affairs of the school. Mr D commented that the principal has so many roles to play in handling cases of discipline in his school. He further stated that when he was a principal what he usually does is that whenever a teacher committed an offence, he will first call him in his office and ask why he committed the offence, from there he will advise him not to repeat again but when the offence was repeated then he takes action by writing a warning letter to the teacher from there if he couldn't take to correction then the issue of query will follow. This concurs with Richard et al (1992) that suggested ways of handling disciplinary cases which includes; Counselling, letter of warning, subsequent warning and disciplinary action. Mr B is with the opinion that principals should be more patience than all their teachers they should be ready to tolerate so many things from their teachers but yet this does not mean they shouldn't discipline, their role is to correct staff from derailing. If a teacher committed an offence the principal has the right to discipline but in an orderly manner. He added that the principal should take steps before dealing with the teacher, this may involve calling the teacher into order, if he refused then he can report him to the upper authority like the ministry, because nowadays administering penalties directly from the principals is



becoming difficult, this is due to so many factors, some teachers may be connected more than the principal while some are aggressive and furious, so as a principal you have to be very careful.

Mr A has different opinion to him, hence all teachers are under the control of the principal then he has the right to discipline when necessary because if he refused to do so whatever happened in the school, he will be held responsible, so discipline is paramount but the principal must do justice when discipline, he shouldn't punish Mr Y for an offence and when Mr Z committed the offence he forgives him, this will cause crises in the school. To Mr C, principal has great roles to play in handling disciplinary cases in their schools. He added that there are offences that can be forgiven, for example if a teacher is not perpetual offender when he committed an offence for the first time he needs to be forgiven. He concluded that Principal can call on the attention of any teacher that committed an offence with the aim of correcting him, it is only when the matter keeps rising that strong disciplinary action will be taken.

In my own opinion, I believe that in any organization there should be a leader who will control the affairs of others, so a principal is a leader in the school who control teachers, he exercises Power and use Authority where necessary, so he need to discipline against any misconduct so as to keep the school conducive for learning.

CONCLUSION

Principals have to be more diligent in their administrative responsibilities, and disciplinary issues in school setting should be giving a due consideration. They should also know the kind of leadership to operate in different situations, this will help them in having better understanding of their teachers and their disciplinary problems and will give them a foresight on how to properly handle different disciplinary problems in their schools.

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