Prohibition and Elimination of Corporal Punishment: What are the Workable Alternative Disciplinary Methods?

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Abstract
Disruptive behaviour in schools has been a source of concern for school systems for several years. The use of corporal punishment has been used by many education systems to manage misbehavior among its learners. A number of studies have been written on the use and impact of corporal punishment. It has been established that corporal punishment leads to physical injuries and emotional pain hence many human rights have denounced and recommended for its abolishment. This paper is set to discuss the abolishment of corporal punishment and discuss the other alternatives of discipline. The approaches namely a good curriculum, good teacher-student relations, active participation of learners in making decisions about their learning, involving parents to build a culture of human rights and respect which are critical for development. A constructive, non-violent child discipline is needed.

Keywords: Punishment, Corporal Punishment, Misbehavior, Discipline, Human Dignity

Introduction
In the classroom, worldwide, pupils do engage in behaviors that are counter-productive to learning and contrary to acceptable social practices. Disciplinary problems are experienced by all schools. These problems hamper the smooth running of schools leading to poor academic performance (Korb, 2011; Mskeomeng, 2010). Negative behaviours call for disciplinary action by the teachers. Some of the disciplinary problems include late coming, absenteeism, neglect of academic work, possessions of cell phones at school, use of drugs and alcohol, carrying dangerous objects, bunking lessons, bullying, not abiding by the dress code, and disrespect for educators.

In endeavours to maintain discipline in schools, the use of corporal punishment has been used by many school educators. In the past corporal punishment has been regarded positively as a technique for child rearing. It is as old as humanity itself. To that effect, there is a saying, “spare the rod and spoil the child.” The stick was the most prevalent form of metting out corporal punishment (Matope, 2011).
Bitensky (2006) defines corporal punishment as the intellectual infliction of pain or discomfort and/or use of physical force upon a student with the intention of causing the student to experience bodily pain so as to correct or punish student behaviour. Methods such as hitting, slapping, spanking, pinching, kicking, punching, shoving, use of objects like belts and sticks are employed to cause physical pain in order to change behaviour (Busienei, 2012).

Corporal punishment is a technique that can lead to physical injuries, causing serious emotional pain. There is clear evidence that corporal punishment leads to better control in the classroom, enhances moral character development in children or increases children’s respect for teachers or authority figures. It does not instruct a child in correct behaviour. Gershoff (2010), in a meta-analytical review of 88 separate studies that examined the use of corporal punishment found out that children who are beaten change their behaviour immediately and obey the rules in the short-term. However, in the same study he found out that corporal punishment was significantly related to negative behavioural outcomes in the long term (Gershoff, 2010). Other negative effects of such punishment according to Gershoff include running away, fearing teachers, feeling high levels of anxiety, humiliation and being aggressive.

Similarly according to Jenny (2009), studies revealed that spanking increases both long term as well as short-term harm in children and also increases aggressive behaviour. It leads children into believing that violence is an acceptable way of expressing disapproval or anger. Corporal punishment negatively affects the social, psychological and educational development of students.

**Prohibition and Abolition of Corporal Punishment**

Many human rights have denounced corporal punishment in schools and officially recommended its abolishment (Busienei, 2012). The use of corporal punishment has sparked criticism locally, regionally and internationally from parents, learners, educationalists, psychologists and human rights activists (Matope, 2011). Corporal punishment does not build a culture of human rights, tolerance and respect.

There are international laws that support the abolition of corporal punishment. The United Nations on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) ratified by 192 countries is the first international human rights instruments to address prevention of all forms of violence against children. Article 19 of the UNCRC (1990) states that “State partners shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the case of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child.”

The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child 1999: Article 11 also states that its member countries must take steps to ensure that a child who is subjected to school or parental discipline shall be treated with humanity and respect for the inherent dignity of the child. In addition, Article 28 (2) requires states to take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child’s human dignity and in conformity with the present convention.
Worldwide there are increasing numbers of countries that have banned corporal punishment in schools. Several African states for example, Ethiopia, Namibia and South Africa have outlawed the use of this punishment in schools. Zimbabwe expressed its commitment to prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings in accepting clearly the recommendation to do so during the Universal Periodic Review of Zimbabwe in 2011 (www.endcorporalpunishment.org/assets/pdfs/states-reports/zimbabwe.pdf). The High Court has abolished corporal punishment against juveniles saying the practice was illegal according to the new Constitution. Section 53 of the new constitution reads, “No person may be subjected to physical or psychological torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.” Ending all corporal punishment of children is the final stage of a regrettably long process of assessing all pupils’ fundamental rights to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity (Hart, Dorrant, Newell and Power, 2005).

Alternatives to Corporal Punishment
Research locally and internationally has proved that there is strong support for the use of alternatives to corporal punishment. Discipline is crucial and there are effective and instructional alternative strategies to help students develop self-discipline (Gershoff, 2010). Thus, giving up corporal punishment does not mean giving up on discipline. In maintaining discipline in schools that will serve a long term, educators have to device and implement disciplinary strategies that are non-coercive, yet assertive and which will strive to increase classroom time available for teaching and learning and at the same time respond to students’ behaviours in a manner that decreases disruption. The next section discusses some of the alternatives to corporal punishment.

Classroom Management
When teachers develop strategies to create and maintain an orderly learning environment disciplinary problems are reduced. Classroom management is one of the most efficient and effective step a school could take to reduce learner misbehavior (Kupchick, 2010). Classroom management has been defined broadly as an action a teacher takes to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning Evertson and Weinstein, (2006) cited in Oliver, Wehby and Reschly, (2011). It embodies rules to organize the class, to plan materials and activities. Rules prevent problem behaviour by giving students specific appropriate behaviours to engage in since they specify what is expected. The teacher should be instructionally prepared that is ensuring materials are ready, designing relevant activities and establishing rules that are enforced consistently. Likewise Korb (2011) asserts that each classroom needs rules that are fair, reasonable and age appropriate. When pupils perceive there is injustice with one group of pupils held to a different standard than other, pupils are more likely to misbehave because of the perceived injustice. Expert opinion on moral and ethical development emphasizes the importance of fairness and justice in dealing with standards and consequences of human behaviour. Students who misbehave should be treated similarly (Hart et al., 2005).

Educator – Learner Relationship
A key to maintaining good discipline is to establish a good relationship with learners by respecting them. According to Hart et al. (2005) all persons have the right to and benefit from respect and support for their human dignity. The quality of the teacher-pupil relationship is the cornerstone for effective discipline. The teacher should be warm, approachable, tolerant and
pleasant, and should communicate high expectations and show care and respect (Irrpublic.cli.det.nsw.edu.au/Irresecure/sites/LRRView/14437/documents/2-proactive-prevent-misbehav.pdf). The teacher should stay friendly, respectful and avoid sarcasm and inappropriate reactions to any type of behaviour. One’s dignity is violated when subjected to conduct which is degrading and humiliating. When a teacher respects learners, they will in turn respect the teacher’s values, rules and opinions (Porter, 2004). Good educator-pupil relationships according to Porter assist to unearth learners’ problems. A child might be badly disciplined because of a social problem. As an example, a child might be aggressive as a result of experiencing sexual abuse. Learners open up if teacher listens and is approachable. Only by understanding what drives a behaviour, can educators be able to manage behaviour effectively (Bechoke and Debeila, 2012).

Maximizing Child’s Active Participation
Disciplinary practices intended specifically to affect child’s present and future behaviour and character must respect the right of the child to express relevant views. Articles 1 – 3 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) strongly support the child to develop the views and apply them to relevant life conditions (www.ohhr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx). Having one’s views considered and influencing conditions affecting self and those things one values is essential to human dignity and democratic citizenship. Bechuke and Debeila (2012), assert that students must have a choice about their learning and deciding on the rules in the classroom so that they will have ownership of their learning and pride in their participation. They should be involved in developing classroom rules (Kupchick, 2010). Learners should be given opportunity to take responsibility in making decisions about their behaviour.

Parental Involvement
Lack of or inadequate parental involvement or inability to take interest in children education is a factor that places child at risk of misbehavior (www.ncert.nic.in/departments/nie/dee/publication/pdf/Report-child.pdf). Parents have a tendency of shifting their role of instilling good morals into their children. Ndamani (2008), stresses that for effective changes in children’s behaviour parents need to be involved in the education of their children. Parents and teachers need to join forces in managing discipline in schools. Parents should direct their children to abide by all school rules and accept responsibility for any misconduct on their part. When a child is ill-disciplined a parent should be invited to school because learners do not want their parents to come to school. By inviting a parent misbehavior is reduced.

Conclusion
Corporal punishment is an ineffective method of discipline with both, physical and mental health problems. It makes pupils obey the rules when the teacher is present but often return to their misbehavior as soon as the teacher is absent. There are other effective disciplinary strategies other than corporal punishment. Teachers’ classroom practices, relationships with students have a significant positive effect on decreasing problem behaviours in the classroom. If teachers make the work clear and interesting keeping the child involved in lesson and helping them when they have problems with their work, discipline will follow. It is crucial for learners to be given responsibility to make decisions about their behaviours in classrooms because it teaches them accountability and responsibility of their behaviours (Bechuke and
Debeila, 2012). Educators and parents need also support each other in discipline management.

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