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LEARNERS' DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOURS AND THE PROSPECTS OF EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

GESINDE, A. MATTHEW

Federal College of Education (Special),

Oyo

Abstract

The realisation of objectives of education programmes is paramount to the educational development of a nation. This may however be hindered by several occurrences. This paper discusses how disruptive behaviours of learners can prevent appropriate development expected in educational programme. Recommendations are made on the way out.

Introduction

Educational programmes of every nation are tailored towards the attainment of certain objectives. The attainment of these objectives could, however be hindered by factors within and outside the educational sector. Problems may arise from policy developers, policy implementers, teachers, parents and learners. The learners who are expected to benefit directly from the educational programmes may also manifest certain behaviour patterns, which threaten the orderly pursuit of academic excellence. Despite the fact that they are required to behave in a socially acceptable manner those who are misbehaving increase in number daily, both in the public and private schools. The academic environment is expected to be peaceful and conducive to meaningful learning; but certain disruptive activities of learners have made this difficult. The consequence of this is predictable on educational prospects, educational administrators, teachers, the society as a whole, parents and learners. For instance, Feldhusen (1979) submitted that:

Adolescents who develop aggressive or disruptive behaviour patterns that lead to serious disciplinary problems in school will not fail to achieve well themselves, but they will also interfere with the efforts of teachers and fellow students.

A practical solution that will combat inappropriate behaviours in the pre-primary, primary, post-primary and post secondary institutions should be worked out. On this premise, this paper is designed to discuss disruptive behaviours; identify and discuss causes of learners' disruptive behaviours, expose the interrelationship between learners' disruptive behaviours and the prospects of educational development in Nigeria; and recommend solutions to identified problems.

The Meaning of Disruptive Behaviour

Disruption, according to Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary (1978), is the act of bursting and rending or the act of breaking asunder. Behaviour is the activity of an individual or group of individuals as a result of interaction with the environment. Disruptive behaviour in schools would, therefore, denote an activity by an individual or group of individuals, which hinder or break asunder the serene environment needed for meaningful learning activities from

taking place.

In other words, disruptive behaviour in schools can be perpetrated by a student or by the collaboration of many students. In virtually all cases it can be noticed by a careful observer. Among scholars who perceived disruptive behaviours as group activities are Rubel (1977) and Herbert (1978). While Rubel (1977) sees it as exclusively group events designed to accomplish a planned goal or establish a point of contention, Herbert (1978) regards it as a group process applied to interfere with the work of a group of pupils. It should however be noted that for students activities to be regarded as disruptive, it must satisfy two criteria, according to Saunders (1979):

1. It interrupts the lesson and prevents the teacher from achieving his objectives.
2. The teacher perceives the pupil's intentions as deliberately obstructive. Adolescent who is likely to engage in problem behaviour, according Jessor and Jessor (1977), is one who does not value academic achievement, who does not expect to do well academically, who is much concerned with independence, and who regards the society as problematic and deserving criticism and reshaping. He characteristically has a tolerant attitude toward transgression and lacks interest in conventional institutions such as church and school.

Prosocial behaviour and disruptive behaviour

As earlier indicated, students are expected to behave in a socially acceptable manner (prosocial). But some prefer to perpetrate disruptive behaviours, which hinder successful learning. Certain characteristics however distinguish those who engage in disruptive behaviours from others who engage in prosocial behaviour. When these two groups of students were compared by Feldhusen et al (1973) the disruptive children had an average nine-point deficit in IQ and significantly lower scores on tests of achievement in Reading and Mathematics and more significantly inclined to drop out of school. If they however remain, their ranks in the graduating class were far lower. Teachers' ratings of their personalities and social characteristics were significantly lower, and they continued to display these same characteristics up to eight years after the original identification.

Causes of Learners' Disruptive Behaviours

Several factors could be held responsible for disruptive behaviour in schools. Majority of these causes have their origin within the school environment, while some have their existence from happenings outside the school premises. Broadly speaking, causes of disruptive behaviours can be classed into four:

1. Causes resident in school administration
2. Causes resident in the teachers
3. Causes resident in learners
4. Causes resident in homes

1. **Causes resident in school administration:** One of the factors on which the attainment of educational objectives rely on is the proper administration of school activities by those saddled with this responsibility. In order to make administration effective, rules and regulations are made, not only for staff, but also for students. In cases whereby the rules and regulations are either not made known to students or sanctions for violating them are not implemented, there is great tendency that students would be liable to disrupt classroom

activities.

At times, rules and regulations that are made available to students do conflict. Too many rules and regulations, in most cases, result into undue confusion. In cases where teachers give rules that contradict school rules and regulations or rules and regulations they have been exposed to at home, students are bound to be confused as to which one to obey.

2. **Causes resident in the teachers:** The utmost responsibility of a teacher is to teach. For his teaching to be meaningful to the learners and to attain behavioural objectives of the lessons, he must be able to manage the learners in his class. Successful classroom management has been found to produce a high rate of work involvement and low rate of deviance in academic settings (Kounin, 1970).

A teacher may, however, be authoritarian, permissive, or moderate in his classroom management technique. Authoritarian or strict teacher behaviour may produce unnecessary anxiety and tension in learners. An attempt to attain tension-free or anxiety-free state of mind may disrupt the classroom activities. On the other hand, if the teacher's management controls permit learners to do as they like, it signifies that they have been indirectly given license to disrupt the classroom through their activities.

The relationship of teachers to learners outside the classroom situation may also determine how learners would comport themselves during lesson. If the teacher is too close to the learners to the extent of losing credibility or engaging in inappropriate activities with them, learners may not perceive such a teacher as an "authority" in the classroom situation, and disruptive behaviour may prevail among the learners.

3. **Causes Resident in Learners:** Learners are expected to be conversant with the rules and regulations governing their behaviours in schools. In cases where learners are unaware of the existence of rules and regulations, they tend to disrupt or act against constituted authorities.

Besides, individual behaviours may be influenced by the peer group he or she belongs to. If members of the group engage in activities that would disrupt educational programme, every member would be expected to participate fully.

In an attempt to gain special recognition or defined self against embarrassment caused by constituted authorities, learners may engage in disruptive behaviour. Lorber (1966) submitted that children who are socially unacceptable to their classmates tend to act in a disruptive attention – seeking manner in the classroom.

4. **Causes Resident in the Home:** Learners are from different homes and child-rearing methods employed by parents differ. Learners who are permitted to disobey rules and regulations at home or without rules governing their behaviours at home would engage in disruptive behaviours since they may find it difficult to abide by the set rules in schools.

Thurston et al (1964) in Gnagey (1968) carried out a study which reveals that most of the following factors appeared consistently in the home situations of children who were constant classroom deviants:

- (i) The discipline by the father is either lax, overtly strict, or erratic
- (ii) The supervision by the mother is at best only fair, or it is downright inadequate,
- (iii) The parents are either indifferent, or even hostile, toward the child.

- (iv) The family members are scattered in diverse activities and operate only somewhat as a unit, or perhaps not at all.
- (v) The parents find it difficult to talk things over regarding the child.
- (vi) The husband-wife relationship lacks closeness and equality or partnership.
- (vii) The parents find things to disapprove of in their child.
- (viii) The mothers are not happy with the communities in which they live.
- (ix) The parents resort to angry physical punishment when the child does wrong. Temper control is difficult problem for them at this time.
- (x) The parents believe they have little influence on the development of their child.
- (xi) The parents believe that other children exert bad influences upon their child.
- (xii) The parents' leisure time activities lack much of constructive elements.
- (xiii) The parents, particularly the father, report no church membership. Even if members, their attendance tends to be sporadic.

Learners' Disruptive behaviours and the prospects of Educational development in Nigeria

Disruptive behaviours by learners cut across cultural, natural or artificial barriers. In the same manner, their consequences reflect similar pattern. For meaningful learning to take place and for Nigerian Education to achieve its set objectives, the academic environment must be conducive and learners must engage in prosocial behaviours and disengage in disruptive behaviours. The rate at which the number of learners engaging in disruptive behaviours increase on daily basis suggests that the prospects of educational development in Nigeria looks bleak, because disruptive behaviour would not give room for the realisation of national educational objectives. Unless this is addressed appropriately, the negative effects of this on educational development would have contagious effects on other sectors of the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper has established the fact that learners' disruptive behaviour can hinder the educational development in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that:

1. rules and regulations governing learners' activities be specific and made available to students;
2. appropriate sanctions be implemented as and when necessary to violators;
3. cases of disruptive behaviours should be referred to Guidance Counsellors;
4. child rearing technique of parents should emphasize obedience to rules and regulations by constituted authorities.
5. teachers need to uphold their professional ethics.

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