

“School Discipline, Value-Based Curriculum and Parental Roles”

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Abstract

As Africa welcomed the 21st century, not much preparation was done to help Africa maintain some of its values amidst the techno-terror era that came with the 21st century. As a result, the strong African value of communal living was tampered with. It was this value that helped traditional Africans societies to have a stronger sense of self, community and society at large. This value taught many things such as, hospitality, sense of belonging, etc. Ingrained in the culture of the traditional African, communal living was an easy way of grooming children to fit in the society. This grooming was done by every member of the community. Modern day Africa is daily moving away from this communal living. As a result, the continent continues to face increasing challenges with maintaining its values and disciplining the leaders of the next generation. Schools are overwhelmed with the need to meet the rising demands to train the future leaders of Africa. This paper seeks to discuss how parents are to be involved with the school in the disciplining of their kids as well as helping to instill values in them. Furthermore, the paper will attempt to provide suggested methods by which Bible-based values can be incorporated into the curriculum and ways that Christian educators can teach values to learners in a pluralistic society. This paper is arguing that values, discipline and the roles of parents are all interwoven interchangeably. This means, the three – values, discipline and parental roles - are inseparable. As a result, the paper will use the three interchangeably.

Keywords: School Discipline, Value-Based Curriculum, Parental Roles

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Values: those things which are considered to be important; ideals worth striving for (Olander, ED522 Class Notes, 2015: 7). *Discipline:* is managing students' behavior to reach the desire end of helping them achieve their God-given potential without destroying their dignity.

1.1 Values and Discipline of Children: The Role of Parents

The family is the primary agent for socializing the child. Children are to be taught the norms of the immediate family and later extended family and then the society-at-large. Ward argues that the family is responsible primarily for nurturing the children into accepted norms by the family and every other agent is secondary or tertiary (1981: 21). He goes on to argue that for Christian parents, their primary value is to see their children establish “personal relationship with Jesus Christ” (Ward, 1981: 17) while non-believers will find values in doing “humanitarian good works” (Ward, 1981: 17). Whatever the case might be, the role of the family is to “hand down values from generation to generation” (Ward, 1981: 19). From Ward’s argument, we can see how this clearly fits in the African context. The continent Africa is unarguably known for traditional values being passed down from generation to generation primarily through oral history. African families are expected in traditional Africa to hand down the values of greeting others, hospitality, respect for elders, inculcation of religiosity, protect the environment, harmonious living with community members and the environment and so forth. In other words, the African society values relationships. This value of relationship is vivid in Scriptures. We serve a relational God – Triune God. God loves relationships as we see him providing a helper for Adam in Gen. 2:18, firstly redeeming mankind through his covenant with Noah in Genesis 9 and most importantly, sending his Son to die so that a genuine eternal relationship can be established with the Creator and his creatures in John 3:16.

The value of genuine relationship should be seen in every aspect of the family. The goal of establishing genuine relationships should be to train the child to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and help him or her grow in it. Parents are admonished in Scriptures – Deuteronomy 6:1-7, 31:12, Proverbs 22:6, and Ephesians 6:4 – to teach and model spiritual truths to their children (Clark, 1994: 235). Clark argues that “spiritual formation integrates total personality development – physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development” (1994: 235). Parents are to train their children God’s ways. Children are to be taught that everything they engage in should be critiqued by the Bible. Teach children to always ask **What Would Jesus Do?** To help them constructively engage those differing views they are going to face in the larger society. This is best achieved when the parents have personal relationship with Christ. This starting point can provide a strong foundation to walk daily with their children in God’s ways as written in Scriptures. This is a lifelong process of spiritual formation. As a result, Clark admonishes

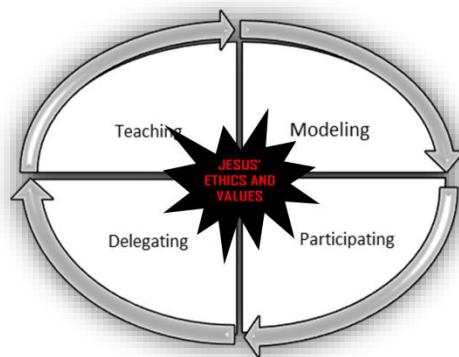
No parent is perfect in child rearing and will make blunders. However, the Lord honors parental faithfulness as parents lay foundations for life. God will reward them for being consistent and persistent as Isaiah wrote: For it is:

Do and do, do and do, rule on rule, rule on rule; a little here, a little there” (Isa. 28:10) (1994: 240). Though we see a strong relationship between instruction in the Bible on rearing children and traditional Africa’s, modern Africa tends to shift from this method. Were (1987) argues that parent-child concern in modern Africa is left to family members alone and family members are to rear children in with whatever education acquired in school or travel. She also acknowledges the selfish competitive attitude of parents in rearing children in modern Africa by the use of statement like “my child must be better than yours” (pp.23-24). As a result of this selfish goal, children are seen today involving themselves with numerous ills in society and can’t be offered counsel and discipline by community members due to the poor communal lifestyle which helped many young people groom to better men and women. This poses a challenge on schools to provide every method to discipline the children.

1.2 Teaching and Assessing Values in Schools

Schools should support parents who are teaching values and disciplining their kids by doing likewise to the learners. As a larger society, the programs of the school should view education as rooted in God’s general and special revelation; it involves the whole human being – holistic education and we should respond with commitment and service to God and humanity (Van Brummelen, 1980: 255). We should realize that we cannot construct knowledge, instead, we can only discover the knowledge that God has created. Due to our human frailty and finite ways, we are limited and cannot fully understand God’s ways – Is. 55:8-9. The school is to start teaching Biblical values starting from the structure of the campus to the interactions amongst administration, faculty, staff, and students. Schools are to be constructed in line with their mission and vision statements, but most importantly depicting their ethical and moral standards. They are not only to focus on subject matters for students to grow in their intellect but also on ethical standards (Maxcy, 2002: 2). When we talk about ethics, values, and morals, we often don’t take the environment into consideration. I agree with Maxcy that the context and structure of the school should validate our ethical standards and principles. They should be grounded in “love for God and our fellow humans”. School administrations should have ethical standards and principles to follow as guide in their respective institutions. To help strengthen a school leadership ethically, Maxcy ascertains the following virtues: “courage, temperance, prudence, honesty, will and performance” (2002: 68-69). These are similar virtues emphasized by Jesus and Paul but they accentuated the importance of love that it supersedes all of to others. These virtues should be seen in the leadership, discussed in the teachers’ lounge and offices, modeled on campus by teachers as they interact with students and emphasized on students to practice them when relating with fellow students on campus and their friends in the larger society – *Deut. 6*. The leadership is to conduct daily devotions in school among staff and students and organize mid-semester prayer days. Teachers should begin their classes with prayers and read the Scriptures for meditation, allow students to share their challenges so others can pray about them, etc.

Every staff should view himself/herself and the students as unique and made in God’s image and likeness. They should be seen as holistic beings that possess every aspect of life. These will best be achieved when the leaders have a personal and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ (Pazmino, 1994: 146). Christian school leaders and teachers should not be ashamed to teach Christian values in Christian faith-based institutions. A better and more simple method that this paper proposes to adapt in teaching and assessing values in any setting is the Teach-Assess Values Cycle.



This cycle proposes that the teaching and assessing of values does not end. It argues that this is a lifelong process. It supports Deuteronomy 6:6-9, “These commandments … are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on you children, talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up, tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads, write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates” (NIV). The cycle does not end with delegating. Delegating and participating are areas where assessment is really done. Teachers, parents and every community member is to aid in helping the children go through

this cycle as they themselves go through it. In the cycle, the Jesus' Ethics is about faithfulness to yourself and being just and merciful to others as Christ is just and merciful to you.

2.0 DISCIPLINE IN SCHOOL SETTINGS

The desire to see the next generation of leaders well-disciplined to take leadership seems to have become an overwhelming challenge as we see discipline in most schools not being achieved. It is either because students are being hostile and parents are supporting them or some schools are not interested in it. On the other hand, learners – especially the younger ones – are learning from their teachers and older generation in how to behave in terms of feeling unjust. We can see examples of this in the Kenyan Public Schools Teachers Strike, the South Africa Universities Students Strike as well as the Liberian Major Public University Students Strike. All these strikes occurred within three months with one strike after the other.

2.1 Causes of Discipline Problems

Curwin and Mendler (1988) outline several causes of discipline problems. These causes are very relevant to the context of Africa.

Societal Violence: According to Curwin and Mendler, “we live in a society where resolving problems through shootings ... and threats of injury is commonplace” (1988: 5). This was evident in the three strikes mentioned earlier.

Negative Media Influence: The 21st century has widened the use of the media so much so that it is now used almost everywhere, especially through the use of smartphones. Learners are accorded the opportunity to access the media (TV, radio, literature, smartphones, etc.). Nangale affirms that majority of the learners had access to the first three of the social media (2001: 32). Curwin and Mendler have “noticed how most popular TV shows glamorize and glorify anti-authority protagonists as they behave irresponsibly” (1988: 5).

Westerners Individualistic Life Influence on Modern Day Africa: There is a trend of individualistic lifestyle influencing Africa – primarily the urban parts of Africa. This is what Curwin and Mendler called “me generation” (1988:6). Many learners are no longer interested in what will benefit the society but on what will first benefit them. They are influenced by the upbringing of their parents in the society as well as what they (see pg. 6 of *Discipline with Dignity* by Curwin and Mendler: 1988). The society in Africa is losing grip of its communal living. Parents are now pressured to find well-paid jobs to support them. Therefore, some parents spend more hours in school to become better trained for the job. As a result, parents are not home to cater to the needs of their children and community members are also not helping children for fear that some parents might be furious were they to hear that a member of the community disciplined their children. Parents are now leaving the responsibility with housemaids (Nangale, 2001: 24-36).

Lack of Secure Homes: Parenting is now becoming a struggle around the world and also in Africa. We are now seeing a generation of single parents. In the West we see a higher rate of divorce than marriages (Curwin and Mendler: 1988: 6). Moreover, we also see single-parent families becoming common (Curwin and Mendler: 1988: 6). In modern Africa, we are also seeing this trend of single parents as fathers of children are leaving the responsibility primarily to the mothers, young women are influenced through watching soap operas and so forth. Hence, most children are affected because these parents are either busy fending for the children or they lack proper ideas on how to train their children and they're not allowing the community to help in nurturing the kids.

Boring Classes: For some people nothing is more painful than a boring event or day. Learners are no exemption. Learners enjoy a class that is lively and where the teacher is sensitive to their feelings. Students tend to misbehave when classes become boring by doing things that will make the teacher angry (Curwin and Mendler, 1988: 7-8). A boring class is one that the teacher is only focused on his/her personal feelings and ignores how the students feel or appear in class. Students are also commanded to stay for certain duration in school or class. These hours sometimes are irritating to students. Those decisions are often not made with students' participation. As a result, the students feel powerless when they cannot do anything about them.

Attacks on Dignity: Most students' feelings are being ignored by schools administrators and students. They feel hurt when leaders in schools fail to listen to their plight. As a result, they try to find solution to their plight by fighting back (Curwin and Mendler, 1988: 10).

Undisciplined Educators: Some educators have poor work ethics. Some are irresponsible and dishonest. According to Klerk and Rens,

The moral crisis in schools boils down to learners who do not respect one another, their teachers or property. The absence of a work ethics in educators and learners, dishonesty, the absence of responsibility on all levels coincides with increasing self-centeredness; growing ethical illiteracy, vandalism and the increase of violence also add to this

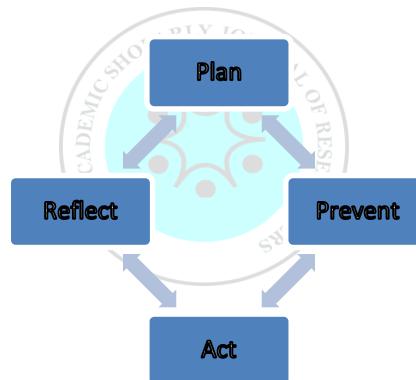
moral crisis. The spirit of poor discipline in schools does not only manifest in ill-disciplined learners, but is also exhibited by undisciplined educators who are not serious about and committed to their task and calling (page 359).

2.2 Making a Difference in Discipline

In making a difference in discipline, we need to realize and teach students that values and discipline are interwoven. Schools need to teach students values by allowing them to think critically about why they accept the values. The values that students are to accept are good moral values because they will help form their conscience which is the foundation in living a life full of strong moral values. Holmes asserts that, Moral values are only one kind of value, then, but they are inseparably intertwined with other kinds; and what we in fact value, individually and as a society, needs careful scrutiny and realignment with God's good ends for his creatures. *Hence, we need to form our consciences* for sensitivity to and a realignment of right values (italics mine) (1991: 29). Schools are to "build a value-sharing environment and value-sharing society". This society should inculcate the values of affection and respect for students, provide skills, encourage students to participate in decision making, provide goods and services for students (Rucker, Arnsperger and Brodbeck, 1969: 7).

We need to develop in students an inner motivation to accept values and allow them to internalize why discipline is essential. The more students are intrinsically motivated to accept values and discipline, the smoother the teaching learning process will be. Therefore, Klerk and Rens note: It is clear that discipline involves much more than the good organisation or management of the classroom and the school. It also includes an inner or personal discipline in both teachers and learners. The three concepts, namely education, values and discipline, have to be intrinsically bound together if there is to be any true education in the lives of children (page 359)

Disciplinarians in schools are "to teach students to make responsible choices and allow them learn from the outcomes of their decisions – responsibility model of discipline" (Curwin and Mendler, 1988: 26). They can also adapt the discipline model below. This is what I call the **PPAR Discipline Model**.



Plan – At this level, the disciplinarian involves the learners on how to help maintain discipline within the school environment.

Prevent – The disciplinarian is creating avenues that will help to curtail several indiscipline acts done by the students.

Act – This only occurs when the previous two methods fail. The disciplinarian will have to react after the proactive method, which is the prevention method, fails.

Reflect – The most important of all. The disciplinarian has to retrospect on how the disciplinary process went with his or her student(s). He or she has to also engage the person(s) involved to understand areas that will help him/her improve the next time a disciplinary decision has to be made.

It is good to adapt this method. However, we need to consider that, Effective discipline comes from the heart and soul of the teacher (*parent*). It comes from the belief that teaching students to take responsibility for their behavior is as much the "job" of the teacher as teaching *any other subject* and more important than simply enforcing rules...It comes from the belief that all students need hope (italics mine) (Curwin and Mendler, 1988: 31).

3.0 TEACHING-ASSESSING VALUES IN PLURALISTIC SCHOOLS

Christian educators are to have strong philosophies of education that are rooted in God's Word. Their philosophies of education should never try to destroy the image of God that is in every learner. They should help children to realize this image. The challenge of false doctrines from some Christian schools and also the idea of relativism in public schools cannot be ignore. Hence, Christian educators can still live an exemplary life in these places. As the old adage says, "our lifestyles preach the most powerful sermons".

This becomes even more powerful in the pluralistic setting. Christian educators are to live lives that they will keep pressing towards the mark of the high calling (Phil. 3:12-14). In achieving this, Van Brummelen cautions us to distinguish peoples' actions and words from who they are, understand the environment you are working in, get involved with the community, be an active listener, discuss religions' roles in various cultures, respect each student and staff, live a life of integrity, compassion and love (1998: 228-229).

Christian educators in such an environment who want to make changes are to understand the environment very well and find influential people who they can try to befriend and present the gospel to before winning people over to Christ. Christian educators should do their best to maintain these values as highlighted by Keith-Spiegel if they want to make a change in their surroundings. They are: "respect the autonomy of others, do no harm, benefits to others, fairness and equity – be objective, fidelity and honesty, dignity, daring, do your best – value the pursuit of excellence and take pride in your work" (Keith-Spiegel, n.d.)

4.0 CONCLUSION

Throughout this paper, I have argued that values and discipline can best be seen in the informal and/or hidden curriculum. It proposes that every figure here can be used by parents, teachers and faith community members. Values, discipline and the roles of parents are all interwoven interchangeably. As a result, Wilson asserts, "if parents and teachers refuse to discipline, they are holding in contempt the education they offer" (1999: 9). The school environment will function well if we heed to Einstein's position of value:

It is essential that the student acquire an understanding of and a lively feeling for values. He must acquire a vivid sense of the beautiful and the morally good. Otherwise he – with his specialized knowledge – more closely resembles a well-trained dog than a harmoniously developed person (Einstein as quoted by Holmes, 1991:27-28).

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