

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL INDISCIPLINE

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Abstract

School discipline and school indiscipline is one of the most important issues in pedagogical theory and practice. Testimonies of various situations in schools in the Republic of North Macedonia indicate that the educational component in the schools is reduced, the teaching staff are more often faced with problems of how to establish discipline with dignity, how to raise the quality of moral education, and how to solve the problems of indiscipline of individual students. The paper presents result of investigated teachers' opinions and views in primary education. The aim of this study is to find out what teachers think about school discipline and indiscipline, what kind of model of school discipline do they implement in their work, and how teachers are solving problems with indiscipline? In this research were included 70 teachers from VI to IX grade in primary schools from Bitola, Prilep, and Ohrid municipality in the Republic of North Macedonia. The results of this research are the basis for taking future steps and recommendations for solving problems with school indiscipline.

Keywords: school discipline, indiscipline, models of discipline, teachers.

Introduction

School discipline as a pedagogical phenomenon has not been studied specifically until the 1970s. It was considered that teachers would acquire the skills of discipline spontaneously, with the course of their experience. Scientists from the United States began to deal with pioneer research and practical discipline. During this period, a large wave of interest in school discipline developed.

Although school discipline and school indiscipline constitute one of the most important issues in pedagogical theory and practice, the interest in them in our region remains to be an overlooked topic. It is not covered in textbooks, it is rarely treated in scientific-professional literature, and there is only a little research conducted about it. Models of discipline that are taught during the education of future teachers in different countries are not known to us. Very often, (although sometimes we do not want to admit it) teachers base discipline on punishment and reward. Teachers solve problems with indiscipline mostly through ad-hoc actions. It seems that cases of indiscipline and steps that are taken are often uncoordinated with other relevant authorities in the school.

School discipline and school indiscipline

Two distinct categories of definitions for school discipline can be found according to the focus of understanding and meanings, given by specialists and scientists. In the first category of definitions, authors are focused on the "learning process", which means that students should learn how to express their feelings according to some expected "right" behavior. This category of definitions is based on the Latin origin of the word discipline which means "to learn" (Morrison & Skiba, 2001, p.179). *The word "discipline" is related to the Latin words disco ('to*

learn) and *disciplina* ('learning') Adams (1974, p.21); *The development of self-control through the teaching of problem-solving skills and learning more productive ways to express feelings* (Dupper, 2010, p.15). According to this understanding and explanation, school discipline has positive meanings (Fontana, 1985, Gasic-Pavusic, 2005).

Negative meanings of discipline are related with the second category of definitions. Discipline, according to this category means to control, to punish, to be submissive to rules and authority, to suspend and expel. These are often intervention practices in cases of school indiscipline and misbehavior (Trnavac, 1996; Morrison & Skiba, 2001; Gasic-Pavusic, 2005; Kohn, 2006; Lundau, 2009; Dupper, 2010; Nešić & Popović Ćitić, 2018).

Following the understanding of authors about the actions that should (or shouldn't) be taken to discipline children, we can find two views on discipline: traditional view and progressive view. They are approaches related with control, and influence of adults. According to the traditional view, to discipline children is necessary adult control and influence, so the children can develop self-control. According to the progressive view, children are good by their nature, so no action should be taken to discipline them; they will learn self-control on their own, through their development and self-experience. Especially when we discuss about discipline in the classroom, these views of discipline are related with some concepts of education. They are similar with the socio-centric pedagogical conception of education and pedocentric pedagogical conception of education (Potkonjak, 2003; Trnavac, 2005; Malesevic & Tadic, 2012). The socio-centric conception is directed towards the interests of the community, *education should be in function of community* (Malesevic & Tadic, 2012, p.58). As opposed to it, the pedocentric conception puts the interest on the individual. We may find these attitudes in Russo, Lock, Tolstoy, Delacroix, Key, Montessori, etc.

When we speak about the opinions of theoreticians and practitioners on what discipline means, Trnavac gives an explanation that these opinions can be divided in three groups:

a) *These are only educational means that are compulsorily, providing educational work and respect for the agreed norms of behavioral strikes, remarks, criticisms, requests, bans and penalties).*

b) *These are programs, i.e. tasks for the formation of certain habits and personality traits, such as work habits: accuracy, order, accountability, fulfillment of obligations; behavioral habits: respect for teaching and school curriculum rules and regulations, respect for teachers, postponements, attitude towards friends, behavior in public places; the relationship to the social property: minding their own and other people's affairs, opposing fraud, thefts and of the like.*

c) *It is a form of interpersonal relationships that emerge within and during the realization of the educational process. (Trnavac, 1996, p.18).*

Indiscipline, as a word, is opposite of discipline. According to the opposite meaning of this word, Timothy gives a definition: Indiscipline is the direct opposite of discipline, i.e. lack of discipline. (Timothy, 2008, p. 110).

When we search about indiscipline understanding and explanations in previous literature, we find out that this term is perceived mostly as misbehaviors from students. Indiscipline, is perceived as a state of lacking standards and principles of controlled behavior, or limited ability for self-control, threat to educators' authority, dominance, and class work, or an impediment to learning, and a cause of distress. (Kuloheri, 2016, p.60). In the lists of misbehaviors, the author also points to the destruction of school property, immoral behavior, deviant behavior, aggression, drug and alcohol abuse, sexual abuse among peers, physical abuse of teacher, smoking, stealing, fighting, rudeness, tardiness in classes, chewing gum, disrespect of authority, talking in class, disturbing the class, conflict, use of abusive language, use of weapons, etc. We see that the level and interpretation of what is considered to be an irregular behavior varies. Approaches or discipline measures taken to solve indiscipline depend on the nature and cause of misbehavior.

The difference between the terms classroom management and classroom discipline

We want to give a short explanation of these two terms. Often, classroom management and classroom discipline are used as synonyms. We agree with the authors who make a distinction between these terms.

Classroom management includes the organization of students, space, time, and materials, so that the teacher can then allow the students to learn the intended content (Wong & Wong, 1998).

“Classroom discipline, on the other hand, is a broader, umbrella term, describing the teacher’s efforts to watch over a multitude of activities in the classroom, including learning, social interaction, and student behavior”. (Martin, Yin, & Baldwin, 1998).

Classroom management is about teachers’ management of the process of education in the classroom, including the management of teaching and learning strategies. Classroom discipline is about the behavior of students in the classroom. Classroom management and classroom discipline are connected together. Classroom discipline depends on classroom management, also good discipline in the classroom enables effective realization of the teacher’s responsibility.

Types of school discipline and models of discipline

Some authors, who agree that discipline should be part of the educational process and classroom management, discuss the types of discipline. These types are the different aspects of the discipline process. They are related with methods and actions that are used to discipline the students. The types of discipline are mostly divided into three groups: preventive, corrective, and supportive. *Preventive Discipline -- measures taken to prevent misbehavior by keeping the students engaged. Supportive Discipline -- measures taken to assist students with self-control, by helping them to get back on task. Corrective Discipline -- measures taken when students are not following classroom or school rules.* (Charles, 1999). According to Tan, there are three other types of discipline: developmental, preventive, and corrective (Tan, 2002). *The developmental aspect includes training, adoption of values and standards for acceptable behavior, that is, the overall organization of work on time and classroom management. The preventive aspect refers to setting the limits of behavior and determining the basic rules of behavior, informing students about what is considered acceptable or unacceptable behavior, and the consequences of which lead to an unacceptable behavior. The corrective aspect involves the application of a teaching strategy and intervention procedures, in order to maintain acceptable behavior and change unacceptable behavior (use of corrective measures such as rewarding and punishing).* (Gasic-Paviscic, 2005, p.9, 10).

Some other authors present these types of discipline: corrective and preventive discipline (Straus & Fauchier, 2011; Kotkamp, 2005; Nešić & Popović Ćitić, 2018). Here preventive discipline includes developmental and preventive actions (explained according to previous authors).

Preventive discipline: is the part of the discipline plan that removes factors from the classroom that will promote misbehavior. This part is essential for the teacher to teach the students exactly how they want the student to behave within the classroom. Every part in the classroom should be clear and concise so as not to confuse the students. (Kotkamp, 2005, p.2).

Charles combined prevention, control, and correction, in his definition of discipline. *“Discipline is intended to prevent, suppress, and redirect misbehaviour”.* (Charles, 2002, p. 3).

History practice, in a lot of countries in the world, and especially in the USA, is largely based on punishing and expelling students from school. Research shows that this is also a current disciplinary practice in a lot of schools in different countries. Corporal punishment is legal today and it is practiced in many countries in the world. Most of the European countries have left physical punishment in the 19th century, while some of the countries in the Europe have never practiced this form of punishment.

In the USA, from 1969 to 1979, a number of models were developed, so teachers could easily deal with students' misbehavior and increase efficiency of the teaching process. Researchers started to develop a lot of systematic models of discipline. We will mention some models of discipline, without the intention of giving a complete analysis of these models of discipline: Fritz Redl-William Wattenberg-1951, Brophy and Good Model, Richard Curwin – Allen Mendelr Model-1988, 1992, The Jacob Kounin Model -1971, Neo-Skinnerian Model-1960, Haim Ginott Model (considered non-interventionist model approach) -1971, William Glasser Model-1969, 1985, 1992 (Quality school), Rudolf Dreikurs Model (Model of democracy)-1972, Lee and Marlene Canter Model (Assertive Discipline Model is one of the most spread out models with more of a million trained teachers, mostly based on punishment and reward, but is intended as an intervention, for example when some rules are broken and corrections are needed, this model concentrates on students' attitudes and self-control)-1976, 1992, Frederick H. Jones Model (Positive Discipline, as a previously mentioned model, is also based on intervention action)-1979, 1987, Thomas Gordon Model (non-interventionist approach)-1979, 1984, Redl-Watenberg Model, James Dobson Model (alsoof the interventionist approach)-1992, William Rogers Model, Alfie Kohn Model, Eric Bern Model, Alfred Alschuler-Paulo Freire Model, Ronald Morrish Model (Right discipline) etc. All of these models are based on behavioral, cognitive, or cognitive-behavioral theoretical approach. All of these models have their own advantages and disadvantages and critics who point to their positive and negative sides. All of them have different approaches on discipline problems. None of these models give solutions for every situation and cannot be ideal. Our opinion is that disciplinary policies and procedures, especially in democratic societies, should not be based on suspension, punishment, and exclusion of misbehaving students from schools. Approaches and methods that should be used in the processes of discipline should be preventive, based on a good relationship between all participants in the educational process and other authorities in society, based on results of researching good practices, on building knowledge and skills of teachers, to solve and reduce indiscipline of students in school, to build school environment that supports students and increases students' skills to control their behaviors.

Methodology of research

To get acquainted with the situation in our schools about: teacher's opinions about the discipline of their students, teacher's opinions about the nature of problems with the discipline, about who is to be blamed for the state of indiscipline? Who takes the merits for the discipline? How teachers solve the problems of discipline? Whether teachers know the models of discipline? We have conducted a research which aims to give a description of the teacher's opinions.

The research includes 70 teachers from VI to IX grade from the primary schools in several municipalities: Bitola, Prilep, and Ohrid, in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The survey examines attitudes and opinions of teachers. The research is designed with quantitative and qualitative approaches and uses a case study method. Open-ended questions were used to collect data in semi-structured interviews. Answers from interviews are grouped under related titles and their frequencies are identified.

For the purpose of this research, we started with the assumption and we set the hypothesis that the students, in their teachers' opinion, are not disciplined, and teachers do not have enough knowledge on how to deal with the indiscipline of their students. We decided to investigate teachers who teach students from VI to IX grade, because we want to gain insights into the teachers' opinions who teach in different classes and grades. The research doesn't take into account the teachers' age, years of working experience, or whether they work in village or city schools. We didn't ask teachers for their understanding of the concept of discipline, so in this

interview, the concept of discipline may be used and understood in the same way with a number of other related concepts (e.g., classroom disruption, classroom misbehavior). This was intentionally done because the research aims to get acquainted with some generalizations about discipline by the teachers. It's also considered as first step that should be taken for another more spread investigation about the concept of discipline in the future with teachers and students.

Analysis of research and results

Teachers' views and opinions about students' discipline. We can see answer frequency in Table 1.

Table 1. Teachers' opinions about students' discipline?

Answer choices	Frequency
Students are not enough disciplined	45
Students are disciplined	17
Students are not disciplined	8

Teachers' opinions about problems with students' discipline in their schools. We can see answer frequency in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers' opinions about problems of discipline in their schools?

Answer choices	Frequency
We have some problems with discipline, but they are not so great	50
We don't have problems with discipline	12
We have great problems with discipline	8

Which students' behaviours teachers find as undisciplined?

Interviewing teachers' opinions about undisciplined behaviour of their students, we gained the following descriptions: verbally abusing their peers, being aggressive with their peers, verbally abusing teachers, talking in class, using phones in class, interfering with school property, neglecting schoolwork and homework, being late in classes.

Teachers' opinions about who is to be blamed for the state of indiscipline?

Most of the teacher's point to parents, peers, character of students, and influence of modern technologies, as main factors for the indiscipline of students.

Teachers' opinions about who takes the merits for the discipline?

Most of the teacher's point to themselves, parents, and character of students, as main factors for good discipline of their students.

Teachers' views and opinions about whether they have enough knowledge and experience for dealing with the discipline of their students?

Frequency of answers are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers' opinions about their knowledge and experience in dealing with discipline

Answer choices	Frequency
I don't have enough knowledge and experience to deal with discipline of students	55
I have enough knowledge and experience to deal with the discipline of students	12
I don't know	3

Teachers’ answers about whether they are familiar with some models of discipline.

None of the teachers gave a positive answer.

Teachers’ answers about the methods and activities they use to discipline their students.

Most of the teachers point to rewards, praise, or a higher grade, or the inclusion of some motivational school activities, such as playing some games. They also point to rewards, by giving greater responsibilities in the school environment, or punishment, by giving out lower grades, loading the student with schoolwork or homework, or by ignoring the misbehavior, as methods that they use to manage students’ discipline.

Have you ever been “blamed” for the indiscipline of your students by your colleagues or parents?

Frequency of answers are given in Table 4.

Table 4. Blaming for students’ indiscipline

Answer choices	Frequency
I have, very often, been “blamed” for students’ indiscipline	37
I have, very rarely, been “blamed” for students’ indiscipline	22
I haven’t been “blamed” for students’ indiscipline	11

When you have some problems with discipline, who do you involve in its solutions?

Most of the teachers respond that they solve problems by themselves; some of them include other persons in solving problems, such as the parents, peers, or other colleagues and authorities from the school.

Teachers’ recommendations for better discipline in the schools

Teachers provide the following answers: Teachers’ trainings for their competence development, workshops on how to manage school discipline, workshops with students on how to manage and control some behaviors, workshops with parents, materials for work, use of different techniques of working with students, creation of positive school environment, inclusion of parents in the process of solving discipline problems, inclusion of students in the process of solving discipline problems.

Conclusion and recommendations

Students, in the opinion of their teachers, are not enough disciplined. The hypothesis that the teachers do not have enough knowledge on how to deal with the indiscipline of their students was confirmed by the teachers’ answers. None of the interviewed teachers is familiar with the models of school discipline. Rewards, such as praise or a higher grade, punishment, such as a lower grade or more schoolwork or homework, and ignoring the misbehavior, are pointed out as the most frequently used methods by teachers in order to manage their students’ discipline. It is especially important to point out that none of the interviewed teachers emphasized punishment to a negative extreme, such as students’ expulsion from school.

Most of the teachers’ point to parents, peers, the character of students, and the influence of modern technologies, as the main factors for the students’ indiscipline. They don’t point to themselves factors for the indiscipline. In the contrary, most of the teachers refer to themselves, parents, and the characters of the students, as main factors for their students’ good discipline. The teachers’ views show that they are very often “blamed” by parents and other colleagues for the indiscipline of their students.

The opinions of the interviewed teachers about indiscipline behaviours consist of: verbally abusing of their peers, being aggressive with their peers, verbally abusing their teachers, talking in class, using phones in class, interfering with school property, neglecting schoolwork and homework, being late in classes. Teachers answer that they have problems with discipline in their schools, yet these problems are not of great proportions. Teachers solve problems with indiscipline mostly through ad-hoc actions. Cases of indiscipline and steps that are taken are often coordinated with other relevant authorities in the school.

Teacher's trainings for their competence development, workshops on how to manage school discipline, workshops with students on how to manage and control some behaviors, workshops with parents, materials for work, use of different techniques of working with students, creation of positive school environment, inclusion of parents in the process of solving discipline problems, inclusion of students in the process of solving discipline problems, are pointed out as things that should be done in the future, in order to ensure a better discipline in schools.

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