Restorative Discipline Approach to Resolving School Indiscipline: A Good Way to Go in Ghana? Perceptions of Some Ghanaian Basic School Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Restorative discipline approach is a widely utilized approach to resolving school indiscipline. Positive discipline strategies, which are the currently recommended discipline strategies of Ghana Education Service, involves the application of the tenets of restorative discipline approach. This study, employed the phenomenological research design of the qualitative research approach, to explore the lived experiences of 15 basic school teachers and 15 basic school headteachers on the restorative discipline approach, in terms of how they see the restorative discipline approach, the challenges with the use of this approach and how the challenges with the use of this approach could be addressed, to bring lasting discipline in Ghanaian basic schools, following public concern of indiscipline in Ghanaian schools, even after the introduction of positive discipline strategies. With the use of interview and focus group discussion to gather data, the participants generally, expressed positive perceptions of the use of the restorative discipline approach despite indicating several challenges with its use in Ghanaian basic schools. Suggestions including education of stakeholders, provision of facilities for Guidance and Counselling and commitment by stakeholders were made by the participants to improve the use of the restorative discipline approach in Ghanaian basic schools.

Keywords: Restorative discipline, Positive discipline, Corporal punishment, Perceptions, Phenomenology

INTRODUCTION

Punitive discipline has been a long-used approach to discipline in Ghana. This is partly due to the cultural and religious beliefs of the people and the perceived effectiveness of this approach to discipline (End Corporal Punishment, 2020; Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, 2018; Twum, 2021; Yeboah, 2020). As a result, justifiable forms of corporal punishment are permissible in the Ghana's Children's Act of 1998 and the Revised Criminal Offences Act of 1960 (Ghana, 1998, Criminal Offences Act,1960).

These notwithstanding, several calls arose for a ban on the use of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools, as a result of a number of negative consequences associated with its use as stipulated in the literature (Addison, 2015; Gershoff et al., 2019; Heekes et al., 2022; Le & Nguyen, 2019; Maiti, 2021). As a result, though the use of corporal punishment is supported by a section of society as enumerated in the literature (Bulmuo, 2017; Dwamena, 2021; Ghanaweb, 2020; Twum, 2021), Ghana Education Service (GES) took administrative policy in 2017, banning the use of corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools (Ghana Education Service, 2019a). In its place, positive discipline approach was adopted and recommended by GES for use by teachers in Ghanaian schools (Ghana Education Service, 2019b).

Positive discipline strategies largely aim at restoring the offender rather than punishing them for exhibiting wrong behavior. These strategies, therefore, utilize practices that bring together the offender, victim, and the entire community or significant players in the child's development, to resolve the problem at stake. The aim of positive discipline strategies is mostly to appease the victim and to restore the offender by providing him/her (the offender) with skills lacking in the environment that resulted in the offence committed. There are three (3)

main positive discipline strategies used in schools. These are restorative discipline, positive behavioral intervention and support and collaborative and proactive solutions (Oxley & Holden, 2021).

The term, restorative discipline, refers to "a process whereby all the parties with a stake in a particular offence come together to resolve collectively how to deal with the aftermath of an offence and its implications for the future" (Marshal, as cited in Borton, 2008:216). On the other hand, the National Commission on Restorative Justice (NCRJ) defined restorative discipline as "a victim-sensitive response to criminal offending, which, through engagement with those affected by the crime, aims to make amends for the harm that has been caused to victims and communities and which facilitates offender rehabilitation and integration into society" (NCRJ, 2009:34).

Howard Zehr is credited with the introduction of restorative justice into the crime justice space (Nelson & Nelson, 2020). Current restorative justice and, hence, discipline emanated from "Elimra Case" in Elimra, Ontario, where rather than using the punitive measure to deal with two teenagers charged with 22 counts of vandalism, a local group used this approach to resolve the problem (Noakes-Duncan, 2016). According to Borton (2008) and Motsinger (2018), restorative discipline was born out of three (3) main factors: social and political moves to come out with more informal route to solving conflicts, a growing dislike for punitive punishment, and the formation of groups of victims of corporal punishment. In restorative discipline, three principal actors are brought together to resolve a problem—the victim, the offender and the community.

The theory of restorative discipline is explained by McCold and Wachtel (2003). McCold and Wachtel's (2003) model depicts the responsibilities of the three parties in restorative discipline namely the victim, the offender and the community in bringing about partial restoration, most restoration and full restoration of the parties involved. The responsibilities among the parties largely involve an interaction between the parties to decide on an amicable solution to the harm caused by the indiscipline act of the offender and the restoration of all the parties to the offence to a position prior to the harm being caused. This shows that restorative discipline avails the opportunity for parties who have been most affected by an occurrence to meet to share their feelings, explain how they were harmed and develop a strategy to amend the harm done or block its reoccurrence. Thus, the restorative model is uniting, making room for the offender to correct and clear the offender tag (Gregory et al., 2016). It, therefore, aims at the well-being of the victim, community and the offender (Nelson & Nelson, 2020). The philosophical base of restorative discipline, therefore, is on treating all individuals with fairness and involving their co-operation in resolving problems (Scriven, 2017). Restorative discipline has its roots in a perspective of human nature which denotes that man is forgiving, loving and good-natured, and aims at reconciliation (Borton, 2008; Kervick et al., 2019). Its focus, therefore, is in line with positive psychology which looks at the good side of human nature namely joy, love, cheerfulness and happiness among others.

First administered in the criminal justice system, restorative discipline seeks to fix the damage caused by an offensive act while stemming further offences largely through reconciliation conferences involving victims, offenders and community members (Karp & Frank, 2015). Therefore, the focus of restorative discipline is on repairing the damage caused rather than on punishment as in the case of retributive discipline (Ntombizandile et al., 2020; Wachtel, 2016). It, therefore, has a co-operative focus rather than a top-down approach as in the case of punishment. It is, therefore, seen as more effective than punishment (Ntombizandile et al., 2020). Studies by Blood and Thorsborne, Queensland Education Department, Youth Justice Board, as cited in Payne and Welch (2015), have testified to the effectiveness of restorative discipline over punitive discipline in dealing with school-based misbehaviour. To this extent, it is said that the restorative discipline approach is more effective in the school system than in the court system because of the close nature of interaction in the school system (Payne & Welch, 2015).

In the school situation, restorative discipline seeks to mend the sour relationship between pupils and educators as a way of resolving conflicts between them and as a way of showing empathic understanding towards the perpetrator of the offence (Jeznik et al., 2020; Oxley & Holden, 2021; Vanjaarsueld, 2011). Though restorative discipline has been found successful in controlling school discipline, its successful implementation is found to be dependent on teachers' training on restorative discipline and, hence, requires re-orientation of teachers towards school discipline (Oxley & Holden, 2021; Weaver & Swank, 2020). Effective implementation of

restorative discipline practices is expected to bring outcomes of self-regulation, happiness, trust and self-discipline which are the focus of the positive psychology theory.

Several studies support the use of restorative discipline. Studies in Japan and Australia have demonstrated the resolution of most school-related disciplinary problems through the use of restorative discipline (Fronius et al., 2019). Watchel cited in Payne and Welch (2015) reports that restorative discipline enables the school to find its own individualized solutions to school misbehaviour so that the victim, offender and community play key roles for amicable resolution. Settlement is usually accomplished through restorative conference. Sprague (2014) noted that restorative discipline makes people mindful of their actions by engaging them in one-on-one interaction with those they have offended. This makes them aware that everybody has rights. Beitzel and Castle (2013) reveal that restorative discipline (1) is successful in dealing with a variety of crime rates not excluding violent offenses, (2) has a high likelihood of acceptance as good by both parties, (3) accounts for a reduction in the level of indiscipline and (4) decreases the feeling of anger, retaliation and the propensity to seek retributive justice. Morrison and Vaandering (2012), on the other hand, opined that restorative discipline builds the student's sense of maturity by aiding in problem solving, reconciliation and compensation. They further reiterate that this method builds understanding and motivation in others while allowing moods of anger, anxiety and humiliation to be articulated and settled by all parties. Other evaluative studies have pointed to the other positive outcomes of the restorative discipline strategy. For instance, Stowe (2016) saw that restorative discipline improves relationship and promotes empathic understanding for each other. Furthermore, it encourages teachers and pupils to work together and creates the sense in pupils to take control of their behaviour.

Notwithstanding the positive aspects of restorative discipline, Stowe (2016) further reported that for success in the use of restorative discipline, repetition of practices, proper structuring of acts and reasoned engagements are required. Acosta et al. (2019), on the other hand, in an evaluation of restorative discipline utilizing self-report from children with the purpose of finding out how restorative discipline builds a supportive learning environment reported that restorative discipline improves children's support and bond to each other, their social skills and perception of the climate of the school, and significantly reduces their rate of falling victim to cyberbullying. Studies specifically carried out in England reported that restorative discipline reduced students' absenteeism and exclusion, and increased their achievement test scores in mathematics and science (Flanagan, 2014). Bevington (2015), in a study carried out in a primary school in London, found out that staff respondents who were six in number gave a positive outlook of restorative discipline. The staff reported that restorative discipline was far more effective in conflict resolution than the traditional punitive approach. Again, restorative discipline was in line with school values as compared with punitive discipline. Effective implementation of restorative discipline practices is expected to bring outcomes of self-regulation, happiness, trust and self-discipline on the part of the parties. These outcomes are the focus of the positive psychology theory.

Despite the positive outlook of the use of the restorative discipline model, a study by Payne and Welch (2015) gave a disturbing picture with its use. In a study at United States of America using a national random sample of 1,287 schools, they discovered that schools that have proportionally large black population had a lower probability of utilizing restorative discipline compared with punitive discipline. This affirmed a study that high minority or black population in a school led to a greater use of punitive discipline (Payne & Welch, 2010; Peguero et al., 2015). This they attributed to the phenomenon of racial threat. In another study to set out school-based issues that promote the use of restorative discipline practices, Payne and Welch (2015) found that the school condition, that is, whether the school is middle, vocational or otherwise, does not influence the usage of restorative discipline. Similarly, the proportion of male and female population did not also influence its use. Also, teachers' demographic characteristics did not influence its use. However, the structure and size of the school affected the use of restorative discipline. Schools with larger population were found likely to use restorative practices. Schools with high black, minority and Hispanic population were less likely to use restorative discipline practices other than punitive discipline, corroborating previous findings by Payne and Welch (2010) and Peguero et al., (2015).

Problem Statement

Restorative discipline approach is an accepted approach to discipline as attested to by the literature(Bevington,

2015; Flanagan, 2014; Oxley & Holden, 2021). Ghana, however, has had a long experience with the use of corporal punishment as a discipline approach. The use of corporal punishment is also accepted in Ghanaian community amidst several criticisms of its use. The criticisms of its use, led to a ban on its use in Ghanaian schools through an administrative policy in 2017 (Ghana Education Service, 2019a). The use of corporal punishment was replaced with positive discipline strategies by Ghana Education Service by an administrative policy in 2017 (Ghana Education Service, 2019b). Positive discipline strategies largely follow the line of restorative discipline approach (Oxley & Holden, 2021).

With corporal punishment now abolished in Ghanaian schools and replaced with an approach that utilizes the restorative discipline approach, how do teachers perceive that move? How readily acceptable is the restorative discipline approach to the teachers? What challenges do teachers face in their line of use of the restorative discipline approach and what do they think can be done to resolve these challenges? A search through literature from prominent databases indicates little by way of information on Ghanaian teachers' perceptions of the use of restorative discipline approach to school discipline. It is this gap that this study sought to fill by using the qualitative approach to explore the perceptions of basic school teachers on this line of approach to school discipline.

Three research questions guided this study. They were: How do teachers perceive the nature of restorative discipline? What are the challenges with the use of restorative discipline? How can the challenges of restorative discipline be addressed? Ascertaining answers to these questions is imperative, as a way of evaluating to find out how the current discipline policy is faring in Ghanaian basic schools and what actions need to be taken to improve and sustain its use by stakeholders.

METHODOLOGY

Research framework

In terms of the research framework, that is, research paradigm, research approach, and research design, this study adopted constructivism– interpretivism paradigms, qualitative research approach, and phenomenological research design respectively. The constructivism– interpretivism paradigms are based on the premise that knowledge is not objective in its form but is something that has to be constructed from the point of view of the experiencer (Guba, 1990; Iofrida et al., 2018). These paradigms were adopted because the researchers wanted to construct knowledge from the views of the participants of the study. A qualitative approach was adopted to enable the researchers to explore and describe the perceptions of the participants of the study on the phenomenon under study. Since the study was conducted with the intention of understanding the participants' experiences of their use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment, Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological design was adopted for the study. Gill (2020) asserted that Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method follows the line of descriptive phenomenology by Husserl. It originated from psychology and its method of enquiry is scientific. The aim of Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method is to reach out to the core essence of a particular phenomenon.

Population, sample and sampling procedures

Fifteen basic school teachers who had experience in the use of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment, by having undergone professional teacher education which in part, includes topics on behaviour modification strategies of pupils, were purposefully selected for the study after the necessary ethical clearance was obtained. These teachers were engaged in an in-depth interview on their experiences with the use of alternative strategies to corporal punishment. Furthermore, fifteen headteachers with experience in the use of the alternative strategies, by virtue of their training and use of the strategies, were engaged in focus group discussion to ascertain their experiences on the use of the strategies. There were three focus groups of five members each. The focus group discussion data were used to triangulate the data from the interviews in the course of the analysis of the data. The interview as well as the focus group discussion guides were developed by the researchers and content validated by the Ethical Review Committee of College of Education, University of South Africa.

Data analysis procedure

The data from the two research techniques used for data collection namely the interview and the focus group discussion were thematically analyzed using Georgi et al., (2017) guide to phenomenological studies to arrive at the themes and the sub-themes of this study. Georgi et al., (2017) have presented steps undertaken to arrive at the essence of a phenomenon in the Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method. These steps are collecting the lived experiences of the key experiencers of the phenomenon under consideration, reading through the transcripts of the lived experiences and drawing meaning units from them after bracketing your experiences, and lastly, using the meaning units to form themes and sub-themes after assuming a scientific phenomenological reduction position. These were the steps used in arriving at the themes and sub-themes of this study during the data analysis.

In the analysis of the interview data, the interview participants were represented with the alphanumeric codes P1-P15 while the three focus groups were represented with alphanumeric codes FGD1-FGD3. This was done to ensure anonymity of their responses. Strategies, such as member checking, triangulation, and audit trail were used after obtaining the data to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings.

Demographics of the participants

Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic information of the participants of the study.

Table 1: Demographic data of the interview participants

Participant Code	Sex	Age Range	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Educational Qualification	Current Rank
P1	Male	41-50 years	20	M. Ed.	Assistant Director I
P2	Female	31-40 years	12	B.Ed.	Assistant Director II
P3	Female	31-40 years	15	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P4	Female	31-40 years	12	M. Ed.	Assistant Director I
P5	Male	31-40 years	13	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P6	Female	31-40 years	10	B. Sc. (Dip. Ed)	Assistant Director II
P7	Male	41-50 years	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P8	Male	20-30 years	5	Diploma	Senior Superintendent II
P9	Male	31-40 years	10	Diploma	Senior Superintendent II
P10	Male	31-40 years	10	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P11	Female	20-30 years	7	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P12	Female	31-40 years	11	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P13	Male	41-50 years	18	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
P14	Male	31-40 years	9	B. Ed.	Principal Superintendent
P15	Male	41-50 years	21	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II

From Table 1 above, it can be seen that nine (9) male, and six female teachers were interviewed. They had years of teaching experience ranging from the least of five (5) years to the highest of twenty-one (21) years. Just two (2) of the participants had their highest academic qualification as Diploma. Most of them had Bachelor's degrees, with two (2) of them having Master's degrees. In terms of their ranks in the teaching profession, just two (2) of them were at a near lower rank in the profession, that is, Senior Superintendent II. The majority of them was at the middle and higher ranks, namely, Principal Superintendent and Assistant Director, respectively. This means that the participants had considerable experience in teaching, and hence, they tapped from their rich experiences to share their perceptions of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment they use or have used in the course of their teaching.

Table 2: Demographic data of the focus group participants

Group Code	Sex	Age Range (Years)	Years of Teaching Experience	Highest Educational Qualification	Current Rank
FGD1	Male	41-50	26	MPhil.	Deputy Director
	Female	41-50	21	M. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	41-50	27	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Female	51-60	28	B. Ed.	Assistant Director I
	Male	41-50	21	M. Ed.	Assistant Director II
FGD2	Male	41-50	21	M. A.	Assistant Director II
	Male	31-40	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Female	31-40	12	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Female	41-50	20	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	31-40	14	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
FGD3	Male	51-60	28	MPhil.	Assistant Director I
	Female	41-50	23	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	51-60	24	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	51-60	26	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II
	Male	41-50	23	B. Ed.	Assistant Director II

In relation to the focus group discussions, five females and 10 males formed the three (3) focus groups. Twelve (12) of them were at the rank of Assistant Director II, two (2) were at Assistant Director I, and one (1) was at the rank of Deputy Director. Their range in terms of years of teaching experience was twelve (12) to twenty-eight (28) years.

FINDINGS

Research Question 1: How do teachers perceive the nature of restorative discipline?

Restorative discipline is one of the alternative strategies to corporal punishment which falls under the umbrella of positive discipline. It is a new line of discipline where instead of punishing a person for a misbehaviour, attempts are made to attack the behaviour rather than the person who misbehaved, by conferencing with the person (offender), victim, parents, community and other significant stakeholders in the offender's development as a way of restoring the offender to his previous state before the misbehaviour.

In research question one, the researchers sought to find out from the participants, their perceptions of the use of

restorative discipline in Ghanaian schools from the experiences they have had with the use of this approach to discipline in their teaching life. Two themes were identified from the thematic analysis of the perceptions of the participants on restorative discipline as a form of discipline in current dispensation. These were: restorative discipline is good and reformational to use, and restorative discipline is good but challenging to use.

Restorative discipline is good and reformational to use

In terms of the nature of restorative discipline, the participants expressed the perception that it is a good strategy of discipline and reforms offenders when used. The following narratives point to this finding from the analysis of the data:

P3, P14, P15, FGD2 and FGD3 indicated that, by the mode of operation of restorative discipline, it changes the person for the better:

> *P3:* This restorative discipline, I think we discipline children to reform them. So, if you discipline a child and there is no reformation, there is no discipline. Since restorative discipline reforms children, I think it should be enforced.

> P14: I know and believe that the restorative discipline strategy could reform the students well. So, if it is implemented well and it is well executed, it will work better than corporal punishment.

> P15: I will say it is good. Why am I saying so? As a teacher, you are a parent, counsellor, pastor and others. Why do you discipline someone? You want to transform him or her. So, sitting down with the child and parents will help in transforming the child.

> FGD2: It is good because in corporal punishment, we just punish. We don't tell the person what he actually did. With restorative discipline, it helps you to know the issues on the ground and helps you the one given out the discipline to do the right thing.

> FGD3: It is good, and it is helping. So, if you call parents and you share ideas about their wards, it helps a lot in changing the child.

For P5, P6, P8, P10, P12 and FGD2, restorative discipline changes the person for the better because it helps identify the root cause of the problem and also makes parents partners in the solution process:

> *P5:* It is a good practice which could lead to positive outcomes. It depends on how the other stakeholders get involved.

> P6: I think that it is good because teachers are not the only people to inculcate discipline in the child. It goes along with the help of parents. So, if you bring in the parents, then the student is there, the teachers are also there, then we know the weaknesses and strengths of the student. It may be the fault of parents so; actions can be taken.

> P8: It is good. Yes, maybe what the person is doing, it is coming from the family so when you sit with the family members, you will know the reasons why the child is misbehaving that way. So, sitting with the parents will really help.

> P10: It is a right procedure because you need to know more about the learner. Maybe there is something worrying him or her that is why he or she is doing that. So, you need to know.

> P12: Well, it would have been the best but here is the case most of the time, we don't have much interaction with the children in order to find, the root cause of the problem. So, finding the root cause of the problem is one nice thing we can do.

> FGD2: It is good because sometimes when you sit down with the parents, you get to know the actual reasons why the child is misbehaving and most of the misbehaviours they put up might be a problem they might be encountering at home.

For FGD1, it is good and reforms the child because it makes the community own the school and responds to its needs:

> *FGD1: This line of discipline is good. It means that the community will own the school. They will see themselves as part and parcel of the school. They will make their resources available to the school to help transform their children.*

The forgoing narratives indicate that restorative discipline is seen in a good light in the Ghanaian setting. It is seen that when properly and adequately instituted and practiced, it will bring about the reformation of pupils with disciplinary challenges.

Restorative discipline is good but challenging to use

Participants further indicated that restorative discipline is good as a discipline strategy, but it is challenging to use in the Ghanaian setting because of some problems with its use. The quotations below show how the participants expressed this concern:

P2 indicated that the use of the policy is good but at times, the stakeholders do not take it seriously and feel that the child is being pampered:

> *P2: The strategy is good but at times stakeholders think we are pampering the children too much. The workload is heavy on us so sometimes the restorative practices, they don't take them seriously.*

P4, P7, P9, P11 and P13 follow up with these perceptions:

> P4: It works. I think it is good but how are the teachers going to go about it? That is why I say that they should organize workshops for us so that we get to know what exactly we should do when carrying out such practices.

> P7: That approach, sitting down with the parents, child, teachers and others, it is good, but the truth is that it wastes time. When are you going to call the stakeholders to sit down and solve the child's problem? It will waste your time.

> P9: It is good, but it is a long-term solution. It takes time because, the child does something and you have to call in the parents. Even, if the parents will turn up, that is another problem. So, it is very challenging because it does not give immediate solution to the problem.

> P11: It is good, but with our Ghanaian culture, you can't do it effectively. If you tell the child to go and call in the parents, he or she will come and tell you "My mother says she can't come" "My mum says she doesn't have time".

> P13: It is good. We normally do it. Involving the parents ang others, though tedious, time consuming, if you do it willingly and wholeheartedly, it will work.

These narratives from the participants indicate that the approach is seen as a good policy, only that there are some bottlenecks in its use. The next theme explores some of these challenges experienced by the participants in their use of the restorative discipline policy.

Research Question 2: What are the challenges with the use of restorative discipline?

Restorative discipline thrives on conferencing between parties to a case and stakeholders in the development of the learner. Anything that makes this not possible hampers the smooth practice of a restorative discipline policy in school. In the analysis of the data, the participants enumerated a number of challenges with their use of the restorative discipline policy. This resulted in the development of five sub-themes on the challenges of restorative discipline. These were lack of co-operation and access to parents and other stakeholders, lack of amenities for guidance and counselling, lack of knowledge on restorative discipline strategy, and waste of time.

Lack of co-operation and access to parents and other stakeholders

Lack of co-operation and access to parents and other stakeholders was found as a factor that hampers the use of the restorative discipline strategy in school. Since the policy thrives on the coming together of the team players in the development of the child, the absence of any of these team members makes it difficult for the successful implementation of the strategy. The following quotes from the participants denote the challenges they expressed in respect of lack of cooperation and access to the stakeholders of the policy:

P3: Some parents don't co-operate with the restorative practices and tend to defend their children.

P4: Sometimes the parents don't agree with this strategy. When the child does something wrong and you call in the parents, they tell you "So madam what did you do to him? You should cane him".

P6: One of the challenges we face is that most of the time, you invite the parents, and they fail to come because they have other things to attend to. They don't normally come.

P8: Most of the parents are not willing to open up certain things to you about the child. This is because they think that when they open up to you, you are going to spread it.

P9: Getting the Assembly member, parents and church leaders to sit down in relation to the child is a big problem.

P10: It is not easy. Even inviting some parents would be difficult. They won't come looking at our community. If you tell a child that "Tomorrow when coming to school, come with your parents", the child will come and tell you "My mother has gone to farm, my mother is not at home, she said she will come", but you will wait, she won't come.

P12: One of the challenges is parental refusal to respond to calls. Parents most times don't care about the academic affairs of their children. No matter how you call them, they won't come. Just a few parents are interested in the academic affairs of their children.

P13: Some parents are not co-operative. They don't co-operate. If you invite them, what they will tell you, you won't be happy: "You can't waste my time, I am going to sell yam, you can do anything to the child". They have been saying that. So, that is the challenging aspect of it.

P14: In our community, it is very difficult getting the parents to have heart-to-heart conversation with them. When you invite them, at times the student will come and tell you "My father says he can't come because he is going to farm.

FGD1: These parents will come, and they will not disclose the bad behaviours of their wards. Some of the parents shield their wards. They will say "My child is not like that".

FGD3: With the invitation, it is a challenge at times. For example, if you tell a child to call the parents, the parents refuse to come. It has become a challenge.

From the above narratives, it can be seen that almost all the participants were unanimous on the fact that there are challenges in the use of restorative discipline in schools in Ghana's current situation.

Lack of amenities for guidance and counselling

Restorative discipline succeeds in an environment where there is a clear laid out guidance and counselling programme. Therefore, guidance and counselling is part and parcel of the restorative discipline process. In this era of increased workload on teachers, the strengthening of guidance and counselling process in school will help facilitate the restorative discipline process. Teachers' know-how of guidance and counselling can also be brought to bear to strengthen the restorative discipline process. In Ghanaian schools today, there are inadequate provisions of guidance and counselling, which is militating against the conduct of smooth restorative discipline practices in school. These were expressed by the participants as one of the challenges to the smooth practice of restorative discipline, as shown in these quotes from them:

P4: For guidance and counselling, where are you going to counsel the child? Here we don't have counselling centre.

P9: We don't have guidance and counselling unit which is supposed to take care of those problems.

P11: At the basic school, we don't have guidance and counselling coordinators, but we have a teacher assigned to do guidance and counselling, but I don't see them doing any guidance and counselling.

P14: Teachers' knowledge in guidance and is too low. There is little education on that. So, it makes it difficult to effectively interact with parents and other stakeholders.

The above perceptions were what the participants indicated as a challenge in the area of guidance and counselling in the course of restorative discipline.

Lack of knowledge on restorative discipline strategy

The knowledge and practice of restorative discipline are specialized areas that require some form of education and training to acquire and practice. However, most teachers lack these requisites for the effective practice of restorative discipline. It came out from the analysis of the data that lack of knowledge of restorative discipline practices among stakeholders poses a challenge in the use of the restorative discipline strategy in school. The following quotes from the participants support this assertion:

P4: The strategies, they don't even know. Some of the teachers don't know at all. Students are also not aware.

P5: Again, teachers are not educated on it.

P11: There is also a challenge with knowledge base of teachers on restorative practice. They just banned corporal punishment without any education on the effectiveness of choosing any of these alternatives. They said "Don't beat them, don't punish them" but no education on restorative practice was given.

P12: We teachers, most of us don't know the requirements of restorative discipline strategy so we need to be educated on them. That is the main problem. We don't know.

FGD1: Here, we don't know much about it. All we know is corporal punishment.

FGD3: Education base of teachers on the restorative discipline is also low. They don't know that these restorative practices change learners.

These quotes from the participants support the fact that they lack the needed knowledge and competencies required to carry through a successful restorative discipline in their schools and hence, that is a challenge to the practice of restorative discipline in schools.

Waste of time

Another concern expressed with the use of restorative discipline, which hampers its use in schools, is its time-consuming nature of implementation. It wastes a lot of time to carry through a successful restorative discipline programme, compared with other strategies like corporal punishment. As a result of this, a number of teachers are deterred from its use. The quotes below indicate how the participants expressed this challenge:

P15: We have many challenges. The first one is, it deals with time. If you don't have time, you can't use this approach.

FGD2: I think sometimes, it is time consuming. The time that you have to use for something else, you have to use to meet the parents and then discuss things.

P5: It is time consuming. In the process, it will delay discipline and it is said that justice delayed is justice denied.

This concern of teachers, which is inherent in the nature of restorative discipline, affects the level of acceptability of this strategy by teachers and, therefore, limits its use by teachers.

Research Question 3: How can the challenges of restorative discipline be addressed?

With restorative discipline still a means of positive discipline in Ghanaian schools today, it was imperative to explore how its use can be improved. Theme 3, therefore, was on how to improve the use of restorative discipline in schools. This was sought from the perceptions of the participants based on their experience of the phenomenon. From the analysis of the data under this theme, four sub-themes, namely, education of stakeholders, provision of amenities for guidance and counselling, monitoring and supervision of implementation of policy and commitment by stakeholders, were obtained.

Education of stakeholders

The participants expressed the need for education on the use of the strategy. They were unanimous on the fact that a lot of education needs to be given by the policy makers to the implementors of the policy to improve its use. This can be seen in these verbatim quotes from the participants:

P2, P15 and FGD3, specifically, called for teachers to be educated on the use of the strategy:

P2: The education directorate should take their time and talk to we teachers. They should educate us if even one-day workshop on circuit basis, teaching teachers the importance of this restorative discipline practices.

P15: For it to be effective, teachers must have knowledge of the strategy. So, if teachers have knowledge of it and understand it, they will also know how to apply it. So, I suggest that teachers must be trained on its use.

FGD3: We should educate our teachers especially the young ones coming up. They should educate them to understand it because I think they prefer corporal punishment for other to see that they are really teachers.

P1, P4, P5, P6 and FGD1 emphasized education for teachers and parents:

P1: Education on the part of the teachers. We have not been educated enough on that side to know. So, it looks as if everything goes. You say we should do this but how it should be done, they have kept the teachers at the back. We don't know what to do. So, this education must go on so that the teachers will know what to do. The parents are also to be educated to know to know what is going on.

P4: For me, I think the education would be everywhere. They should educate the teachers and educate the parents as well, that, we are no longer using corporal punishment but rather restorative discipline.

P5: We should organize workshops for teachers to educate them well on how to use restorative discipline. Not only teachers but parents as well.

P6: I think parents should be educated as well as teachers and students. They should have more knowledge on that. If we organize workshop for teachers and parents, it will help so that they see the need to use the restorative discipline.

FGD1: I will talk about teacher education. We need to be educated more on it because the strategy, some of us even don't know and also, parents should be educated.

P3 called for both teachers and students to be educated on the use of the strategy:

P3: Education on the part of teachers and students. We should educate them.

P7, P8, P10, P11 and P14 suggested the use of Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings as the best forum for educating parents on this strategy:

P7: The point is that education must still go on in schools and teachers should also be willing to buy that strategy. PTA meetings should be held for parents to be educated on it.

P8: We should organize PTA meetings and talk to parents about this new strategy and how they will help us to bring out the best from the students.

P10: PTA meetings should be held so that issues relating to restorative discipline could be addressed.

P11: So, it all boils down to education like meeting the PTA, then we all discuss that, this is the trend now. It is about education.

P14: We need to organize PTA meetings and then tell parents the new strategies that we want to implement to reform their wards, so that they can support.

Finally, P9, P12 and FGD2 called for education of all the stakeholders, for the success of the restorative discipline strategy:

P9: There should be education on these measures both at the school environment and the community within which they operate.

P12: Education is the main thing. You educate students, teachers, parents and the community at large on these restorative discipline practices and also, the use of them.

FGD2: There should be proper education. If you inform the stakeholders, you tell them the necessity of that programme. Then, you explain everything to them and allow them to ask questions peculiar to them for them to know how to help teachers to bring about discipline in school.

From the above narratives, it can be seen that the participants perceive education of teachers, parents, community, students and the entire stakeholders of education in the country as a measure for the successful working of the restorative discipline strategy in schools.

Provision of amenities for guidance and counselling

The participants, further, suggested that, if the necessary resources are provided for guidance and counselling, that will also lead to improvement in the use of the restorative discipline strategy in schools. The narratives below were what they said:

P4: So, there should be an office for guidance and counselling so that when an incident like this happens, we can go there and talk about it. When you talk to them before their friends, they don't want to open up.

P5: Also, guidance and counselling units should be set up and made to function but should not be a ceremonial body.

P9: Schools should have guidance and counselling units where we have a counsellor as a professional or a clinical psychologist over there. That will make the work easier.

The narratives above indicate that when there is a proper guidance and counselling system in school, it promotes the use of restorative practices because the school counsellor assists the teachers in that function. Again, the counselling centre can help co-ordinate all restorative practices in the school to promote its use.

Monitoring and supervision of policy implementation

When monitoring and evaluation are carried out whenever a policy is implemented, they make for the success of the policy. This is because the shortcomings of the policy are detected, and necessary actions taken to avert them. The participants in the study indicated that when proper monitoring and supervision are carried out in the

course of the implementation of the restorative practice policy, its progress by way of successes and failures can be detected and necessary action taken. This is what a participant said in this respect:

P13: Supervision is the key to the success of the policy. The circuit supervisors and the education directorate as a whole should find out: Are teachers practicing it? What are the results? Is there any area they can help?

The narrative above shows that the directorate of education, with its officers like circuit supervisors, should monitor and supervise the use of the policy to find out the progress or otherwise of the policy and take necessary actions, to ensure the success of the policy.

Commitment by stakeholders

For every policy to succeed, there should be commitment on the part of key players. They should be committed to use it and report any challenges in its use for action to be taken. This was also indicated by the participants. They came out with the following statements to back this point:

FGD1: It is just a matter of the stakeholders been committed and available whenever they are needed in the school.

FGD3: We need to also have time. Time on these things and make conscious that we are going to put them into practice.

DISCUSSIONS

The study found that teachers perceive restorative discipline as good because it unearths the root causes of a problem and helps reform the offender even though its use is challenging. The perceptions that restorative discipline is a good, reformational and new way to deal with pupils' disciplinary challenges is in consonance with the findings of some studies. Gregory et al. (2016), supported by Nelson and Nelson (2020), assert that restorative discipline reforms the offender. Other studies find restorative discipline as good in terms of repairing relationships between students and educators (Jeznik et al., 2020; Oxley & Holden, 2021; Vanjaarsueld, 2011). Furthermore, other studies see it as good in dealing with damage caused as compared with the use of corporal punishment (Karp & Frank, 2015; Ntombizandile et al., 2020; Wachtel, 2016). These positive outcomes of restorative discipline will result in happiness, self-regulation, trust and well-functioned teachers and pupils, attributes which are the focus of the study of positive psychology (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Pawelski, 2016).

The study revealed that there are several challenges with the implementation of restorative discipline in Ghanaian schools. These included lack of co-operation and access to stakeholders, lack of amenities for guidance and counselling, and lack of stakeholders' knowledge of the restorative discipline strategy. The rest were time consuming nature of the strategy and lack of commitment of some stakeholders in its implementation. These findings, to some extent, are confirmed by the literature. Selikar (2020) stipulated that a successful restorative practice policy depends on committed teachers and teachers with knowledge of the strategy. It, therefore, implies that lack of knowledge of the strategy and lack of commitment of teachers will limit its use in schools. Seith (2019), on the other hand, gave a picture of why the restorative discipline policy failed in Scotland. He enumerated factors like rush in implementation, lack of education and lack of teacher commitment as leading to the failure. These factors akin the ones found in this study.

Furthermore, a study by Djabrayan and Hanningan (2019) identified that factors that pose a challenge to implementation of a successful restorative discipline policy were lack of support of the policy by the policy implementors, parental and community resistance and non-support of the strategy, and lack of time and commitment of stakeholders to implement the strategy. These factors are similar to those found in this study as posing a challenge to successful implementation of the restorative discipline strategy in Ghanaian schools. These challenges, among others, would have to be addressed for a successful restorative practice to go on in schools.

The study identified a number of ways the use of restorative discipline can be improved in schools. They included education of stakeholders, provision of amenities for guidance and counselling, monitoring and supervision of

the implementation of the policy and the commitment from stakeholders to make the policy work. These factors are not far-fetch from the literature. In a California-based study that looked at factors that support the use of the restorative discipline strategy, Djabrayan and Hanningan (2019) identified that for restorative discipline to be successful in its use, there should be availability of physical resources needed for its use, technical know-how, training and education on its use, and willingness and commitment of staff to implement the policy. These findings support three factors in this current study, namely, education of stakeholders, provision of necessary amenities and commitment by stakeholder. Monitoring and evaluation of an implemented policy is very necessary to unearth shortfalls in the implementation of a programme. It can be done through research, stakeholder engagement and observation of outcomes of the policy. The call for monitoring and evaluation for the strategy to be effective was right. All put together, these are salient factors that when considered, can facilitate the use of restorative discipline in schools to bring the necessary returns.

CONCLUSIONS

It can be concluded that, despite the challenges with the use of the restorative approach to school discipline in Ghana, the teachers perceive this approach as good and reformational as its use helps to get to the root of the child's disciplinary problem. Thus, through the conferencing of the stakeholders in the development of the child, the child's actual problem is ascertained and the necessary help provided. However, the challenges with the use of this approach to school discipline, calls for urgent attention of stakeholders, if this approach to school discipline would be continuously used by teachers. The challenges relating to lack of commitment of stakeholders, lack of amenities for guidance and counselling, lack of knowledge of teachers on its use and the perceived attitude of time wasting in its use, call for redress by stakeholders through education and provision of necessary resources, for its use to be sustained in Ghanaian schools. This is because the challenges left unattended to, might erode the trust and confidence in the use of this approach to school discipline and make teachers revert to the use of corporal punishment which to some extent, is perceived to be easy to use, but in reality, has several negative consequences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for stakeholders of education based on the study, to improve the use of restorative discipline in Ghanaian basic schools:

a) Teachers should cooperate and be committed to the use of the restorative discipline approach to make its use more successful. They should not be discouraged by its time delaying nature and its non-quick response to problems.

b) Teachers should be patient with parents and pupils in the use of the restorative discipline approach since it is a new policy and so will take a while for all stakeholders to adapt to its use.

c) School counsellors should acquaint themselves with the use of the restorative discipline approach since counsellors play a key role in the success of the use of this strategy in schools.

d) Parents should seek education on restorative discipline approach and cooperate with the use of this strategy to reform their children. They should discard their minds of the belief that without corporal punishment, pupils will show signs of indiscipline and as a result, they should be caned to make them conform to rules.

e) Parents should use this strategy at home instead of using corporal punishment to ensure uniformity of behaviour modification strategy used at home and in school.

f) The Directorates of Education should encourage the use of the restorative discipline approach to corporal punishment by instituting monitoring and supervision mechanisms for its use. Furthermore, rewards and other motivational means should be given to teachers to encourage their use of this strategy.

g) Massive education should be carried out by the directorate to make teachers, parents, students and all the stakeholders of the policy aware of the restorative discipline approach and how it is used. To this end, workshops, seminars and conferences should be organized for parents, teachers and students to educate them on this strategy. Brochures can also be prepared and given to teachers to guide them on their use of this strategy.

h) The positive discipline toolkits document should be widely circulated through schools to help in the

education of teachers on the use of the restorative discipline approach.

i) The restorative discipline approach should be given special attention in teacher education curriculum and in the continuous professional development of teachers. Teachers should discuss the use of this strategy at their Professional Learning Community (PLC) meetings to enhance their knowledge on this strategy.

j) Guidance and counselling should be strengthened in schools through the provision of the necessary amenities required for effective guidance and counselling.

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