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## Review

# Egalitarianism and classroom discipline: A pre requisite to successful instructional processes in mathematics

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**Egalitarianism supposes equal attention to every individual and to do this, there ought to be rules of the game. One of the rules that every student in the mathematic classroom is to be catered for by stimulating them to work such that they can always aim at attaining the mark of excellence. This means that a disciplined and ordered classroom atmosphere becomes imperative. The attainment of learning objectives could become difficult in a disorderly anarchical classroom but such a situation portrays an undemocratic community. The performance of each individual in a democratic society (where there is a belief in egalitarianism) is considered important, therefore a good mathematics teacher must be sensitive to the unfolding of defiant actions in the classroom. He must crackdown on such misbehaviour immediately otherwise he could turn small group into big ones. It should be noted that students need NOT cringe in dread every time the teacher steps into their classroom for mathematics lesson. The orderly atmosphere into the mathematics classroom could be a good reflection of the teacher's belief in democratic principles. The principles of egalitarianism assume that all men are alike and that individual differences are due to environment. The classroom provides an environment for learning. For learning to take place, every child has to enjoy the fundamental rights provided by the political ideologies of the state. Such belief system often affects teacher's disciplines actions.**

**Keywords:** Egalitarianism, Classroom Discipline, Pre-requisite Instructional Processes in Mathematics.

## INTRODUCTION

Egalitarianism is a basic principle of education that recognises all men to be alike and hence should be given equal attention. Egalitarianism according to Oxford Advance Learner's Dictionary 7th Edition is based on or holding the belief that everyone is equal and should have the same opportunities. Where this is lacking, chaos results, and basically, this is the need for discipline in the school system. Maintaining discipline in the mathematics

classroom becomes a dilemma to a teacher whose instructional processes often turns chaotic as defiant students continue to be completely out of hand. However, discipline is different from punishment in that it involves training in good manners for purpose of self-respect and cultivation of integrity of personality. In a democratic society, discipline encourages mutual respect for each individual's worth. Hence, it preaches tolerance and cooperation. The ability to maintain discipline is as important as other aspect of mathematics teaching which should be thoroughly mastered. Wherever discipline problems stare the teacher in the face, tension usually

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accompanies them which must be faced and controlled. This is because as human being, success in all endeavours becomes a desired goal.

The majority of management problems stem from poor classroom discipline and poor mathematics instructional procedures. Many times, majority of mathematics teachers with discipline problems lack the qualities needed to control and manage a class. Discipline problem, if not controlled from the beginning of the school year instructional contact, may constitute an ever-present teaching danger. It should be noted by the mathematics teacher that egalitarianism as a political doctrine preaches equal opportunity. At the beginning of each school year, the teacher who believes and operates in democratic classroom atmosphere assures his students of his willingness to keep this principle in operation throughout the year. His students must become a 'minisociety' where every learner acquires and builds upon the relevant experiences of equal opportunity and freedom to achieve to their fullest according to individual's capability. Johnson and Rising (1972) explain that failure by teachers to set a standard pattern of discipline at the beginning of school year instructional contacts usually lead to beginning teachers leaving the profession. For any discipline pattern to endure, the beginning teacher of mathematics must be sincerely interested in his/her students because any act of insincerity on the teacher's part will constantly provoke negative reactions on the part of learners. A mathematics classroom in which the teacher has no answer to discipline problems and where the teacher has lost control of his students is usually emotionally disturbing to both students and their teachers. It should be noted that learning mathematics cannot just occur in chaotic classroom. Maintaining discipline in the classroom requires understanding, planning and ingenuity.

### **Purpose of the Paper**

The major aim of this paper is to make teachers aware of the meaning of discipline in a democratic society so as to adopt it for classroom management. Indiscipline according to Onyije and Ojedepo in Akande 2011 is caused by some factors such as government nonchalant attitudes to education, parental factors and the teacher's attitude. Brown opined that discipline refers to those specific coercive acts performed by the teacher and designed to repress behaviour. It involves all these techniques utilised in the classroom with the aim of controlling students behaviour by setting limits and punishment. Zubarida (2009) wrote that discipline implies self-control, restraint and respect for one self and others.

Though classroom discipline is considered a dilemma to many mathematics teachers, especially the pre-service interns. It is one of the main instructional weapons employed for effective pruning of learner's behaviour for

successful learning outcomes. It is necessary, however, for teachers to distinguish between learners act of misbehaviour that are manifestations of their age-group level and those that are purely disruptive and capable of inflaming chaotic classroom atmosphere. It is an act of indiscipline for a teacher to label anybody not to say a whole class as 'no-good' because of the deviant behaviour of some members of the class. It is part of his own discipline as a teacher to know that such people are reacting negatively to certain factors in the learning environment and he has to diagnose the cause of their behaviour. Since an effective teacher is expected to work hard to establish a classroom climate where respect out of love and not out of fear is fostered and a place where all students can afford to become good mannered and respectable members of the classroom. The objective of this paper is to highlight ways of carrying out classroom discipline with a view of enabling mathematics teachers have a renewed determination of placing appropriate emphasis for better learning outcomes.

### **The Nature of Classroom Discipline**

A mathematics teacher that integrates classroom discipline into his instructional processes is laying a foundation for breeding tough and seasoned future mathematical minds. Yet, the mathematics teacher should remind himself always that there is not prepackaged correlated theory to solve every discipline problem that arises in the classroom. The teacher has to selectively gather and accumulate his own beneficial processes of discipline from various sources of examples, techniques and principles for controlling so many types of students in different situations. In many disciplinary situations, teachers who respond intuitively are very effective. Kingley and Callahan (1977) explained that no one answer, or one form of teacher behaviour will suffice for all varieties of people and all situations and that not even the powers of the sensitive computer push button can be made sensitive enough to respond appropriately in every instance.

Every adopted solution to various classroom discipline problem must be compatible with the teacher's style of teaching and temperament. It is not every teacher that can use every discipline technique successfully. The teacher should note that good discipline is not only necessary in the classroom, he should extend same to the home, street and other places where students find themselves. Rules and their enforcement are a vital part of efficient living and confusion results in case they are not in existence (Kingsley and Callahan 1977). In most cases, disruptive behaviours in the classroom are to satisfy students' need for attention. Such needs are usually created when the work schedules are inadequate or as a result of tensions constantly cumulating from student-student conflicts in the classroom. Any

disciplinary measure aimed at checking disruptive behaviour must put into proper focus pupils' needs and aspirations. Learners of all categories need opportunities to assert initiative and to accommodate the consequences of their behaviour. This is simply psychological manifestations of learners' growth level. When teachers operate a democratic disciplinary measure and foster the growth of good learning climate, the learners are likely to practice good democratic living and behaviour. The purpose of discipline is to aid learner's behavioural change, and not just to punish. Good discipline processes would enable the individual learners to establish their internal self-control.

Some classroom deviant actions and misbehaviours have their roots in the learners' homes. This is why if the mathematics teacher finds it necessary to punish misbehaviour, such punishment must not outweigh the 'crime'. The teacher should be able to 'spot' the problem as it emerges. Timing is an important aspect of most solutions of classroom misconduct. A teacher that is insensitive or blunt to the unfolding of deviant actions in the classroom and who cannot crack down on them immediately could turn small problems into big ones.

The application of classroom discipline as a conditioning experience is limited only by the teacher's imagination. Classroom discipline could be used such that students could develop or modify their attitudes, values, internalized skills and interaction. Discipline may not be internalized in the mathematics classroom within a clear-out period of time.

It is necessary for students in the mathematics classroom to know that a set of behaviour is acceptable and unacceptable in the conducive learning atmosphere. This is because reward, reproof, approval and punishment are useful components in maintaining discipline. It should be noted however that extreme permissiveness could be as damaging as extreme authoritarianism. A worthy mathematics teacher should create a situation where there are equal opportunities for learners' self-realisation or self-actualisation and where there is respect for each person's opinion. The strife to do good must be generated within the learners through good disciplinary measures and not constantly without, otherwise learners could turn out to be good for repetitive work only. Punishment as disciplinary measures, like a trap, should not be invoked constantly unless it has something to catch.

### **Suggested Techniques to Consider when Handling Discipline Problems in the Classroom**

The goals of learning are best achieved in a discipline and ordered classroom atmosphere and not in a disorderly and anarchical one. A learner should not be forced always to submit, he should be led to render his submission voluntarily in love. In preventing occurrence

of discipline problem in the classroom apart from understanding why the learner wants to disrupt the class, you require clear understanding, planning and ingenuity. According to Johnson and Rising (1972), after indentifying discipline problems, of first importance is your response to students. You need to demonstrate dignity, common sensed, concern, industry, fairness and courtesy in dealing with your learners. As a good mathematics teacher, you must start your class promptly, proceeding at a challenging rate, having alternative plans and materials available in case of emergencies.

Create an optimistic spirit of 'I can always succeed' in the learners. The mathematics teacher must be sensitive to 'ALL' that is happening in the classroom (Gnagy, 1975). Always call on students by name to answer questions especially those whose attentions are wavering. The mathematics teacher should endeavour to let the learners know their responsibilities in respect to learning as well as behaviour. No rule or threat should be established if it will not be enforced. Teachers should realise that the learners could become sources of valuable help for them now and in the future. Therefore, they should be open with the learners about the difficulties of dealing with discipline problem. Hence, they should be involved in dealing with tense classroom atmosphere. The necessity of rules, authority, order and regulations should be pointed out to the learner.

The mathematics teacher should not make it a habit to stand in front of the class without moving round the classroom. Often, the presence of the teacher near a culprit is enough for him to drop his or her behaviour. The teacher must make it a habit to stress positive activities in the classroom. He must always allow students to commit mistakes and errors in the classroom. Whenever the mathematics teacher commits an error, he should accept, correct and be willing to apologise publicly if need be. Any apology tendered publicly or privately to students should be done without causing any embarrassment. This will enable the students to learn to accept their mistakes and be willing to correct wrong steps taken.

Most mathematics teachers face a stiff situation when students refuse to take order or do an assignment. The effective teacher should reduce the size of the problem by avoiding a confrontation that could disrupt the peaceful atmosphere of the classroom. He should try to diffuse the tension by taking steps that could trivialise the situation by such statements as 'when you want to do it, let me know'. A wise mathematics teacher would always avoid taking any traumatic position which could lead merely to 'dissipation' of his energy and yet be ineffective in the solution of the problem at hand. As the adult and professional, the teacher must always keep his emotions under control until difficult issues are resolved. When problem students are handled with maturity and they are helped out of the problems into which they 'boxed' themselves, they may not be able to verbalise how they feel, but their actions could reveal their inner convictions

that they are being led out of destructions.

Sometimes, it could be appropriate to use forceful restraints, when learner constantly causes problems in the class. The teacher can use 'planned ignoring' at relevant and appropriate times. The teacher should not go about with frowned or oblong face all the time, he should have some fun and even try to share some laughter with his or her students. Laughter could ease tension and act as a social glue in the classroom.

A mathematics teacher without considerable sense of humour could end up treading the verge of failure. When an offence is committed by one or two students in the mathematics classroom, always avoid penalising the entire body of students (Kouin, 1970). Let the learners know that you love them and that you would do all you can for their good. Let the students also realise that you do not have any planned hatred against them or carry out any action out of selfish motive. Mass punishments usually generate resentment in students. So, mathematics teachers should do everything that would make the learners to love the subject and what they want to study is beyond their present level. This issue of resentment is one of the reasons why mathematics teachers should avoid frequent confrontation with students. In confrontations, one party would lose face, whether the students or the teacher and this could result in root of bitterness springing up in the party whose ego has been bruised. Unless you are absolutely certain about all occurrence in the class, do not levy an accusation against a learner. For example, unless you are very sure that a learner is cheating in a test, do not levy any accusation against him. Even when you are sure, your accusation should not be so bare as to throw him to ridicule of others. It should be noted that an important aspect of discipline is the sensitivity to the society consequence of one's actions and a deliberate orientation of one's behaviour toward promoting the social benefits.

When a learner's misbehaviours assume larger dimensions, it could be wise to isolate the offender from the rest of the class until the distressing situations are resolved. Exceptional misbehaviour from particular learners should be tacked with wisdom. A good mathematics teacher would not send any students out of his class for any misbehaviour whosoever. The teacher must seek to be fair to all students. In carrying out disciplinary measures the mathematics teachers should not mistake 'punishment always' for 'discipline'. In fact, he must recognise his professional limitations in regard to corporal punishments. He also should realise that punishment is just a means of ensuring discipline and should be rarely used.

## CONCLUSION

Discipline should be grafted upon the personal initiatives and ideas of mathematics learners and not imposed. Egalitarianism supposes equal attention in every individual, and to do this, there ought to be rules of the game. One of the rules is that every student in the mathematics classroom is to be catered for by stimulating them to work such that they can always aim at attaining the mark of excellence. This means that a disciplined and ordered classroom atmosphere becomes imperative. The attainment of learning objectives could become difficult in a disorderly and anarchical classroom but such a situation portrays an undemocratic community (the classroom as an example).

The occurrence of any act of indiscipline has to be traced to the learning environment and the teacher should use his experience to solve them. Punishment is a 'negative' discipline and does not correct behaviour if the root is not found.

The mathematics teacher must ensure that he fosters a democratic classroom environment where equal attention is given to every learner and him as the teacher show disciplinary behaviours like appearance, punctuality, knowledge of the subject matter, selection of appropriate methods of teaching, good leadership qualities. etc.

The effective mathematics teacher does not impose discipline on any learner. Instead he encourages self correction and self-judgement among his students. Discipline comes from within the person himself. He controls himself, when such control comes from outside (i.e imposed) it becomes punishment. In any situation, and in any environment, the lack of self-judgement, self correction and proper self-control from within the individual results in indiscipline. Many of the present leaders that now exhibit acts of indiscipline even as public officers attended Mission Schools. The religious touch they had in their school days are now gone. The reason could be that they were coerced into becoming 'disciplined', thus conforming into 'good boys' (Read, 1956) of the missionaries. This is why when they were outside and the force of coercion removed, since they have come to realise their 'freedom'. They relaxed into the indiscipline situation in which we find them nowadays.

The mathematics teacher should realise that when every precaution has been taken in the classroom, disciplinary problems could still arise (Johnson and Rising, 1972). Of particular importance to the mathematics teacher is the recognition that symptoms of constant disruptive behaviours are based on underlying causes. Every display of show-off by the learner could be

caused by basic insecurity rooted in the home. The orderly atmosphere in the mathematics classroom could be a good reflection of the well disciplined teacher. In most cases, a well-organised teacher according to Johnson and Rising (1972) has a neat, orderly and attractive classroom. Learners look forward to his lessons as the teacher would have organised himself in areas of asking questions to stimulate the thinking of students and arouse their curiosity in areas of problem solving and direction of discovery activities. It should be noted however that good disciplinary may require a good thunderstorm occasionally rather than a constant drizzle (Kingsley and Callaham, 1972). This is because if circumstances are sufficiently traumatic, the `bark, bark, bark teacher` but not the `biting` could find the situation very disintegrating. In such cases, a `thunderstorm` could prove a very effective device.

However, `biting` or `thunderstorm` devices should be used sparingly. This is because any techniques used too often may lose its effectiveness. An effective mathematics teacher should arrange his disciplinary techniques hierarchically. He should then use them in selective fashion according to the gravity of the deviant behaviour exhibited by the learner.

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