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A CONTENT ANALYSIS IN THE DISCIPLINE SYSTEM OF SELECTED DIOCESAN SCHOOLS IN THE PHILIPPINES

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Synopsis:

The study aims to open new perspectives in handling the system of the school in terms of discipline. The study will start by conducting a survey in various schools and exploring the possible effects and impacts of the current system being implemented. The ultimate aim is to redesign a justice system for the school which best fits the students' personalities and maximizing the potential of holistic formation of students.

A content analysis of the discipline system in selected Diocesan schools in Manila, Philippines

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1. Introduction

Student discipline and how to effectively address it is a major concern of schools. Researchers appreciate that discipline is an important component of human behaviour and assert that without it an organization cannot function well towards the achievement of its goals (Guma, Sumatra & Serem, 2013 as cited by Simba, et.al, 2016). In the context of a school system, a disciplined student is that student whose behaviors, actions and inactions conform to the predetermined rules and regulations of the school (Ali, Dada, Isiaka & Salmon, 2014). Discipline is widely acknowledged to be essential for creating a positive school climate conducive to sound academic performance (Masitsa, 2008 as cited by Simba, et.al, 2016). A school which puts premium on students' welfare requires that a specific type of discipline be in place. The discipline system allows modification of certain behaviour that needs refinement, instilling specific value or behavior, or simply to come up with a system that can pave a way to a community that everyone lives harmoniously.

A number of initiatives taken by both the government and private educational institutions in countries like the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and Philippines show that there is a premium given to discipline in schools. In the United States alone, projects were launched by the Department of Education and the Department of Justice from 2011 to 2016 that seek to improve how discipline challenges are addressed in schools. These projects are: Supportive School Discipline Initiative: In 2011, School Climate and Discipline Guidance Package in 2014, Rethink Discipline and National Resource Center for School

Justice Partnerships in 2015, Pyramid Equity Project, and Investing in Innovation Program in 2016 (White House Report: The Continuing Need to Rethink Discipline, Office of the Press Secretary, December 9, 2016). These documents have been released not only for the purpose of revisiting discipline paradigms and approaches in schools but also to provide alternatives to current practices of addressing school discipline through suspension, exclusion and expulsion.

The documents echo part of the joint statement released by the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Service Policy, citing the adverse effects of actions that are offshoots of the zero tolerance policy, suspension and expulsion can contribute to a number of adverse outcomes for childhood development in areas such as personal health, interactions with the criminal justice system, and education.

The Philippine government also places a premium on student discipline. Two major documents released by the Department Education focus on this concern. The first is Department order no. 40 Series of 2012, Policy Guidelines on Protecting Children in School from Abuse, Violence, Exploitation, Discrimination, Bullying, and Other Forms of Abuse. In Section 2 of the DO, it is stated that it is a reiteration of the zero tolerance policy adopted by the department. It is interesting to note how the department defines zero tolerance policy, unfortunately, it is not included in Section 3 (definition of terms) nor in any other sections of the document.

In November, 2015, the Department of Education, with the support of private agencies, released the document, "Positive Discipline in Everyday Teaching: A Primer

for Filipino Teachers.” The primer provides easy-to-follow steps for teacher in using positive and non-violent discipline to address the common challenges posed by children’s behavior in school (Message of the Undersecretary, p.6). In the same message, the undersecretary expressed the hope that through the continuing efforts of the Department and all partners and stakeholders, the policy on zero tolerance for any act of violence against children in school, including corporal punishment, enshrined in the DepEd Child Protection Policy (Department Order No. 40, s. 2012), shall be observed and implemented more effectively.

The two documents released by the Department of Education strongly outlaws the use of corporal punishment. In DO no. 40, the use of corporal punishment is effectively ruled out when it states in letter H that in no case shall corporal punishment be inflicted upon the children (Section 8 Duties and Responsibilities of School Personnel). The document Positive Discipline in Everyday Teaching on the other hand categorically states that the Department of Education (DepEd) supports the prohibition of corporal punishment (p.12). They also emphasize the need to adopt positive discipline as an effective way of addressing everyday challenges in school. The two documents are closely related since the primer provides support to teachers to teachers to fulfill their responsibilities in line with positive discipline as articulated in DO no. 4 (Primer, p. 9).

It is strange that while the documents mandate the use of positive discipline, they at the same time reiterate the Department of Education’s policy on zero tolerance. By its very definition, zero tolerance does not sit well with positive discipline. While positive discipline is defined in the Department of Education documents as an approach to teaching that helps children succeed, gives them the information they need to learn, and supports their development. It respects children’s rights to

healthy development, protection from violence, and active participation in their learning (Positive Discipline in Everyday Teaching p. 9), the Zero Tolerance Policy is “ a philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context (Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in Schools? American Psychological Association 2008 0003-066X/08/\$12.00 Vol. 63, No. 9, 852).

With the release of the document Positive Discipline for Everyday Teaching it can be argued that the department is exerting effort to tread the path of restorative discipline, there is however, an urgent need for it to realize that the ZT policy, mentioned by both the Undersecretary and the then Secretary of the Department as the prevailing norm in addressing student misbehavior, has already been dropped by educational institutions in many parts of the world.

While the Department of Education may still be stuck with the ZT Policy, it is consoling to note that two universities in the Philippines, namely, the University of the Philippines and the Ateneo de Manila University have incorporated the principles of restorative discipline in their student handbooks. Other universities and schools all over the country still have yet to discover its merits.

Convinced of the positive effects of restorative discipline on the learners’ personal and academic development, on the school climate and on mitigating the occurrence of learner misbehavior, this study aims to first, generate data on the type of approach to discipline that schools in the Philippines adopt, particularly selected member-schools of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila Education System (RCAM-ES). The data gathered will be used to assess the training needs of school officials and teachers in line with

restorative discipline and to design training modules that will capacitate the officials and teachers in incorporating the principles of restorative discipline in the formation of their learners.

This study is the first small step in raising awareness on the need to tilt the balance towards a restorative approach to discipline in the Philippine educational system. The journey may be long and arduous as evidenced by the fact that there are only two Universities who have incorporated some of the key elements of restorative discipline into their student discipline code. This means that, based on the 2013 data presented by TeacherPh (<https://www.teacherph.com/basic-education-statistics-philippines/>), there are 46,404 elementary schools and 12,878 secondary schools who may not need to be oriented on the principles of restorative discipline. These schools command a total enrolment of 14,509,690 for elementary and 7,110,949 for secondary.

The researches on the positive effects of restorative discipline in school is encouraging and enlightening. The time is rife for those who are engaged in the formation of young people to study how it could be efficiently applied in the Philippine educational system.

Exploring the discipline system of schools as a prelude to imbibing a restorative practice is a way of revisiting the main aim of the educational process. It is an opportune time for the school administrators, teachers and all stakeholders to reassess whether there are enough opportunities and/ or environments where learners achieve their fullest potentials. The discipline system in schools shall always provide an avenue to create structures, persons included, where individual learners are nurtured as they thrive in and succeed toward their goals.

2. Theoretical Framework

The Social Discipline Window (Wachtel, 1997, 2000; Wachtel & McCold, 2000) serves as the framework that supports the study's objective of identifying the current practice and of confirming restorative practice that schools in the Philippines adopt, particularly selected member-schools of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila Education System (RCAM-ES). Subsequently, the data gathered will be used to provide direction to efforts for organization change and to achieve preferred outcomes through the assessment of the training needs of school officials and teachers in line with restorative discipline and the construction of training modules that will capacitate the officials and teachers in incorporating the principles of restorative discipline in the formation of their learners.

Drawing from Braithwaite's reintegrative shaming theory (1989) and from Macoby and Martin's (1983) definition of the four parenting styles, the social discipline window is an early psychosocial theory that puts emphasis on the view that young people are relational, emotive beings whose innate sense of worth is restored through the affirmation and support of adults in an environment of high control of offense and high support (Vaandering, 2010). The principle idea is that individuals learn to exercise intrinsic self-control, rather than extrinsic control enforced on them via social control (van Alphen, 2015). Hence, it provides schools with a common language based on restorative justice that thereby shapes the culture and climate. In particular, it puts crucial importance on using relational language and veering away from using blaming, stigmatizing, excusing, rescuing, helpless language.

It also emphasizes congruent behaviour; that is, "practicing what we preach" or "walking the talk." Moreover, it also dissipates the wrong notion that restorative practice is a lax option. In fact, restorative practices seek to be firm and fair as it is both strong on control and support (Morrison, Blood, & Thorsborne, 2005). In

fact, the social discipline window is one of the several restorative practice frameworks that dismiss the value of rehabilitation as a component of a just response to an offense that has the potential to reduce re-offense.

As outlined in Figure 1. The vertical axis refers to the structure and boundaries for maintaining the social order of the whole school community such as classrooms and playgrounds. On the other hand, the horizontal axis relates to the needed environment and support that all members of the school community. The four quadrants describe a range of disciplinary practice: Practice which lacks both control and support is experienced as neglectful or not engaging at any level; practice which is high in control and low on support is experienced as authoritarian and punitive or doing things TO the people; practice which is low on control and high on support is experienced as permissive or doing things FOR people; and practice which maintains both high control and support is experienced as firm and fair or doing things WITH others.

Doing things to (authoritarian or punitive quadrant) or for (permissive quadrant) are impertinent as the latter sends the message that students are incapable of doing things for themselves while the former tends to treat students as mere objects. On the other hand, the NOT or neglectful quadrant treats students as incidental consequences (Rodman, 2007). Within this framework, the offender rehabilitation is also in the permissive quadrant which has a “tendency to protect or shield people from natural and logical consequences of wrongdoing” (McCold & Wachtel, 2002 in Ward & Langlands, 2009).

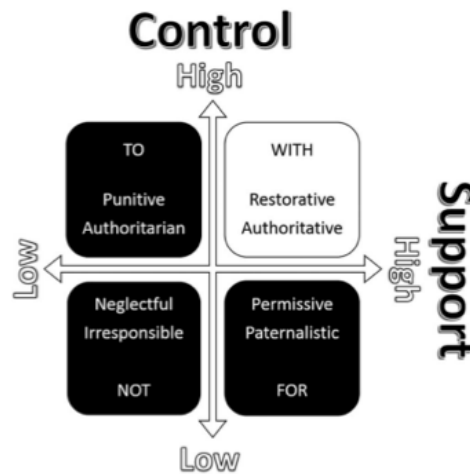


Figure 1. Social Discipline Window

The authoritative restorative or “WITH” quadrant illustrates that humans have a need to be in a relationship which thereby provides opportunities in which students can express and deal with their feelings, and seek support for their development in understanding these relationships. By providing an environment of high control of wrongdoing instead of people but high support of students and teachers can involve students and the community in the process of restorative discipline (Vaandering, 2010; Macready, 2009). A study by Gregory and Thompson (2010) supports this idea via their findings that African American students who feel fairly treated by their teachers tend to be perceived as less defiant and more cooperative. Similarly, a study by Gregory and colleagues (2013) found out that high restorative practice-implementing teachers had more positive relationships with their diverse students. The framework also dispels wrong notions that schools have no need to adopt sanctions for offenses. In a study by Ttofi and Farrington (2011), it was found out that disciplinary methods are strongly associated with decreases in bullying and victimization.

The framework reinforces the idea that restorative practice is only attainable when there is collaborative process between the primary stakeholders and secondary stakeholders. The primary stakeholders are: offenders who accept primary responsibility for the offense (primary offenders), offenders who accept some responsibility for contributing to the offense (secondary offenders), those against whom the offense was committed (direct victims), those who suffered indirect injury, loss and/or emotional suffering because of their relationship to the victim or offender (indirect victims), those who suffer because they have a responsibility with a victim or offender (secondary victims), and those who are only indirectly emotionally connected to the offense due to an ongoing relationship of concern for a victim or offender (communities of support) (McCold, 2000). Only when all three sets of primary stakeholders are actively involved is a process fully restorative.

Just like many other theories advocating restorative practices, however, a criticism of the social window theory also is that it fails to take into account the institutional and structural factors that shape the behaviour of students by focusing solely to the relationships between individuals (i.e., the teacher and the student). In effect, their communal needs and responsibility are lessened and misuse of power may ensue.

Nevertheless, based on review of literature, the social discipline window still provides an apt framework for restorative practice in schools. According to van Alphen (2015), the following criteria can make the restorative practice effective: participation must be voluntary for both the victims and the offenders; emphasis on the communication between the victim and the offender rather than finding out who is the guilty party; first question is purely factual as it merely serves to vent off emotions; the second question inquires about the

motivation of the offender; the third question moves the situation from the past into the here-and-now; the question about 'who was affected and in what way' serves to get insight into the consequences of what happened; emphasis on how the offender's behaviour has negatively affected another that generally leads to feeling of shame or discomfort about their own functioning; and emphasis on moving towards the future (e.g. how amends can be made, how mutual relationship be repaired) during negotiation.

Further, the social discipline theory is helpful on many levels. First, it brought aspects of restorative justice to school environment. Also, the theory reveals aspects of how offenders respond to harmful behaviour they commit and the accounts given by victims. Further, the theory provides a context for understanding effective discipline between adults and young people. Finally, the theory serves as a foundation for exploring the concept of restorative practice that is rooted in healthy relationships (Vaandering, 2010).

Based on the aforementioned criteria and a review of related literature, the social discipline theory is an apt framework in congruence to objectives of this study which is the identification of the current practice and the confirmation of restorative practice as implemented in selected RCAM-ES schools.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

Content analysis as a primary method in qualitative based research has been in use across several disciplines. It draws on various data sources such as school handbooks, email communications and other pertinent documents. These data sources often comprise written accounts, hence, textual in nature.

In this research, the primary method was used to analyse the content of the handbooks of various schools in Metro Manila. The focus of the analysis is to look into the type of approach to discipline the schools have adopted from its context and meaning, which were directly extracted from the textual data.

3.2 Area of the Study

The entire system comprises one Archdiocese (Manila), seven Dioceses (Paranaque, Cubao, Novaliches, Kalookan, Pasig, Malolos, Antipolo) and one Apostolic Vicariate (Taytay, Palawan) which gathers a total of 109 schools within the whole jurisdiction. With specific reasons and purposes, this research delves on the selected schools from clusters within the Archdiocese of Manila, to wit: Holy Trinity Academy (Balic-Balic), Manila Cathedral School (Tayuman), Malate Catholic School (Malate), Paco Catholic School (Paco), Espiritu Santo Parochial School (Tayuman), and Guadalupe Catholic School (Makati).

3.3 Mode of analysis

Bearing in mind the contextuality and applicability of the research at hand, this paper utilised the handbooks of the selected member schools within the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Manila Educational System in order to explore the discipline system implemented in their respective schools. The data were subjected into two phases namely the data generation and data analysis. Phase 1 is consist of five steps while phase 2 has three steps.

Phase 1

Step 1: Prepare the data. In this step, the whole picture of the data was gathered through reading and rereading of the policies written on the handbook.

Step 2: Define the unit of analysis. The unit of analysis that was determined to be essential is the sentences formed around the handbook.

Step 3. Develop categories and coding scheme. This involves careful reading text from the perspective of the research objectives and associated constructs as well as the context in which particular words were conveyed.

Step 4. Conduct preliminary coding. When the initial codes have been developed, two or more coders compared their code assignments and check for discrepancies.

Step 5. Code the content. This step draws meaning and inferences. Consistency of the coding was highly secured in order to complete the coding of the whole content.

Phase 2.

Step 6. Identify categories across codes. Since the data has been fully coded, meaningful categories were established in order to create possible connections and patterns.

Step 7. Draw conclusions from the coded data. Using the defined connections and patterns, themes were created. The themes were extracted from the categories.

Step 8. Draw interpretations and implications from the data. The themes were utilised to frame interpretations and preliminary implications. Triangulation of data was also secured.

4. Findings and Discussion

The analysis of data revealed ten (10) categories that were lumped into two (2) conceptual themes. The two conceptual themes describe the type of approach to discipline of the diocesan schools which were analysed through the language used in their students' handbook. The first theme is the punishment focused and the other one is the formation focused.

Punishment focused is defined as statements found in the handbooks that emphasize the consequences of actions prohibited in school. Statements such as "...the policies, rules, and regulations formulated by GCS and are stated in the handbook are strictly enforced for pupils/students compliance" and "creation of handbook is geared towards government compliance." These illustrate that the main

purpose of the creation of policies is simply as part of the requirements which put little significance on the welfare of the students. This may be reflected on how the phrases inside the handbook were formulated. Majority were directed towards the sanctions of the offenses. Specific misbehaviour were enumerated and the coverage of the sanctions were thoroughly discussed (e.g. section on cheating and the sanctions from suspension and grade equivalents or failure in conduct grade).

Formation focused is defined as statements found in the handbooks that show efforts in injecting positive element of disciplining the students. There were few efforts in incorporating programs or activities to develop the students when they committed offenses such as placing counselling and community works. The words utilized such as 'released students' instead of debarred students, 'code of conduct' may reflect efforts of the school to present the disciplinary measures. A rationale in the beginning was practiced on few schools which may also be seen as formation focused since the effort to explain the system being implemented appears to be essential to the school community.

Majority of the included schools in the research leaned towards the Punishment Focused actions. The offences and sanctions were enumerated. This gives a picture to the community of what is not expected from them to do - giving the impression of simply not to do the behaviours. Otherwise, the corresponding sanctions await the offender. Items that were found as Formation Focused, simply inserts few efforts to develop the offenders. Hence, the focus of the handbook is still on the offences and sanctions.

Referring to the social discipline window (Wachtel, 1997, 2000; Wachtel & McCold, 2000), the Punishment Focused may be a reflection of the Retributive approach which shows high in control of the authority and low in support to offenders. Evidently shown through the listing of offences and

sanctions. On the other hand, Formation focused has its element of the Restorative approach since it confronts and disapproves the wrong doing while supporting the intrinsic worth of the wrongdoing. The integration of counselling can be the element however due to the limitation of the nature of counselling, it may not suffice to provide high support to the offenders.

As stipulated in the handbooks of selected schools, Punishment Focused may be construed as a Discipline system concentrating on misbehavior or indiscipline such as stealing, disobedience, cheating, absenteeism, bullying and other related cases. These examples appear as various forms or displays of misbehavior and/ or indiscipline in the study of Ali et al (2014) as well as of Ouma et al (2013) in Kenya that include among many others the following: disobedience, truancy, theft, sneaking, cheating, lateness, noise making, fighting, defiance, failure to complete assignment, sexual harassment, use of abusive language, being quarrelsome, drug abuse, rudeness and possession of pornography (mentioned in Simba et al, 2016).

On the other hand, Formation Focused is a Discipline System that attempts to emphasize why in the first place there are structures. Formation Focused adopts a broader perspective of discipline. In the research of Ouma et al (2016), the discipline system that focuses on Formation of learners must refer to a 'personal attribute characterized by obedience, politeness, social competence (i.e. ability to get along with other people), orderliness, and academic efficiency (i.e. competence in undertaking academic tasks and obligations).'

Such emphasis paves the way for a paradigm shift on Discipline that is not meant to punish but meant to form, not to destroy but to restore, not to cast away but to nurture.

Conclusion

The schools included in the study utilise the Punishment Focused in the implementation of discipline. There is an effort to integrate formative programs yet it can be disregarded since it was given only very little attention and seen not much of effort to mould the students on the *right* behavior.

Future Directions

The Philippine Educational System is saddled with challenges that militate against the effective delivery of instructions to Filipino learners. One of these challenges is providing sustained and responsive training for administrators and teachers not only in their line of specialization but also in the aspect of restorative discipline. The data generated by this study reveal the paucity of knowledge about restorative discipline in the country and the dismal absence of restorative principles in addressing learner misbehavior.

To address the need for greater awareness on the advantages of adopting restorative discipline in schools and their effective implementation, the proponents of this study shall embark on a two-pronged approach aimed at engendering greater awareness on the benefits of restorative discipline and its eventual adoption by schools, both public and private initially in the National Capital Region and eventually nationwide. This two-pronged approach shall consist of first, conducting a more intensive research on knowledge of and practice of restorative discipline involving a wider and more heterogeneous group of educational institutions. This move will provide the proponents the needed *terra firma* to stand on when they embark on the second approach which is the establishment of a center for restorative discipline in the Philippines. The center will be housed in one of the leading universities in the country, the University of Santo Tomas and will be staffed with trained personnel who shall be sent for training in institutions outside of the Philippines that

are acclaimed pioneers in restorative discipline. This center will:

1. engage in continuing research on the effective implementation of restorative discipline in the Philippines that considers the aspects of culture, government support and school setting;
2. develop training modules on restorative discipline;
3. provide free training to school administrators and teachers on how to integrate the principles of restorative discipline in the school manuals and how to effectively implement these principles;
4. establish functional network with local and international educational institutions, relevant government offices and professional organizations that will assist the center in meeting its financial and manpower needs as it begins to roll out training seminars for school administrators and teachers.

The road that leads to the full implementation of restorative discipline in Philippine schools stretches ahead. It is certain that there will be bumps along the way and hurdles that have to be overcome such as:

1. resistance among those who still believe in the power of zero tolerance policy;
2. changing political landscapes every time a new president is elected,
3. budgetary constraints; and
4. forming a critical mass of capable and good-spirited academics who are willing to be trained in the art and science of restorative discipline and who in turn will serve as trainers for school administrators and teachers.

The time is rife for restorative discipline to be implemented in Philippine schools. The hurdles are real but equally real is the fact that the seed of consciousness about the need to shift to a restorative approach to address learner misbehavior is already germinating in some schools. To nurture

this seed so that it can grow and bear fruits
is the vision which the proponents of this
study have before them.