

Report on the Relation of Administration to Discipline

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THE RELATION OF ADMINISTRATION TO DISCIPLINE

The immediate responsibility for discipline or classroom control rests upon the classroom teacher. The particular type of control and the way it is administered is indirectly set-up by the administration of the school through its philosophy of education and curriculum. In order to clarify these statements it would be wise to first consider the methods used by classroom teachers throughout the country in meeting the control problem.—(1) No Control (2) Absolute teacher control (3) Group control (4) Unselfish self control.

Miss Seeds of U. C. L. A. says there are four major types of classroom control.

(1) No control—where the children do as they please. This type of control is sometimes found in the schools of today where the untrained, inexperienced teacher has a poor understanding of the term “freedom.” The teacher might as well not be there at all. The result of no control is chaos where the children are denied the right to feel happiness in real achievements. True freedom is something which should be earned and bestowed only upon those who can use it wisely. Real freedom leads toward right and true happiness; while allowing children to do as they please leads toward wrong and toward future sorrow. There is never any excuse for a teacher to smilingly assure the visitor of a classroom that she believes in “freedom” when a recitation has failed because of an uproar.

(2) Absolute teacher control—where rules are made and enforced by the teacher. This method is preferable to no control and should be used at times, especially by the inexperienced teacher, until she can determine the type best suited to her class of children. Under this system the children usually do the right things, not because they know it is right or why it is right, but because they are trained to obey blindly.

No teacher should be content to use this type continually because “following blindly” does not develop leadership or initiation. As soon as possible each group of children should be given a share of responsibility for its own mental and moral achievements. The teacher should gradually take the position of guide and advisor rather than one of policemen.

In most schools, before the 20th Century, absolute teacher control was the only type of control used. The teacher served as a dictator who made the rules, enforced them and judged all results. Rousseau indicated his views on this type of control with the following statement.

“What is to be thought of that cruel education which sacrifices the present to an uncertain future, that burdens the child with all sorts of restrictions, and begins by making him miserable in order to prepare him for some far-off happiness which he may never enjoy.”

- (3) Group control—wherein rules are made and enforced by the children working together for a common purpose. Under this type of control boys and girls of the classroom enforce the regulations where are often made by themselves without aid from the teacher. For example: If a child should deliberately spoil a group project it is quite possible that he would be dealt with severely by the children at recess. This type of control is quite dangerous if the teacher is not very alert. Because many children lack good judgement when dealing out punishment. Children seldom understand the underlying reasons why a pupil might be interfering with the group wishes. They usually consider it as meanness.
- (4) Unselfish self-control—where each person considers the good of the whole. This is the highest type of control and shows that the urge towards right is from within—that character has been built in the child. This end is reached by building up in the child right habits, ideals and attitudes through the discussion of problems which grow out of their immediate experiences. When the class as a whole sets up its own standard of work and behavior and each child lives up to them, sharing responsibility and making decisions for the good of the whole, we have unselfish self-control.

After considering the different types of control it seems obvious that the teacher must be well acquainted with several factors before she will know the type that will work in her particular classroom. She must know the philosophy of education, the curriculum and the methods adhered to by the administration of her school system. She must also know the types of people in her community and their attitude toward school in general and discipline in particular. Last but not least she must understand child psychology and be able to apply her knowledge to a given situation.

The teacher must understand that the control problem in her room is her responsibility. She alone has continual contact with the pupils, and understands their individual and group reactions to different situations. She is the only person in the school system who has the opportunity to know the parents of the children in her room well enough to determine their attitudes toward school and toward the children's future.

The problem of control which the teacher must meet is a miniature of the greater problem which confronts the democracy. It isn't easy for the teacher to know how to manage the forty children who differ more or less in native and acquired characteristic, so that they live richly and cooperatively together in their school. Like the democracy she should strive for the highest type of control. However, she should not be despondent or discouraged, if at times she has to resort to coercion in order to promote the greatest good for the greatest number. She must know how to reach each child—for one method will not suffice for all. Some with respond to reasoning, but with others it may even be necessary to inflict physical pain. Each child should be reached by the highest and best method possible to make him see and will to do right. It is the teachers' duty to see that the child feels satisfaction when he responds to the right way and that wrong responses cause dissatisfaction

In this discussion it should be quite obvious that the administrations of any school can set the stage for the type of control by the type of curriculum and methods they propose for the school system. If the curriculum and methods employed come from the 19th century philosophy of education it is necessary

to have the traditional absolute teacher control. In the last century schools, little effort was made to hold the child's interest or to enlist his services in planning the day's work. Assignments were given, (a certain number of pages each day) recitations heard and judgments made exclusively by the teacher who served as dictator.

In the present day progressive schools where the entire program is child centered the higher types of control are much easier to establish. Today we make every effort to utilize the cooperation of the pupils in planning the day's work and seeing that it is carried through with a satisfactory feeling of accomplishment for all.

Today in our progressive schools the administrators have every little to do in handling the control or discipline problem. The principal, supervisor, or superintendent is consulted on only exceptional disciplinary problems dealing with abnormal children, willful disobedience, stealing, etc. It should be emphasized, however, that when unusually troublesome individual cases arise the teacher should not hesitate to consult some member of the administrative staff. It may be necessary to enlist the aid of some trained specialist or consult the parents. Such contacts are often more easily made by the principal or supervisor than by the teacher.

It is also the responsibility of the administrative staff of the school to see that adequate housing facilities, equipment and supplies are available at all times. Small classrooms with poor equipment usually cause control problems for which a teacher is not responsible.

Many more or less scientific studies have been made to try to determine just what are the most serious problems of control that teachers are meeting almost constantly and how solutions were found. An interesting study on this problem was undertaken at Teachers College, Columbia University, under the direction of Professor Milo B. Hillegas. For a period of eighteen weeks careful note was made of all teaching problems which were brought to the attention of a training school supervisor by twelve student teachers. These problems were then classified and formed the basis of a questionnaire which was sent to 100 teachers who had less than two years teaching experience. The teachers were asked to indicate which problems gave them the most trouble. They were also asked to state with whose help they solved the problems.

The result showed that control problems such as difficulties in discipline and difficulties in building habits of good citizenship were felt more keenly than difficulties in teaching the various subjects. Twenty different difficulties in discipline were given and listed here in order of most frequent occurrence. (1) Cheating in school work (2) Tale-bearing (2) Discourtesy-rudeness (3) Abnormal children (3) Keeping all busy (4) General disturbance (5) stealing (5) Lying (5) "Smartness" (6) Talking too much (at wrong time) (6) Obstinacy (7) Impertinence (8) Sullenness (9) Disorderly conduct in halls (9) Disregard of yard rules (10) Willful disobedience (11) Bossiness (11) Note writing (12) Spoiled children (13) Immoral conduct (14) Refusal to abide by decisions of majority (14) Speaking disrespectfully to teachers.

The teachers received help in solving the above difficulties from the following sources. The average % of help received from each source is also indicated.

Unsolved	8%
Solved through common sense	32%
Solved by means of theory courses	3%
Solved through practice teaching	7%
Solved with help of the principal	10%
Solved with help of other teachers	4%
Solved with help of supervisor	1%
Solved with help from books	½%

This study indicates that the problems or discipline are many and varied in nature. It also indicates that even with beginning teachers the solutions to the problems are reached primarily by using good common sense. The administrative staff was utilized in only small percentage of cases and were helpful in solving only certain types of problems as: abnormal conduct, stealing, conduct in the halls and on the playground and immoral conducts. In most instances the administrative staff wasn't even consulted.

Conclusions:

1. Discipline or classroom control is primarily a teachers' problem.
 - a) She must be well trained in good educational practices and child psychology.
 - b) She must understand types of control and how to use them to advantage in a given situation.
 - c) She must be practice and know when to seek administrative help.
2. The administration of a school sets the stage for the type of discipline through its philosophy of education.
3. The administrative staff helps with discipline problems by advising teachers and in exceptional cases by taking the responsibility for solving individual problems.
4. The administration is responsible for adequate housing, equipment and supplies.
 - a. Lack of housing facilities creates control problems.
 - b. It is essential for pupils to have pride in their school in order to have proper attitude towards learning.