Corporal Punishment in the Schools of Ghana: Does Inclusive Education Suffer?

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study that compared the practice of corporal punishment in ten basic schools in the Greater Accra District in Ghana. Five of the ten schools were designated as inclusive project schools (IPS) and the other five as non-inclusive project schools (NIS). The primary purpose was to find out if the inclusive project schools were more effective in eradicating corporal punishment from their schools than were the non-project schools. One hundred teachers responded to a six-item questionnaire. A further 22 participants comprising ten teachers from the survey group, ten pupils and two directors of education were interviewed. Observation of the classroom practices, where these teachers work, substantiated the questionnaire and interview findings. The overall results indicated that corporal punishment still persists in both school sites at relatively the same scale. Three themes were found to underpin the administration of corporal punishment to students in these schools. (1) Punishment as an effective learning imperative (2) Punishment as a moral imperative (3) Punishment as religious imperative. The implications of these findings pertaining to inclusive education are discussed.

Introduction

The concept of inclusion

The concept of developing inclusive schools as the most effective means for achieving quality education for all is underpinned by the notion of social justice, empowerment and democratic participation in regular school. Regular school inclusion is expected to be free from child abuse, forceful, and oppressive pedagogy (Gibson 1986, Giroux 1997, Hook 1994). Inclusive schools are identified on the basis of inclusive indexes (Booth, Ainscow, Black-Hawkins, Vaughan and Shaw 2000). Thus, an educationally inclusive school is:

> An effective school and one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well being of every student matter. This includes students with and without disabilities. This is evident not only in the school's performance but also in its culture and willingness to review provision in order to offer new opportunities to pupils who may have experienced previous difficulties (Lupton and Jones 2002, p.1)

Key indicators of inclusive schools

The broad definition by Lupton and Jones (2002) implies that effective schools:

• Demonstrate sound inclusive practices which include collaborative leadership styles and good practice (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey 2005, Lupton and Jones 2002)

• Ensure that the school's mission statement is well articulated towards promoting inclusion and raising attainment

• Ensure that all the members of the school's community are fully aware of and actively support the principle of inclusion

• Identify resources to support progressive inclusion

• Ensure all staff are actively using sound strategies to provide better support and greater access to all students and teaching

• Ensure learning is routinely monitored by teachers, head teachers and senior mangers to ensure they are in tune with the school's mission statements (Booth et al. 2000, Lupton and Jones 2002).

Additionally, inclusive schools demonstrate school cultures in which admission policies do not discriminate on grounds of racial, ethnic, religious or disability status (Booth et al. 2000, UNESCO 1994, 2001, United Nations 1989, 1998). Inclusive schools should have a clear policy on bullying and punishment; have child protection policies in place; provide safe environments for all students; recognise and value the achievements of all students who experience barriers to learning and offer students the opportunity to play a full and active part in their own learning and encourage them to develop independence and self-advocacy skills (Cowne 2003, Deppeler and Harvey 2004). Although these are not the only indicators that identify schools as being inclusive, they serve as scaffolding for inclusive schooling. In view of these indicators, inclusive education promises to be a concept that reduces exclusion in education, responds to student diversity and increases school efficacy (Loreman, Deppeler and Harvey 2005, UNESCO 1994)

Education and social inclusion in Ghana

Ghana acknowledges the right of children to education and has enshrined this right in Article 25 (1) of the 1992 Republican Constitution of Ghana (Republic of Ghana 1992). This Constitution precipitated the launching of the Free Compulsory and Universal Basic Education (FCUBE) policy in 1996. The FCUBE policy has the following objectives:

• To expand access to good quality basic education

• To reduce exclusion in education

• To promote efficient teaching and learning

• To improve teacher morale and motivation by offering incentives

• To ensure adequate and timely supply of teaching and learning materials to schools

• To improve community relations (Ghana Education Service [GES] 2003).

The Government of Ghana is determined to provide equal educational opportunities for all children and youth with special needs and thus current educational policies are geared towards access, participation, quality and inclusion. To realise this goal the Special Education Division of GES is mandated to promote policies that will ensure quality education and the social inclusion of children with special needs (Republic of Ghana 2004). The implementation of the FCUBE policy has seen a tremendous increase in enrolment and supply of resources to schools (Republic of Ghana 2004). But still, a number of children and youth, particularly those with disabilities are prevented from undertaking basic education in regular schools. Also, others do not complete basic education due to hostile teaching practices adopted by some of the teachers (Avoke 2002, Oliver-Commey 2001). It is documented that 4,109 school age children with disabilities out of an estimated number of 804,000 are in both segregated and integrated schools. This suggests that only 0.6 percent of the population of children with disabilities receive any form of education (Republic of Ghana 2004). The government of Ghana perceived the urgent need for the mobilisation of financial, human and material resources towards the provision of equal educational opportunities for all Ghanaian children and youth to arrest this situation. Thus, moving towards inclusive education has been the main policy agenda of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MOEYS).

In fulfilment of the MOEYS's inclusive policy, GES in collaboration with Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO), initiated an inclusive education pilot project in September 2003. The theme of this project was *increasing access to quality basic education for children with special needs.* The project was to be implemented in ten districts within three regions: Greater Accra, Central, and Eastern (Ghana Education Service 2003)

and involved 35 basic schools. It was expected that through this project teaching and learning would improve and all students including those with disabilities would benefit from regular school education and social inclusion. Although UNESCO has charged every nation to create a welcoming school environment for all students to learn (UNESCO 1994, 1996) it appears Ghana may have difficulty achieving this, particularly for children and youth with disabilities as a result of some critical barriers facing its education practice. For instance, it was stated:

> The challenges facing the government of Ghana for ensuring social inclusion include public prejudiced perception of persons with special needs, architectural barriers, inadequate assessment facilities, inaccessible curriculum, curriculum inflexibility and pre-/post-training in special education needs for regular teachers' (Republic of Ghana 2004, p. 15).

Apart from the barriers identified by GES, corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools that still adopt it may impose unfriendly environmental conditions on students and may lead to exclusion from education. If this is true for Ghana then it is likely that the inclusive project initiated by GES/VSO may also be affected and the desired results would hardly be achieved. It is therefore important to investigate this barrier to inclusive education and to recommend strategies to eliminate its practice in all schools in Ghana.

Corporal punishment as a discipline measure?

Traditionally, corporal punishment is tied to school discipline with the term *discipline* itself problematic and having several ramifications for all actors in education (Rosen 1997, Slee 1995). Interpretations of discipline include a branch of knowledge; training that develops self-control, character, orderliness or efficiency; strict control to enforce obedience; and treatment that controls or punishes and as a system of rules (Rosen 1997). The present study focused on corporal punishment in relation to the last three interpretations of discipline.

Public accountability demands that schools be places that turn out productive and useful school-leavers. This is one of the fundamental principles of inclusive education. Thus, good discipline is considered to be one of the major attributes of effective schools and many failing schools have been blamed for lack of discipline. Educators have recognised that teaching and learning cannot be effective without someone being in control (Rosen 1997, Slee 1995). But being in control does not mean, 'being a warden at a prison, it means maintaining order and discipline' (Rosen 1997, p.4). The United States Department of Education, for example, has acknowledged that:

> Maintaining a disciplined environment conducive to learning does not necessarily mean adopting tough policies to keep students silent in their seats. …Most important, a learning environment requires an ethic of caring that shapes staff-student relationships (U.S. Department of Education 1993, p.1 cited in Rosen 1997).

This suggests that punishment of students is not synonymous with discipline although the two have been tied together. Punishment is usually associated with some form or type of forceful suffering or deprivation (Slee 1995). On the contrary, discipline has more to do with teaching and self-control (Rosen 1997, Slee 1995). Learning theories indicate that punishment was ineffective for producing significant and lasting behavioral change (Canter 2000, Rosen 1997). Kochanska and Thompson (1997) reiterated that power oriented forceful discipline elicits very high anxiety or arousal in the child and interferes with the effective processing of messages and thus inhibits internalisation. It has also been argued that although discipline remains one of the most common problems for educators, corporal punishment should not be used because no evidence suggests that it has produced better results academically, morally or that it improves school discipline (Canter 1989, 2000). Despite the existence of learning theories signaling the barriers punishment regimes pose to effective teaching and learning, the practice continues to be predicated on traditional norms and expectations of society and this is true in our schools, where adults expect that children who misbehave in school or at home will be punished (Rosen 1997).

Discipline in Ghana's schools

Although several countries, including New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom and some states in the United States have recognised the deleterious effects of corporal punishment and thus have abolished it, Ghana still adopts the practice. In Ghana, corporal punishment has been the main form of punishing students before and after independence. In the late 1970s Ghana Education Service (GES) partially banned corporal punishment in schools but allowed head teachers or their deputies to administer it to children because it was identified that the majority of teachers were abusing it and injuring students (Boakye 2001). The use of corporal and other forms of subversive punishment in Ghanaian schools is based on the rather antiquated thinking that it facilitates learning among pupils (Boakye 2001, Edumadze 2004). There are others who also use Judeo-Christian perspectives to justify that the folly of children could best be thrashed out through severe caning. For this reason, the Central Regional Minister, Mr. Isaac Edumadze, and Mr. Kwashie Boakye, chairman of the School Management Committee in Antwiagyeikrom in Ghana reiterated that partial banning of corporal punishment has contributed to indiscipline in schools and advocated its full reintroduction (Boakye 2001, Edumadze 2004).

Given these circumstances this study was conducted to gather evidence from two school sites and to inform educators in Ghana and beyond about the barriers corporal punishment regimes may pose to inclusive practice in countries which still adopt it and to recommend ways by which it can be eliminated.

Participants

The Teacher Registration Numbers were used to select 100 teachers from a total pool of 150 teachers in 10 schools in the Greater Accra District. All of the randomly selected teachers gave their consent to participate in the study. The final sample of 100 teachers were in 10 schools of which 50 were from five basic schools involved in a *pilot inclusive project* and the other fifty were from five basic schools that are *not* participating in the pilot inclusive project. Basic education is the first nine years of free and compulsory schooling and may be followed by 3 years of senior secondary school for a total of 12 years of pre-tertiary education. Second, a small number of the teachers (N=10) from the survey group and directors of education (N=2) who agreed to an interview took part. The 10 teachers who agreed to an interview were allocated to one of two groups according to whether they were teaching in an inclusive project or non-project school. Finally, Head Teachers of the participating schools were asked to nominate a student each from their respective schools to participate in an interview. The overall sample consists of 122 participants with 52 males and 70 females. The ages of students were from 13 to 16 years and those of the adult participants ranged from 27 to 55 years. The majority of the teachers (85 percent) had had more than 10 years teaching experience and a significant number (68 percent) had not undertaken special education related courses.

Procedure

First, the researcher sent letters to participants to ask for their participation. The parents of the students who participated were contacted on behalf of their students. Data were first collected from the administration of a simple questionnaire to 100 teachers. The first part of the questionnaire asked about participants' demographic details. The second part of the questionnaire contained six items that are related to corporal punishment and required only 'Yes' and 'No' responses. The questionnaires were distributed by the Head Teachers and collected on the same day. This was followed by structured classroom observation. Three hours a day for four days was spent observing in each school. This brought the total number of observation hours in the ten schools to 120. An observation checklist was developed for this purpose and letters A-E were assigned against specific statements on the checklist. A mark of letter 'A' indicated the presence of caning, 'B' for knocking a student's head, 'C' for pulling a student's ear, 'D' for pinching a student and 'E' for asking a student to kneel down on the bare floor. When the observation was completed interviews were scheduled with interviewees who agreed to participate. Teacher and student

interviews were conducted on different days in one of the ten schools' classrooms, which was conveniently located from the other nine schools. The Director interviews were conducted in their respective offices. The questions for the interviews were developed based on what was observed in the various schools. This process enabled the accurate triangulation of data. The three data sets served a complementary purpose and also extended the researcher's understanding of teacher perceptions about corporal punishment.

Analysis

Simple percentage scores were computed for the surveys to identify how the teachers from both school sites responded to the various items and to find out if there were any significant differences between the percentage scores. To analyse the observation data, the number of letters for each category was counted after each observation and then converted into numerical figures for all the ten schools. Percentages were then computed by dividing the number of observed punishments by the number of observed hours and then multiplying the result by 100. This was done for each category of punishment. This result is shown in Table 1. Further, framework analytic procedures were used to analyse the interview data. This process involved:

Familiarisation with the data

Identifying a thematic framework for the data

Indexing or coding

Charting by using headings from the thematic framework to create charts of the data which facilitates easy reading across the whole dataset, and mapping and Interpretation of the themes (Richie and Spencer 1993).

Results

Items	IPS(N=50)		NIS(N=50)	
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Yes (%)	No (%)
1. Government policy on education prohibits corp. punishment	26	74	22	68
2. This school uses corporal punishment on students	94	6	98	2
3. The school policy prohibits the use of corporal punishment	4	96	10	90
4. Students who perform poorly in class are punished	62	38	92	8
5. I personally would like corporal punishment to continue	84	16	88	12
6. Corporal punishment should be discontinued	15	85	4	96

*IPS= Inclusive project schools NIS = Non inclusive schools

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for survey responses in percentages

As the quantitative data in Table 1 show, an overwhelming majority of the teachers [94 and 98 percent] from both the IPS and NIS (item 2), use corporal punishment to enforce school discipline. The results also indicate that the majority of the participants from both school sites (item 1) are not aware of any government policy prohibiting corporal punishment. This may be attributed to lack of information flow from GES to the schools. The persistence of corporal punishment in these schools may be attributed to lack of school-based policies that prohibit the use of this form of punishment (item 3). The results further indicate that the majority of the teachers in both school sites administer corporal punishment to students who perform poorly in academic work (item 4). This implies that students with special learning problems who are not officially identified may be punished often for poor performance. Another surprising aspect of this result is that a large number of teachers from all the schools indicated their unwillingness to discontinue corporal punishment in their schools (items 5 and 6). The important lesson that can be learned from these results is that the inclusive project schools have not been found to be more favourable in changing teacher perceptions and beliefs about corporal punishment than their non-project counterparts.

Findings from the qualitative research component

As it was the purpose of this study to gain insight into the reasons why teachers in basic schools in Ghana often use the cane on students during teaching and learning periods, interview questions were designed to elicit such information. These questions were helpful to the researcher in gaining deeper understanding and reasons why the teachers adopt corporal punishment in their schools.

Interviewer: How do you address learning problems in your school or class?

Respondent: Actually, we have a lot of lazy students here who wouldn't like to do anything nor improve no matter how hard we try… the only option is to push them a bit with the cane.

Interviewer: Don't you have any other ways to help these students achieve academic success?

Respondent: All those teaching methods we learnt hardly work. One thing you should understand is that the African child is brought up in a culture that uses canes as a form of push for children to learn and follow instruction. If we do not enforce the same practices, our schools will experience reduced academic standards.

Interviewer: What is the view of Ghana Education Service on this issue?

Respondent: These days GES is complaining of falling standards of education…it is because of their controversial policies on corporal punishment…Gone

are the days when we were in school…how dare you?...You have to know your times by heart and memorise all formulas before the next school day otherwise cane will eat your flesh…We can't just do away with it.

Interviewer: How would you justify the use of the cane in your schools?

Respondent: Certainly, it is really helping our students. If a student fails to do his homework, just give him few strokes of the cane, the next day he will do it…they are really scared of the cane and knowing that failure would result in caning, they sit down and learn.

In order to find out if there were other reasons apart from learning imperatives to justify the use of corporal punishment in the schools, further questions were asked to explore teachers' beliefs.

Interviewer: Apart from ensuring that your students achieve academic success, do you cane students for any other reasons?

Respondent: Yes, we are responsible for the spiritual and moral growth of the students. We punish students who steal, fight, tell lies and use indecent language against colleagues and teachers. All students are expected to attend worship on Wednesday morning before class begins and those who absent themselves are punished.

Interviewer: What part do parents play in this process of moral and religious shaping?

Respondent: The parent-teacher associations (PTAs) forums are used to shape school based policies where power is vested in us (teachers) to discipline students on behalf of parents. Parents usually blame us teachers if a child's behaviour becomes deviant in the home. Often offences committed by students at home are brought to our notice and parents request from us to punish their children in front of them.

Interviewer: What is your general opinion on corporal punishment?

Respondent: We do not see anything wrong with it…we have also passed through it and it has made us what we are today. Besides, the only language our students understand is corporal punishment…when they see the cane it is only then that they respect authority and school rules.

Students' voices

In this study, considering the nature of the problem, it was important to obtain students' views concerning how they are punished and how they felt about it.

Interviewer: Do teachers in this school cane students during teaching and learning periods?

Respondent: Yes, they punish us when we go against the school rules. ….if we talk in class, fight or do not learn hard or get some of our sums wrong…They can use the cane on your back or buttocks and sometimes on your fingers… Sometimes you are asked to leave the class to weed on the field while your friends are still learning… They can ask you to kneel down at the front of the class or at the back and raise your hands… Your hands become tired but they will not let you go until they are sure you are tired.

Interviewer: So what do you think of the teachers?

Respondent: I hate some of the teachers because of how they cane… They cane any part of your body they see, your head, your leg, the back of your neck and…. The teachers teach us but they always frightened us with the cane… If they do not want to cane you they will send you outside to go and weed or clean the gutters, school toilet or urinal.

Interviewer: Are girls exempted from the caning?

Respondent: Our teachers do not know who is a girl or boy when it comes to caning…we are all caned the same way. They will hold your dress on you tight and then give it to you… Sometimes your underpants show and your friends will laugh at you…I do not like this and I want to stop school but my parents will beat me and send me back to school…They will even ask the teacher to beat you again if you do not go to school…Some students fear the cane and if they hear that they will be caned the next day they will not come to school.

The two directors who participated in the interview were also asked to comment on the use of corporal punishment in the schools.

Interviewer: The teachers indicated that they use corporal punishment to discipline their students: what can you say about that?

Respondent: This is a violation of the Ghana Education Service policy on punishment; the policy on corporal punishment allows only the Head Teachers to administer it to students and in rare cases the Head Teacher can deputise a teacher to administer it. Corporal punishment can only be used in extreme cases for example, when a student steals and the number of lashes to be given is specified for all Head Teachers.

Interviewer: Now that this practice is entrenched in schools what are you doing about it?

Respondent: There is a punishment policy now before parliament and if passed teachers who violate the directives would be brought to book.

Apart from the survey results and interview responses, the structured observation provided crosschecks of the data. This is presented in Figure 1.
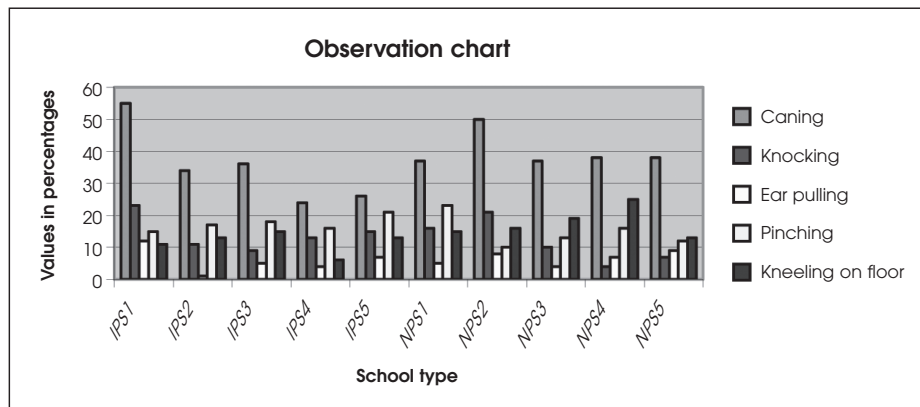

Figure 1: The trend of punishment by school type in percentages

The observation results represented in Figure 1 indicated that caning was the most common form of punishment in both the inclusive project and non-project schools. Schools IPS1 and NPS2 were found to be using caning as a form of corporal punishment more than all the other schools. The results also showed that pinching was the second common method of punishing students and ear pulling was found to be the least common type of corporal punishment students receive in all the schools. It was also observed that the punishment regimes are commingled with teaching and learning and students have no voice to resist its administration. It can be implied from the results that part of students' instructional time is wasted on punishment. This may invariably affect effective teaching and learning in the schools. Further, the observation records did not show significant differences between the levels of different corporal punishment regimes in the two school sites.

Discussion and Implications

Three themes capture the nature of punishment for school children by Ghanaian teachers in basic schools in this study. First, punishment is *motivational to learning.* Second, *punishment is foundational to moral uprightness and shaping of society's future.* Third, *punishment is driven by religious (Biblical) and spiritual concerns.*

Punishment is motivational to learning

The findings of this study indicated that one of the motives behind the use of corporal punishment in the schools was to motivate students to learn and improve academic standards. This ideology symbolises the relationship between traditional pedagogy before the colonial era when Europeans (British) introduced formal education to Ghana. Although the colonial pedagogy was rigid, oppressive and selective and favored brilliant students, that cannot be attributed necessarily to why the practice of corporal punishment still persists in Ghana today. Traditional African teaching and learning is dominated by power relations. Children are expected to take instructions from adults and assimilate knowledge without questioning its source. Questioning the source or challenging the opinion of an instructor may be regarded as rude and is tantamount to punishment. The same master-servant relationships, oppressive and discriminatory pedagogy still permeate teacher education with little or no opportunity for teacher trainees and their trainers to dialogue with each other in academic matters. Thus teachers trained within this culture may regard the use of the cane as a catalyst to induce students to learn. This practice, however, undermines constructivist's philosophy of teaching and learning.

The moral imperative

Morality in Ghanaian society is held in high esteem (Gyekye 2002). Teachers represent parents in schools and they are encouraged by parents to address all problems posed by students. The results of this study indicated a close collaboration between teachers and parents in terms of discipline. Thus the home and school are inextricably linked. The participants believe that the degeneration of the character of individuals in their homes or schools will lead to a fallen nation (Gyekye 2002). As the notion of personal character occupies a central place in Ghanaian society, schools are seen as places of authority where children will be made to conform to the standards of society. Corporal punishment is therefore considered and used as a tool to align students for society.

Religious imperatives

This study has indicated that corporal punishment of children is underscored by religious motives. Ghana is intensely religious and all aspects of life, including all actions, moral behaviour, and thoughts are inspired and influenced from a religious point of view (Gyekye 2002). Christian religion forms more than 70 percent of all religions and Christian teaching in Ghana does not abhor the use of corporal punishment but rather condones it. It is because of the recognition of the part religion plays in school life that worship is compulsorily scheduled on the school timetable for Wednesdays for all government and non-government schools in Ghana. The majority of the participants cited the Holy Bible as their source or reference point to justify why they use corporal punishment in schools. Using the Judeo-Christian

perspectives, teachers quote phrases from the Holy Bible to support their arguments. 'The rod and rebuke give wisdom but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother' (Proverb 29: 15)… 'Correct your son and he will give you rest.' (Proverb, 29: 17)… 'A rod is for the fool's back.' (Proverb, 26: 3)…'Harsh discipline is for him who forsakes the way.' (Proverb, 15:10), (refer to The New King James Version).

The teachers believed that if the rod is spared in their classrooms they may be failing in their religious duties as teachers who are responsible for the moral upbringing of the child. These Judeo-Christian perspectives are not unique to Ghana but are demonstrated in the US as well (Greydanus, Pratt, Spates, Blake-Dreher, Greydanus-Gearhart and Patel 2003).

Implications for inclusive practice

Apart from the physical and psychological damage that corporal discipline causes to students (Canter 2000, Rogers 1994, Rosen 1997, Slee 1995), it has ethical, teaching and learning implications. Evidence indicates that administering corporal punishment to students provokes resistance and resentments such as cyclical child abuse and pro-violent behaviour (Canter 2000, Hyman and Rathbone 2004, Slee 1995). Also, students turn to lying about their behaviour to escape punishment.

One of the major characteristics of inclusive schools is *access* and *retention*; however, corporal punishment creates fear in students that may lead to truancy and premature attrition. Premature attrition from school may lead to social exclusion, as the students who are affected would not have acquired any productive skills that would befit them and the society in which they live. The implication is that they would become social outcasts. Further, properly conducted inclusive schools may have heterogeneous student populations, including students with disabilities. Corporal punishment of children can lead to physical injury if teachers are not very careful in its administration. This may lead to absence from school and consequent reduction in the academic performance of the injured student.

An educationally inclusive school, Lupton and Jones (2002) argued, 'is an effective school and one in which the teaching and learning, achievements, attitudes and well being of every student matter' (p.1). Using corporal punishment is perceived to be counterproductive to inclusive pedagogy and the valuing of all students. Corporal punishment of students for the purpose of enabling them to learn can best be understood from a behaviorist perspective. In the behaviorist tradition, learning is conceived as a process of changing or conditioning observable behavior as a result of selective reinforcement of an individual's response to events that occur in the environment (Hogan and Pressley 1997, von Glasersfeld 1995a). The core of

behaviorism is on students' efforts to accumulate knowledge of the natural world and the teachers' role to transmit it. It therefore relies on a transmission, instructionist approach which is largely authoritative, non-interactive teacher-centered and controlled (von Glasersfeld 1995b). The implication is that it does not offer fertile ground for inclusive practice as punishment contingencies are often used as part of the conditioning process. In sharp contrast, the constructivists' pedagogy encourages students to become critical thinkers, self-directed learners who seek out learning experiences for themselves and challenge accepted practices and norms (Ernest 1995, Hogan and Pressley 1997, von Glasersfeld 1995b). Constructivists are aligned with inclusivists who believe that students should be provided with strong, structured, safe environments in which the student has freedom to learn. In the constructivist perspective, knowledge is constructed by the individual at his/her own pace through interactions with the environment (Ernest 1995, von Glasersfeld 1995a). In this way no student is left out in the teaching and learning process and positive reinforcements replace aversive forms of discipline to encourage students to explore their own potentials.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It can be concluded that none of the schools involved in the current study is inclusive. The findings of this study suggest that corporal punishment in Ghanaian schools is the direct result of the beliefs, values and norms of Ghanaian society; historical precedents and the legacy of power oriented teacher education in which students are expected to assimilate without question what is transmitted to them by their masters (teachers). The use of the cane also symbolises teachers' power over students. It is however, important to note that schools cannot be inclusive if they adopt oppressive pedagogies and aversive class control measures such as those identified in this investigation. Inclusive schools are effective schools where teaching and learning meets the learning styles of every student. We cannot lose sight of the fact that this is not possible in undisciplined and chaotic classrooms. As this study has indicated that no consistent legislation exists regarding the use of corporal punishment, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education in Ghana enact consistent and detailed legislation to abolish the use of corporal punishment in all educational and public institutions across the country. Inclusive education provides access to education and minimises premature attrition, but a reintroduction of corporal punishment may erode the gains that inclusive education has to offer.

Second, pre-service and professional development initiatives need to embrace research based methodologies and pedagogies that value student diversity and are scaffolded on constructivist learning theory. Understanding of individual differences and redefining religious beliefs within a framework that recognises children's rights

such as critical pedagogy, feminism and constructivism will enable teachers to develop a better and a more humane approach to dealing with student behaviour and learning problems arising daily in their classes.

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