



HURAGE:

a Journal of Human Rights and Gender Education.

Maiden Edition, Vol. 1. No. 1. June, 2008.

An academic publication of the:
Centre for Human Rights and Gender
Education (CHURGE),

Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun,
P. M. B. 2118, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.

Alademerin E. A. and Ukonze J. A.

A Critical Appraisal of the Child's Rights in Respect of the
Administration of Practical Agriculture and School Punishment

A Critical Appraisal Of The Child's Rights In Respect Of The Administration Of Practical Agriculture And School Punishment.

By

E. A. Alademerin, Ph.D

Department of Agricultural Production and Management Science,
Tai Solarin University of Education, Ijagun, Ijebu-Ode, Nigeria.

and

J. A. Ukonze, Ph.D

Department of Vocational Teacher Education,
University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria.

Abstract

This paper examined the rights of the child in respect of the administration of practical agriculture and school punishments. The two activities; first for the development of psychomotor skills in farm activities, and the other, for the reformation of students both have been erroneously given same status which has not helped in development of the interest of agriculture as a subject among students it has portrayed the subject as full of energy sapping activities, and in addition; have eroded the rights and privileges of students including those that don't even offer the subject. This paper took a cursory look at the psychomotor skills development of the child as contained in the National Policy on Education, Education laws and the rights of the child, misplaced priorities in practical agriculture and school punishments, and what practical agriculture really aims at in the education of the child. Suggestions on role differentiation of school officials and how to improve on the existing situation among others were given.

Preambles

Teaching should not be seen as merely the application of theoretical or scientific knowledge for it is an extraordinary complex activity, Carried out in a complex social situation, characterized by the immediate and unpredictability of classroom events (Madaus, Kellaghan and Schwab, 1989). Teaching is a moral undertaking which is set out to achieve moral objectives and based on moral relationship between teachers, students and the immediate communities. It is very important for school teachers to be familiar with the rules of conduct and social norms that govern the school they teach in and to be aware also of what parents and the society at large expect from schools.

School Teachers must have a basic understanding of the school or education laws, how the law influence education and the subjects they teach, and how it protects the individual rights and those of the students. Being aware of the basic tenets of school law, also lessens the chance that a

teacher will be involved in litigation unnecessarily arising from a teaching related activity. As a teacher, one is responsible for taking precautions to prevent situations that could result in physical and emotional harm to students both in the schools and out of school situation.

Generally, Practical agriculture and physical punishment meted out to the students which involve the use of motor skills in exercises like cutting of grasses and desired changes, digging, are activities based interventions; designed to produce some desired changes in the child while still in school. The two activities are somehow related in that they involve the use and coordination of motor senses but the ultimate of what they convey and impart on the child are clearly distinguishable. While practical agriculture is education to impart saleable skills on the farm, the school punishment in whatever form is to reform erring students. As a school teacher and a subject specialist, the education one had while in school was aimed at preparing him/her to impart functional knowledge into the students and not as a legal luminary but we should all realize that we live in a litigious society and we need to know a bit of the legal implications of what we do regarding our professions.

Understanding these complexities will provide us with sufficient information on how we can regulate our own conduct to comply with the law. In addition, the legal information should also allow us to recognise when our own legal rights and those of others, are being violated in the discharge of our legitimate duties as teachers, administrators, schools officers etc. To understand the laws governing education, one needs to know something about the sources from which these laws were derived. In Nigeria, there are two sources

- (a) Elected or Appointed governing bodies that formulate written statutes, rules, regulations and Policies-Legislation, Ministry of Education (Federal & States).
- (b) Judiciary which pronounces Legal requirements on education through decision on what is right and dignified.

The National Policy On Education, Psychomotor Skills Development And Rights In The School.

The National policy on education Revised (2004) clearly spelt out the importance of psychomotor skills development of a child while in school. It gives recognition to the award of scores for some motor skills. Our educational experiences have broad range of activities which are aimed at making the child to be physically able and alert when applying the knowledge gained at school in the larger society. They are essential components of the continuous assessment in schools. Without sound

knowledge of the developmental aspects of human behaviour, we can only guess at appropriate educational techniques and intervention procedures. Developmental based instructions incorporate learning experience that are appropriate not only for the chronological ages but also, and more importantly, for the developmental levels of the individuals being taught. This is where the issue of physical and strenuous exercises appropriate to the ages of pupils come into recognition.

Motor skill development is a specialized field of scholarly inquiry which cuts across all disciplines. Gessel (1928) and Graw (1925) were the earlier scholars that became legends in motor development research especially in the area of infant movement and skill acquisition.

During 1980s and 1990s emphasis on the study in motor development shifted dramatically to the understanding of the underlying process involved in complex ways. The process of motor development reveals itself primarily through changes in movement behaviour-planting, weeding, cutting, harvesting, processing etc. All of us at whatever ages are involved in the lifelong process of learning how to move with control and competence in response to challenges we face daily in constantly changing world. We are able to observe developmental differences in movement behavior, brought about by factors within the individual (biology) the environment (experience), and the task (physical/mechanical). We can do this through observation of changes in process (form) and product (performance).

From the above, practical agriculture and school punishments in whatever form involves the functional use of motor senses and skills. As earlier indicated, both are strenuous and they involve physical body movements. The use of senses and skills can be grouped into three levels of manipulation, locomotive and stability. All that are carried out on the farm or within the school environment go through the three levels. Conscious efforts must be made on the part of the Teacher as well as other school officials not to violate the right of individuals in whatever form along the 3 phases or levels in or outside the school.

The world over, constitutional right in the school are almost similar with minor variations from country to country. The generally acceptable rights which are not fully exhaustive are indicated below:

- The right to free speech
- The right to free exercise of religions beliefs
- The right to freedom of press
- The right to be free from government establishment of an official religion
- The right to be free from unreasonable search and seizure of private

- property
- The right to reasonable notice for the rules to which citizens will be held
 - The right to be free from rules and treatment that are not fundamentally fair
 - The right to be free from discrimination on the basis of race
 - The privilege against self-incrimination.
 - The right to protections in the process by which government decisions are made that affect important individual interests.

The part listed above in some instances are still been grossly violated in some countries and as such what obtains in some countries may not exactly be the same in others. What are stated above represents on the average the situation available in majority of the Nations Worldwide.

According to the National Action plan for the promotion and protection of human

A right in Nigeria (2006) the constitutional obligation of the Government is that it should

Recognize that children have right to among other things.

- Be protected from bad treatment, neglect, abuse or shame.
- Be protected from abusive labour practices. Be protected from doing anything that;
- Is wrong for a child of certain age
- Puts the child's well being, education physical health, mental health, spiritual health, moral development at risk (page 69).

Education Laws And The Right Of Child In Respect Of The Psychomotor Development.

Despite the growing importance and influence of school related law, many educators are still unaware of their basic right and responsibilities. It is not possible for the teacher to always know when the child abuse has occurred. Infact many teachers get themselves involved in so many legacy webs in the cause of discharging their duties. The easiest being the child abuse. Reason being that teachers are often the only adults aside from family members who regularly see the children, they may be the society's best opportunity to recognize and prevent child abuse and neglect which include range of behaviours and effects, such as the following;

- Physical abuse, evidenced by cuts, burns and bruises.
- Sexual molestation and exploitation.
- Neglect: medical, educational or physical.
- Emotional abuse.

It is important to remember that abuse and neglect rarely occur as a

result of intentional actions. Rather, they usually represent moments of misplaced courage or a lack of resources or knowledge about love to care for children.

Quin (1984) recounted the horror of his abused childhood. His story stood as a plea to teachers to become involved;

"As an adult survivor of six years of severe child abuse both physical and emotional I often wonder why the church did nothing to help me, my brothers and my parents.... Surely as I attended church school classes, someone must have noticed the pain and terror in my eyes, this helplessness with which I moved, my withdrawal into isolation, or at least, the swelling in my hands and feet. Surely some must have noticed me."

Children who suffer physical abuse may;

- Exhibit signs of frequent injury-burns and bruises.
- Refuse to wear clothes that are conditioned to weather
- Not want to sit down
- Show unusual aggressive or unusually withdrawn behaviour
- Not show emotion-no joy, no pain, no anger.
- Be frequently absent or tardy for no good reason
- Be unusually eager to please
- Complain about pain, beating or other abusive treatment
- Show a significant change in school attitude, behaviour or achievement

Source - Adopted from Texas state teaching Association for instruction and Professional Dept by sadka & Sadka (2000).

Misplaced Priorities Of The Tenets Of Practical Agriculture And School Punishment.

As previously noted, practical agriculture lessons are meant to teach farming skills while School punishment is meant to reform erring students. Sadly enough, in the quest of the reformation exercise, some school officials (particularly the Labour Teacher) do create a negative image of the subject in the mind of pupils thereby distorting the primary objective for which practical agriculture is meant to serve.

Erring students are regularly made to serve their sentences on school farms weeding of the plots, ridge making, stumping, planting of crops, harvesting or even processing of cassava in some extreme cases for the number of day or even weeks that the punishment will last. This has not really helped matters as students on regular basic develop negative image of the subject and in some instances hatred for the teacher (who in most cases) doubles as the labour master as well. When such punishments are

practical lesson or the labour period.

Such tactics are.

Tactics Teacher use to Establish rules and Impose Regulations

- Appealing to sense of propriety it is not polite to act in this way.
- Direct reprimand- "you should not have done that work this way"
- Impersonal reprimand "some of you are not serious about this work"
- Ridicule "you have done this work like a baby"
- Exhortation "how can I teach you when you are making noise"
- Command "Bend down and work"
- Instilling guilt "Nice people don't work like this"
- Cessation of activity "since you can not listen, class, turn to page 4 and do the first 20 examples"
- Group sanction "If who did that thing do not own up, I will punish all of you after school"
- Threat "I will send you away if you do that again".
- Putting the children in his/her honour.
- Promise of reward "I promise you something from the farm today".
- Awakening fear "you remember what happened the last time father came here".
- Exclusion "Go and stand at the back of the class".

Adapted from Henry {1971}. Cited in Mandaus, Kelleghan & Schwab {1989}

What Practical Agriculture should inculcate in learners

- Skills development in farm and related agribusiness experiences.
- To develop the interest of the subject in the students.
- To make students healthy and develop their major skills adequately.
- To make students choose vocation in the broad field of agriculture later in life.
- Should be a powerful teaching tool rather than a means of punishing and reforming erring students.
- Should primarily aim at knowledge for the student rather than a special focus on the "monetary" gains.

Summary And Conclusion

The primary function of education is to transmit knowledge and since the teacher is the one who possesses knowledge and experience, the child it is believed relative to the teacher lacks both. The teacher's job is to present that knowledge to the student and it is the student's job to understand what is yet to be uncomprehended as the student is dependent on the teacher. The idea of dependence implies social relations of power and authority,

concluded, erring students hardly get convinced that the purpose of the sentences was reformatory. They hold a strong view of their being used as "labourers for productive purposes" on the farm just for the teachers to make more money. This defeat the main aim for which the punishment was initially given.

According to center for technical Agriculture (CTA, 2007), "The land can be a powerful teaching tool for the new generation school farms, offer a promising approach for introducing young people to the benefits of farming, helping to equip them with a source of nutrition and household food security for the future and stem the rural exodus.

In reality, school farms and gardens generally have a more practical purpose. They aim to equip young people with skills in environmentally sustainable farming and, in the most successful cases, teach them how to process their output to the best effect, put their produce on the market and get good returns.

According to CTA (2007), in the past, school farms and gardens have received a bad press. Widely promoted for African pupils in Pre-independence times, school farming still suffers from negative colonial connotation. Often, farm were thinly disguised forms of child labour, meted out to children as an opportunity for learning.

The situation still persists since independence till the present moment. A study on the perception of the role of an agriculture teacher conducted in 1987 by Olaitan revealed the following:

- Pupils feared rather than respected the agriculture teacher and thought him a disciplinarian, particularly where physical work was involved. Laziness was not tolerated and complaint largely ignored. He was also seen to be responsible for various outdoor activities as other teachers, rarely spent any appreciable time in the staff room and was not always well dressed.
- To other teachers in the school, he was regarded as untidy, disorganized person who did not fit well in the school society. This close relationship with the school principal alienated him from his colleagues as did his access to school farm products. In contract to the above, he was well respected in the society as they see him as someone who will solve their agricultural problems.

The teacher {Agriculture & Labour} fully aware of the negative image of the subject he teaches also his person, may resort to the use of some certain tactics which may directly and indirectly violate the dignity of the students he/she teaches or supervises either during the regular agriculture

with the student occupying the subordinate status.

This then goes further to give room for punishments and rewards. This paper addressed the area of misplaced attention and priorities regarding farm practical and school punishments. School Principals, Vice Principal, Agricultural Teachers, Labour Teachers among others in the secondary school system are guilty of the misplaced priority. More often than not, erring students sent to the agriculture and the labour teachers were made to work on the school farm upon the instruction from higher authority.

The message usually in a small piece of paper, though short is precise and directional "**send them to the farm**".

From the foregoing, such actions violate students fundamental human right and other similar privileges of the students. It is a daily occurrence in our secondary schools, efforts should be in place to orientate school administrator on this menace. Complaint in respect of school punishments come in 4 ways:-

- {1} Unfair School rules
- {2} Inappropriate punishment when compared to the nature of students behaviours.
- {3} Inappropriate procedure in the administration of the punishment.
- {4} Discriminatory policies of punishments.

Recommendations

The following are hereby recommended;

- School farm should be clearly distinguished from the school punishment ground and under no circumstance should the farm be used as an alternative place for punishment.
- School punishment to erring students should be administered by the labour teacher who is officially designated to handle such matters and by no other official.
- Agriculture teachers should not double as the labour master as the expectations from the two offices are not complimentary to each other.
- All prospective professional teachers currently undergoing training should be exposed to various courses that will dwell extensively on education laws and the day to day practice in school.
- There should be a standardized role differentiation among the senior officials in the school system to avoid multiplicity of instructions in relation to the administration of practical agriculture and school punishments.

- A workshop should be organized for school administration and other senior officials on the common litigious areas in the school system and how to minimize them in the discharge of professional duties of staff.
- Lawyers should be appointed to serve on boards of National, State and Local Government Education Authorities (Teaching Service Commission, State Universal Basic Education etc) so as to help interpret some laws and advise on the educational implications of same in the society appropriately.
- Provision should be made to appoint the lawyers also into the Governing boards of schools (Pry, Sec& Tertiary levels).

References

- Alademerin, E.A and Ukonze, J.A (2006) Educational reforms and measures in correcting the Negative attitude of Youths Towards agriculture.(unpublished)
- Center for Technical Agriculture (2007) Cultivating Young minds. No 127. Spore Technical Report.
- Federal Republic of Nigeria (2006) National Action plan for the protection of Human Rights in Nigeria. Bluesland Publishers.
- Gallahue, D.I and Ozmun, J.C (2002) Understanding Motor Development in Infants, children, Adolescent, Adults. Boston. McGraw Hill Companies
- Gessel, A.& Thompson, H. (1934) infant Behaviours: its genesis and growth. New York; McGraw-Hill.
- Madaus, G; Kellaghan, T; Schwab, R (1989) Teach them well- An introduction to Education. London. Harper & Row Publishers. Inc.
- McGraw, M.B (1934) Growth: A study of Johnny and Jimmy. New York; Appleton-Century.
- Olaitan, S.O (1984) Agriculture Education in the tropics. London. Macmillan Publisher Ltd.
- Quin, P.E (1984) Cry out. Nashville TN. Abingdon Press.
- Sadker, M.P and Sadkler, M.S. (2000) Teachers. Schools and society. Boston. McGraw Hill Companies.
- Santrock, J.W (2004) children. Boston. McGraw Companies
- Tozer, S.E; Violet, P.C and Senese, G (2002) School and Society- Historical and contemporary perspectives. Boston. McGraw Hill companies.s