A Critical Analysis of Retributive Punishment as a Discipline Measure in Nigeria's Public Secondary Schools

Akinjide Aboluwodi
Faculty of Education, Adekunle Ajasin,University, Akungba-Akoko, Ondo State, Nigeria
E-mail: akin_abo@yahoo.com

Abstract
In recent time, students in Nigerian secondary schools engage in certain acts considered to be inimical to the health of their schools. There were cases of students who caused their mates and teachers bodily harm, and tore mates' books and school uniform. Most school authorities in Nigeria adopt different forms of punishment including retributive punishment as a measure of punishing students for bad behaviour. This paper was particularly interested in retribution as a discipline measure to correct maladaptive behaviour among secondary schools students. The intention of most school authorities was to deter erring students from engaging in inappropriate behaviour, the choice of retribution could not be considered appropriate in this regard. It argued in favour of liberal approaches, such as using communitarian principles to control the behaviour of students, which may involve getting the students to understand how their actions may cause a blemish on their families' cherished names. It concluded that such an approach, especially in African context, promised positive change in behaviour.
Keywords: Retributive punishment, discipline, educational situation, behavioural problem, communitarian principles.

1. Introduction
In the Nigerian school system, especially in the secondary schools, students engage in some extra-curricular activities apart from their normal academic programmes. These activities usually range from membership of social clubs to assuming certain responsibilities in their daily life, such as orderly conduct of social affairs in school. The activities are supposed to be positively related to their study. Those who are caught in any acts that are capable of disrupting the learning environment are punished. The form of punishment that is desirable in this regard is always measured in line with the objectives of the school.

Research studies among Nigerian scholars indicate a rise in indiscipline among primary and secondary school students (Idiaghe, 2003: 67). In the results of the study carried out by Idiaghe (2003: 68) it was observed that there were cases of behavioural problems among primary school pupils too. In a similar report by Olu-Olu and Owa (2000:242-243), it was indicated that there was an increase in behavioural problems among secondary school students in Nigeria. Behavioural problems, in this regard, revolves around such incidents as male students raping their female colleagues, violence against mates and teachers, destruction of school property, deviance of classroom instruction and so forth. Correcting students' misbehaviour, in respect of these acts, involves among others the use of different forms of punishment including retributive punishment. Here offenders "are reprimanded and ask(ed) to refund or repair either stolen or damaged item." (Olu-Olu and Owa: 2000: 242). In some other cases students who involved in heinous offences are either expelled or their parents made to sign undertaken of good behaviour on behalf of their children. While for Osher et al (2010: 48) "schools typically respond to disruptive students with external discipline, which consists of sanctions and punishment such as office referrals, corporal punishment, suspensions, and expulsions." It is usually assumed that a punishment of this sort is capable of deterring students from misbehaving.

Corporal punishment, intended for retributive purposes, remains commonplace in Nigerian schools. Its main objective is to put an immediate check to misbehaviour among secondary school students and sometimes primary school pupils. Hence, this paper examines the basic concepts of punishment and discipline as applied to the educational situation in Nigeria. The issue of retributive punishment is the main focus in this paper and its choice for consideration is borne out the sudden interest of school teachers in Nigeria to this form of punishment. The paper contends that retributive punishment is often invoked among different forms of punishment used when students engage in punishable acts. It explores some discipline measures that may be used to maintain order in schools and shows that punishment, especially retributive punishment hardens students rather than reform them; hence, its use in schools should be discouraged. This paper, therefore, explores the possibility of using communitarian principles as a measure of handling students' behavioural problems.

2. Theories of Punishment
In an educational situation, there ought to be a relationship between a learning environment and what MacNeil and Prater called 'disciplined student environment'. The 'disciplined student environment' as conceived by MacNeil and Prater obviously describes the learning atmosphere that pervades the educational situation where

teacher acts with utmost confidence and students learn with little or no fear of class disruption. However, there is always a relationship which exists between these learning atmospheres, that is, learning environment and disciplined student environment. Such relationship obviously defines the school climate which provides teacher and students the leeway to disseminate knowledge and to receive this knowledge with absolute confidence. Nevertheless, learning environment can exhibit *disciplined student environment* and at the same time *disruptive student environment*. When the school environment is disruptive learning is hampered, while both teacher and students suffer for the act. Discipline, therefore, is an attempt to bring under control such disruptive learning environment which may occur as a result of the action of a few students in school.

There is a growing literature on the theories of punishment. Apparently most of these theories constitute the basic discipline justification often invoked by society to punish offenders either to avenge a past misdeed, or deter future wrongdoing. There are two of these theories, namely, utilitarian and retributive theories of punishment that provide an in-road into the nature of punishment. Utilitarian theories of punishment describe different forms of punishment which seek to discourage wrong behaviour or criminal tendencies among individuals in society. The basic utilitarian theories are deterrence and rehabilitation. Deterrence theory follows the principle that steps should be taken to deter wrongdoing by meting out appropriate punishment to an individual who commits an offence. According to Allen (2004) the basic idea of deterrence is to deter both offenders and others from committing a similar offence. Rehabilitation theory of punishment hinges on the belief that when punishment is meted out "others may be brought to awareness that crime is wrong through another's punishment and, as it were, 'reform' before they actually commit a crime" (Allen, 2004). A theory of rehabilitation, according to Allen (2004) is associated with treatment of offender. Utilitarian theory in every form is said to be forward looking and addresses the consequences of an action (Allen, 2004). Retributive theory, on the other hand, seeks to punish wrongdoers because they deserve being punished. According to Marshall (2000) "retributive theory involves a paying back for a crime committed in the past." For example, a student who caused his classmate a bodily harm and absconded from school stands being punished any time he returns to school. However, Marshall is worried about this form of punishment which involves school children, as most of these children who may not be constituted intellectually to understand the reason behind certain actions, are held accountable for breaching the school rules. Because of the nature of this punishment Marshall is forced to ask: "[is] unpleasantness the sort of thing which we wish to inflict upon children?" These are students whose age range between 11 and 16. Marshall's question is: can students whose ages fall within this range be classified as children or young adults? If they are children as African culture would take them, can we "talk about punishment involving the education of the young children when their capacities to understand reason are denied by reason itself – that is children are not normally considered to be rational?" (Marshall, 2000). However, this may not be an excuse for any form of misbehaviour among school children. Nevertheless, this question seems to open up further questions on the desirability of retribution in Nigerian secondary schools.

As a hybrid of utilitarian theory, deterrent theory of punishment is said to hold a high hope as it is expected to aim at preventing the same person from committing crime (Allen, 2004). It does not tell us whether if it prevents the offender from committing the same offence it will equally do the same to other students. Obviously the stability of the system rests on the general discipline atmosphere of the class.

Kant advances his own reason why he thinks retributive punishment is desirable as a form of punishment. According to him,

[but] whoever has committed murder, must die. There is, in this case,
no judicial substitute or surrogate, that can be given or taken for the
satisfaction of justice. There is no *likeness* or proportion between life,
however, painful and death; and therefore there is no equality between
the crime of murder and the retaliation of it but what is judicially
accomplished by the execution of the criminal. (Kant, 1887: 145).

For Kant, retribution is just the principle of equality, by which the pointer of the scale of justice is made to incline no more to one side than the other. Thus, for him on no account should social status obstruct the application of the principle of retaliation which is 'like with like'. No one is sure if Kant would maintain this position if he were to find himself in a learning environment. Since Kant's conception does not mark out any group, if situation warrants its application in an educational situation he might be favourably disposed to it.

3. An Analysis of the Notion of Retributive Punishment

The notion of retributive punishment is usually associated with the idea of retaliation. It is a justification for an act committed by an individual or groups who by their actions have broken certain rules considered to be fundamental to the existence of their group, association or society. However, it is necessary to begin with an examination of the concept of retribution before examining the concept of retributive punishment; and finally its relationship to educational situation.

Retribution as applied to wrongdoing may be defined in terms of 'repayment' that is, repayment for a

wrong committed in the past. Thus, a boy who beat his classmates and was punished for the wrongdoing would be said to have repaid the debt owed the class. In a related case, a murderer who was sentenced to death could also be seen to have paid the debt he owed the society. These are cases of retribution. However, a case of a woman who felt she should repay her debt and promptly did so could not be said to be a case of retribution. Retribution, then according to Wilson (1968) means 'repayment of a 'debt' in an unpleasant way'. It is a case of meting out an unpleasant treatment, which may be or not of equal weight, to an earlier act committed by a person.

The notion of punishment, however, implies the notion of 'unpleasant' treatment administered by human beings other than the offender (Marshall, 2004) where 'unpleasant' here may not necessarily connote severity. A student who misbehaves in class and is transferred from his seat to another seat seems to satisfy this condition. In this situation, punishment may not necessarily involve unpleasant treatment. But this may not be the case with retributive where the treatment means more than 'mere punishment'. Wilson (1968) gave the three criteria that qualify an act as punishment. These are (a) the treatment given must be unpleasant. A boy who stole a pencil and was given a stroke of the cane would be said to have received an unpleasant treatment. However, if the boy was given a pat on the back, he could not be said to have received an unpleasant treatment, (b) the unpleasant treatment must be deliberately meted out by a person 'for' or 'in respect' of the criminal's wrongdoing. The boy was punished because he stole a pencil; (c) lastly, we must be able to show that the unpleasant treatment was meted out by a constituted authority. In the case of a school situation, the authority of the school constitutes the 'persons' authorised to mete out the desired = punishment. It is the same authority that is required to establish that the person, who is being punished, indeed, committed an unjust act.

Having examined what punishment is, it is necessary as well to examine the concept of retributive punishment. Sometimes, students get punished with a view to reforming them or as a way of deterring other people from committing similar offences. For instance, the act of cutting a thief's arm for stealing a fowl may be to serve as deterrence to others. It becomes a retributive punishment if the thief's hand had been cut off in retaliation for the hand of his victim which he cut off. Retributive punishment may not necessarily be unpleasant. A student who tore his classmate's book and got his own textbook torn has received a retributive punishment. Perhaps from a cultural point of view, punishment of this sort would not be regarded as too severe in Nigeria. Obviously, this form of punishment may not necessarily reform or deter the thief or the student.

Part of the reason for sending offenders to prison is to reform them and possibly to deter others from committing wrongdoing. Thus, 'deterring' and 'reforming' are ends or goals of punishment. So, when the question is asked: 'Why is punishment meted out for acts of wrongdoing?' the answer to the question would likely be 'to reform or to deter'. It may equally be to retaliate against an act considered to be undesirable. It should be clear that retributive punishment has a greater intensity in its application. Authorities in schools probably think that its use could bring about a change of attitude in the mind of the offender. However, there is a general concern over its use in secondary schools, especially public schools in Nigeria. The question is whether schools should adopt this form of punishment in their attempts to redress past misdeeds or look elsewhere for solution to the problem of students' wrongdoing in schools.

To talk of retributive punishment, therefore, is to talk of 'repayment' of a debt (for a wrongdoing) through an unpleasant treatment. Most school authorities in Nigeria see its objective as basically to serve as deterrence to others who may want to engage in wrongdoing themselves. The possibility of retaliation cannot be removed from the intention of those who mete out the punishment. It is always the belief that since a student's action could bring about inconvenience to a member of his class he should be made to experience the same measure of inconvenience. The value of such act of punishment in educational situation is the major concern of this paper. The reason is that those who experience this form of punishment are usually young people whose age range between 6 and 16.

4. The Concept of Educational Situation within the School System

It is important to note that the concept 'educational situation' in a school system has a clear-cut explanation in education. According to Perry (1972) educational situation deals with a structural arrangement in which there is at least a teacher, a pupil or pupils, a class and a school. In a related case, we may talk of a family situation where there is the father or the eldest male child in the family, mother, the children, grandchildren and others. In the latter situation, the father organises his household, and maintains discipline as usual. Although the children may sometimes show deference to the head of the family's orders, however, the organisation of the family still rests on him. The structure of maintaining order is highly conspicuous in the educational situation where the prerogative to maintain discipline is given to the teacher.

There are two models of educational situation considered to be of major concern in the discussion of punishment and discipline issues in Nigerian schools. The first model involves a situation where the teacher alone chooses, organises, plans and executes the classroom affairs. This is the traditional model of educational situation. Discipline means for him/her making the pupils conform to certain norms. It is a teacher-pupil, or

pupils' affairs. The second model is the child-centred model which states that experience constitutes learning. Learning, growth or development is the focus of the child-centred model, which places emphasis on the freedom of the individual pupil. Thus, the relationship of pupil to pupil is closer in the child-centred model than in the traditional model where the teacher constitutes an authority in the class. The teacher acts as a supervisor, since his job is to oversee the pupils performing activities at their own rates. The Nigerian educational climate mirrors the traditional model, hence what we have is a teacher who plans, organises and executes a number of classroom activities.

In whatever form, either traditional or child-centred model, the teacher maintains his closer interaction with the pupils in the class. However, this is done either as an authority or supervisor. The pupils, too, still form part of the school system either as receptors of the teacher's values or individuals with freedom to act within the framework of the school's rules and regulations. Both the teacher and the pupils have important functions to perform: to teach and to learn. Teaching and learning, therefore, constitute the basic fundamentals of educational situation. Educating, then, serves as the corollary of the teacher-pupil relations in the educational situation.

In an educational situation, the teacher transmits 'something' while educating. This 'something' translates to learning, which is expected to be acquired by the pupils. Sometimes, the mode of transmitting the knowledge the pupils acquired becomes something of interest to everybody. In this regard, the mode of transmission must be morally compliant. For instance, lthe use of indoctrination may be morally reprehensible. The issue of morality arises where the teacher denies the pupils the freedom to hold personal views on issues. As Peters (1968) has rightly pointed out, 'education relates to some sorts of processes in which a desirable (valued) state of the mind develops.' So, whether in the traditional or the child-centred setting education is expected to generate some desirable state of mind in the pupils. In this regard, the emphasis is on value. As good behaviour among his children may sometimes be the goal of the family head, so thus a teacher whose goal will be to transmit something worthwhile in the class. That is why Peters (1968) believes that to educate is to transmit something worthwhile.

5. Retributive Punishment in an Educational Situation

As a moral community, the school sees itself as a custodian of the societal values. There are situations where pupils violated the rules of their schools because they decided to protest against certain actions taken by the authorities of their school. The authorities of such school may decide to punish them for engaging in acts not permissible by the school regulations. In the course of students' demonstration they sometimes damage the school property. Students are often charged proportionately for any damage done to their school property. Retributive punishment as a form of punishment may be used in this regard. As it has been shown in the paper, retributive punishment sometimes involves an unpleasant treatment meted out for wrong doing. In its use, the school always exerts retribution for its own good. Thus, the essence of this punishment will probably be determined by what the school authorities intend to achieve. For Rawls (2010) the retributionist believes that punishment is justified on the grounds that wrongdoing merits punishment. However, he thinks the retributionists should be able to show that those who are punished indeed deserve the punishment by their actions. Certainly, those who cause damage to the property of their school deserve to be punished.

There is always the question whether there should be room for retributive punishment in an educational situation. Let us take prison as a case study. In a prison situation, for example, it is usual to punish inmates either for stealing or refusal to work. The punishment usually aims at reforming the offender and perhaps deterring others from committing the same offence though at times it may be to retaliate. The case of an educational situation seems to be different from this as the main objective of admitting any child into a school is to assist him/her to learn. In an educational situation where the child's personality is the focus of attention, should a teacher mete out an unpleasant punishment to him/her merely because the teacher thinks the child needs to be punished for his/her bad deeds?

It is obvious that the desirable 'end' achievable in educational situation is quite different from that of the prison. In the prisoner's case, the warder does not have the hope that all the prisoners would be reformed at the end of their prison terms. However, a teacher's primary concern is to impart knowledge and to initiate learners into the values of their communities. The teacher is morally committed to this assignment of imparting knowledge. Just like prison warder, he cannot afford to be passive to the welfare of his pupils. While he will not expect that all the pupils should share a common value, he, however, desires that they will learn something desirable. In this regard, he is necessarily connected with passing on desirable values to his pupils.

A discussion of the place of retributive punishment in an educational situation will help to illustrate the points made above. In a typical situation, a student who tore his mate's school uniform on account of a simple disagreement between them got punished by his teacher for this action. Here, the punishment given typifies a case of 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' Though the student was given an unpleasant treatment for his action, the intention of the teacher may be to show the other students that the student's action was misplaced. This form of punishment may not necessarily deter the student or other students from engaging in a similar act in

future.

6. Retributive Punishment in the Nigerian Educational System

Cases of misdemeanour are not limited to the secondary schools. In Nigeria, for instance, pupils in elementary schools (primary) often engage in acts of wrongdoing. There are cases of pupils who tear their mates' textbooks, or clothes and sometimes inflict injuries on their mates among others. Would it be appropriate for a teacher, in a situation of this sort, to use retributive punishment as a measure of discipline, when discipline here means retaliation? A response to this question is likely to be mediated by the justification being sought by the teacher for the use of severe punishment on such pupils. For instance, it may be argued that at the elementary school level, pupils are mere infants and are not properly 'constituted' in their thinking. Hence, applying severe punishment on them may be out of place. In reality, public schools in Nigeria, either in the urban or rural areas, use corporal punishment as a means of correction at the primary school level. The authorities that apply retributive punishment sometimes claim that such punishment will help to curb the excesses of young children in wrongdoing.

In Nigeria, like other African countries, students' behavioural challenges in rural schools differ considerably from those in urban schools. For instance, students' behavioural challenges in public schools in places like Lagos and Ibadan in South West Nigeria are more intense than those in rural schools in the same region. Primarily, this is due to social stress which characterises cities like Lagos and Ibadan. Most students who grow up in these towns exhibit some behavioural problems which pose critical challenge to teachers and students. Getting to understand the social environment where such students grow up provides cues to the discipline measure required for each circumstance. Thus, urban and rural school students are not likely to exhibit the same form of disruptive behaviour. Urban students are hardened by their physical and social environment resulting sometimes to psychological trauma. For instance, students who hawk wares (as we have in Nigeria), candies, bread and many other items before going to school, often time, experience strain and abuse. Hence, they are likely to disregard school rules and damn the consequences. Discipline strategies required for such students must be subtle not severe.

As earlier indicated, while elementary school pupil is said to require less of severe punishment, it is not generally seen as applicable to secondary students. It is sometimes claimed that secondary schools students are mature in thought and can be held responsible for their actions. In most public schools in Nigeria, punishment of such students over issues of wrongdoing and bad behaviour is usually very severe. Sometimes, punishment may take the form of students being asked to uproot trees (in the rural communities), dig the ground, and cut grasses among others. It is doubtful whether such severe cases of punishment intended for retribution ever achieve their desired objective; that is deter other students from committing the same offences. The situation is different in private schools where the authorities of these schools rarely adopt the types of punishment used in public schools to punish their students for the offences committed; and where students are punished it may involve out-of-school suspension or outright expulsion.

The argument indeed is that if the aim of retributive punishment is to deter students from wrongdoing, (as it is generally assumed by school authorities in Nigeria) then we have no logical ground to reject its use in schools. But the question really is: Is the use of retributive punishment in schools actually intended to deter offenders or to retaliate against past misdeeds? If it is for retaliation does it deserve being used in secondary school? Generally, the argument for the use of retribution can only be sustained if it can be proved that this is the only discipline measure that schools can use to shape the attitudes and behaviour of their students. Most teachers in Nigerian schools seem to assume wrongly that children need corporal punishment to be able to act with reasonableness. The reason for this disposition is instructive. Many of these teachers are indeed products of such upbringing; hence their experience must be replicated in dealing with difficult students. The Biblical injunction, namely, *foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive if far from him* (Proverbs, 22:15) is often used to justify any action taken against any troublesome child. Nevertheless, the argument is that retribution does not aim at deterrence; rather its objective is to punish offenders for their past wrongdoing (see Marshall, 2004).

The argument against the use of retributive punishment in schools rests on two grounds, namely, first, its application to young students cannot be justified, and second, there are alternative discipline measures that can be used to check behavioural problems among young students. In this regard, whether it is used in elementary or secondary schools in Nigeria the argument is that some of these students are infants and should not be given such severe punishment. On the other hand, preventive discipline measures seem to be advocated in secondary schools. At least, this is the position held by Ikoya (2009: 50). The argument to this effect rests on the belief that any method which does not aim at transforming the life of students should not be used in schools (Peters, 1966). Since the use of retributive punishment cannot be justified in an educational situation, given its aim of retaliation, it should not be used in schools. In other words, we must be able to show that retributive punishment is educative enough to warrant our approval of its use. Thus, if retributive punishment cannot be used in an educational situation because it is reprehensible, then we need to have suitable options that can be

used in schools.

7. Achieving Disciplined Learning Environment In Schools.

Students who disrupt classes have their peculiar characteristics which are not hidden to other members of their class. School teachers need not wait until such students exhibit disruptive behaviour that may eventually demand corrective measure in the form of punishment. Different discipline strategies may sometimes be employed for the purpose of preventing wrongdoing by students. Making the right choice of discipline measure is essential to a reduction in punishable offences in schools. How then do school authorities go about adopting communal discipline principle rather than punishment in achieving behavioural modification in students?

There are two senses of discipline we employ in this discussion which we intend to use as frameworks for some of the models of discipline. The first is that in which an individual exercises self-control, exhibits rational behaviour or conforms to the rules and regulations that guide the existence of his/her society. The second relates to measures put in place by some individuals, in positions of authority, to create a safe and conducive environment in the society. These two senses overlap, as the second sense can be used, in some cases, to achieve the first sense. So, a disciplined person will therefore be somebody who complies with the rules and regulations that guide the existence of his community. In an educational system, a disciplined student will be somebody who complies with the rules and regulations of his/her school. He/she exercises self-control in circumstances where unruly behaviour could have been exhibited (Idiaghe, 2003: 68). Discipline, therefore, does not require enforcing the school rules on students; rather it has to do with conscious acceptance, by students, of the existing rules and regulations in schools.

While explaining the notion of discipline in schools, Hirst and Peters (1980) believe that discipline has to do with maintenance of general conditions of order necessary to bring about effective learning. Discipline, in this sense, deals with a measure of behavioural control which a teacher may use in class. In this sense the use of punishment is not too far from such behavioural control as it is often used by teachers to achieve effective control of their class.

While there are different approaches to discipline there are equally different models of school discipline. Each of these approaches and models aims at making some impact in classroom climate. In an attempt to get to the root of discipline, Wolfgang (2011:2) and Ikoya (2009:50) identify three types of discipline, namely, preventive, supportive, and corrective approaches. Both Wolfgang and Ikoya contend that preventive discipline deals with positing rules to lessen chances of misbehaviour, while supportive punishment involves the use of techniques to help students maintain self-control. However, corrective punishment is explained in terms of the punishment a teacher administers after a student misbehaves.

Ironically, the Nigerian school system is used to the corrective approach as identified by Ikoya (2009:50). As he argues, 'indiscipline in schools is linked with the application of corrective discipline practices.' Retributive punishment is one of these corrective discipline practices often used in Nigerian schools. School headmasters and principals think that they need this measure of discipline to be able to maintain order, and create a peaceful learning environment. Ikoya thinks that in schools where principals apply such preventive discipline practices, as opposed to the corrective approach, students are usually better disciplined or well-adjusted morally and behaviourally. Ikoya does not indicate which of these preventive discipline practices was applied and how often it had been used in schools. Recent rise in behavioural problems among school students does not support Ikoya's findings (Punch, 2012 Wednesday, Feb., 1: 5).

Indeed, Skinner (cited in Corey) believes that punishment has limited value in changing behaviour and is often an undesirable way to modify behaviour. He thinks teachers could adopt positive reinforcement policy to shape observable student behaviour. In Canter's model, teacher may use eye contact, verbal warning, proximity control, and manipulatory student behaviour through use of positive reinforcement and punishment (Allen, 1996). For Corey (2005) punishment may not result in teaching desirable behaviour, even when it succeeds in suppressing some undesirable responses. Since the purpose of discipline is to modify the behaviour of students, the Adlerian approach, *private logic*, can be used to achieve a minimal level of discipline among students (Corey, 2005). This approach involves teaching students to define the principles of life they live by, and providing them with supports to stand by these principles. These principles constitute the core of their lifestyle. One way to achieve discipline among students may be to control their lifestyle since there is a direct relationship between students' attitudes to life and their behaviour. Such control cannot rigidly be undertaken else it becomes counterproductive.

Most of the existing models of discipline fall within the second sense of the two senses of discipline earlier mentioned in this paper, namely, measures put in place to check the misbehaviour of school students. Kounin's model expresses a great passion for teacher's role in the management of students' behavioural problems. The same is the views of Ginott, Glasser, Dreikurs and Canter whose models also incline on teachers' efforts to create peaceful learning environment among school students (Allen, 1996: 1-3). Canter focuses on *Assertive discipline* which involves teachers insisting on responsible behaviour from their students and Jones' body language, incentive system and setting the stage is suggestive of discipline measure that can be used in

schools (Allen, 1996:8). Though these models might not have been tested in Nigeria, there are no indications that if they are tested they will achieve any positive results. At least a recent incident which involved a class teacher and an officer of the Customs Service in Nigeria may be a good example. The Officer had beaten up the teacher for reprimanding his son who was caught loitering about with other students. The student was not given any severe punishment which could have warranted his parent's action. Nevertheless, he only felt he could prove to the teacher that his father was an officer of the state (Nigerian Tribune, 2012, February 10: 17). An act which involves parents attacking teachers because their children or wards are punished for wrongdoing is an affront against African culture.

Perhaps teachers in Nigerian school can adopt the technique used by some school officials in some United States schools which involved the intervention of family and community in the reduction of the use of disciplinary actions in schools. The study by Sheldon and Epstein (2002) was designed to find out how to improve student behaviour with the assistance of the family and community. The results of their study, indeed, showed that the implementation of different types of family and community involvement activities was related to decrease in several disciplinary actions. However, Osher et al (2010) are not sure if families would be engaged by school authorities in this situation because for them "families often are estranged from schools." This estrangement is done by school teachers and principals who sometimes refuse to cooperate with parents.

8. Communitarian Principles and Discipline Strategies in Nigerian Schools

Indeed, there is no single approach to how we can lead students to achieve self-control (discipline) in their formative years. What is required, especially as it affects Nigerian students, is how principals or headmasters can use various discipline approaches rather than punishments, intended for retribution, to maintain order in their schools. It is necessary to understand that the essence of discipline among students is not to make education more effective and efficient alone but also to assist the students to live a meaningful life. That is why the education of African child does not lie solely with the parents; as a child born into a community is expected to acquire the norms and values of such community. The responsibility of raising the child becomes that of the community. This is rightly captured by Marah (2006:20) when he says that "while biological mother attends to the education of the child in the early childhood, community assumes the greater role as he approaches adolescence." That is why Muyila (2007:23) submits that "African traditions vest the right to punish a child not just in the hands of his or her parents but also to the other members of the community." And Mbamara (2004) contends that "every member of the community contributed to the upbringing of the child whether the child was an offspring, family relative, extended family member, or simply another member of the clan." In this regard, according to Kazeem (2007:173), community takes priority both ontologically and epistemologically over the individual (the child). Education of this sort is expected to inculcate in the child moral probity, right conduct and integrity in order to demonstrate that his moral life is united with that of the community (Ezekwonna, 2005:200).

Sadly enough "[t]his traditional way of educating the child," as Ezekwonna (2005:220), has observed "...based on the extended family system by which everybody helps in the education, has been and is being toppled." Western culture with the its attendant fleeting values contribute in no small measure to the erosion of African communal values. Different practices among African communities show that communality has given way to individualistic tendencies; and the impression it has generated is that community no longer has a role in the upbringing of children. The traditional value that involves teaching the child "how to behave himself or herself in ways acceptable to the society, to shun social vices, disrespect for elders, use of foul language, etc so as not to earn "bad name" to the family" is no longer honoured (Adebayo, 2009: xix). For instance, what does it connote to identify a person's child with cultural deviance in a social setting like school? How would it sound to a parent who receives a report from school that his/her child has involved himself/herself in vandalism, rape or other serious offence that could tarnish the records of the family? In traditional African society, the parents of such a child are stigmatised and treated with scorn. For the purpose of marriage the family is avoided, as there is the belief that nothing good can come from such a family. Nowadays, children no longer have the fear that by their behaviour they could fail their parents.

In the past Africans live their lives on communitarian principles. Communitarianism, in this respect, rests on the principle that a person's being and life depends "on the activities, values, projects, practices and ends of the community" (Kazeem, 2009:172). Communitarian principle is viewed here in terms of forming "a person's individual values in the social context of communities and often pursued through communal attachment" (Arthur, no date). This principle is described by Isola (2009:91) where he contends that in Yoruba culture (which typifies African cultural practice) "children were demanded early in life to internalise human qualities of honesty, transparency, accountability, integrity, justice, fair play, family sense, hard work and truthfulness." A child is taught to resist evil and uphold the good name his ancestors have built for years. When a child deviates from this path the effects of his action shift to his family and the action is considered a reflection of the child's household (Adebayo, 2009: xix-xx).

Families in African setting are always wary of being stigmatised because of the consequences that

follow the actions of their children. When an individual's action brings shame and a "bad name" to a family, it raises the question of moral probity, cultural compliance and integrity. The fear that the actions of some individuals may destroy the name of one's family usually serves as a cautionary cue for parents to keep track of their children, else their actions lead to the destruction of the reputation of the family. Thus according to Isola (2009: 95) the Yoruba would say "a child not built-up morally will sell the house built by the parents." This is why Africans will always say: *oruko rere san ju wura ati fadaka lo* which translates "a good name is better than riches."

Among the rural dwellers in Africa, corporal punishment still constitutes the basic fundamental of shaping the lives of young adults morally (Muyila, 2007: 24). Ironically, its use has not made any reasonable impact on the life of the offenders. That seems to pose a serious challenge to the various measures that had been used in the past and those still being used currently. In this regard, there may be need for Africans to go back to the basics in order to achieve effective behavioural control among school children. Achieving it is based on the understanding of the following assumptions, namely, that;

a. behavioural problems are products of upbringing

b. a child's conduct is seen as a reflection of his/her household

c. moral life of the individual is united with that of the community.

d. African child is usually raised by the community, hence he/she is
   educated in the culture and tradition of the people.

e. corporal or retributive punishment no longer work with African children.

Based on the understanding of these assumptions, parents and teachers need to work together to achieve behavioural control among school students. Parents need to see teachers as culturally contiguous on matters of a child's discipline, as African culture does not separate teachers from the membership of the extended African family. In this regard, instead of punishing a school child, it might be necessary to remind him of the fact that his moral life is not separated from that of his community and that his actions constitute a reflection of his household. Hence, his activities in public only portray the worth of his family. Thus, he stakes the good name of his family since his actions may constitute a blemish on the name.

Since the use of punishment has not made any significant impart in the lives of most school students, either in terms of reforms or deterrence, it is necessary for parents (family) and schools to go back to cultural involvement in the education of school children. Africans cherish good name, hard work, integrity, hence students must be made to imbibe these cultural values.

9. Conclusion

The level of indiscipline among secondary school students in Nigeria is extremely high. In handling this problem, some principals resort to the use of retributive punishment to deter other students from engaging in wrongdoings. From different studies done by some scholars, for instance Ikoya (2009), corrective discipline practices (punishment) seem to worsen the situation rather than improving it. Schools where punishments, as opposed to preventive discipline practices, are used have not been able to show that there is a decline in the level of indiscipline among their students. There may be the need for the Nigerian principals and headmasters to change their approach to management strategies, especially those that involve the discipline of students, so that they can create a conducive learning environment in their schools. This paper, therefore, recommends a preventive discipline approach such as the use of communitarian principles and Adlerian *positive logic* to arrest the decline in the tone of discipline in Nigerian schools. These discipline measures should be preferred to retributive punishment which is often thought could deter students from engaging in misdemeanour. It is equally important that school authorities should adopt the family-community connection to stem down the tides of indiscipline in schools.

References

Adebayo, A (2009) *Introduction.* Omoluabi: Its Concept and Education in Yoruba Land (ed.) A. Ogundeji and A. Akangbe. Ibadan: Ibadan Cultural Studies Group.

Allen, C (1996) Seven Models of Discipline.   http://tvtip.org/resources/DebberCMresources/A9_sevenmodels-of-Discipline.pdf (Retrieved March 11, 2012).

Allen, R (2004) Divine Punishment as a Problem in Theodicy.http://www.kton.demon.co.uk/punishment.htm (Retrieved Jan., 17, 2012)

Corey, G (2005) *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Psychotherapy*.   Belmont: Thomson Learning Inc.

Ezekwonna, F. C (2005) *African Communitarian Ethics: The Basis for the Moral Conscience and Autonomy of the Individual: Igbo Culture as a Case Study.* Berlin: Peter Lang.

Faleti, A (2009) Omoluabi- the golden attribute of a Yoruba-man: Growing   or dying? *Omoluabi: Its Concept and Education in Yoruba Land* (ed.) A. Ogundeji and A Akangbe. Ibadan: Ibadan Cultural Studies Group.

Hirst P. H. and Peters, R.S. (1980) *The Logic of Education*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Idiaghe, J.E (2008) Discipline in Niigerian Primary Education: The Way Forward. African Journal of Studies in Education, Vol. 4, No 1, May.

Ikoya P.O (2009) Gender Difference in the Application of Preventive   Discipline Practices among Principals of Secondary Schools in Nigeria. *Journal of Social Sciences 20(1): 49-53,* [Online] Available:http://www.krepublishhers.com/02.journals/JSS/J... (June 4, 2010).

Isola, A (2009) Yoruba Culture in Education. *Omoluabi: Its Concept and Education in Yoruba Land* (ed.) A. Ogundeji and A. Akangbe. Ibadan: Ibadan Cultural Studies Group.

Jones, F. H. (nd)The Positive Discipline Model. http://www.nretu.edu.tr/-el33376/The Positive Discipline Model. (Retrieved, March 3, 2012)

Kant, I (nd) The Retributive Theory of Punishment, http://faculty.msmary.edu/Conway/.../Kant%20Retributive%20Theory.pdf (Retrieved March 3, 2012)

Kazeem, F. A (2009) Human Personality and the Yoruba Worldview: An Ethico-Sociological Interpretation. *Journal of Pan African Studies*, Vol, 2 no.9, March.

MacNeil A. J and Prater D (nd) Teachers and Principals Differ On The Seriousness Of School Discipline: A National Perspective.   http://www.nationalForum.com/...MacNeil,%20Angus%20J (Retrieved March 11, 2012)

Marah, J. K. (2006) The Virtues and Challenges in Traditional African Education, *Journal of Pan African Studies,* Vol. 1, no 4, June.

Mbamara, O (2004) Past and Present Education Systems in the African Society. http://www.africanevents.com/Essay-PastPresentEducation.htm (Retrieved February 23, 2012).

Muyila, J. W (2007) *African Values and the Problems of the Rights of the Child: A Search for Explanation*. Copenhagen: The Danish Institute for   Human Rights.

Olu-Olu, O and Owa, A (2000) How Do We Manage Delinquent   Behaviours? Case Reports from Selected Secondary Schools in Ado-Ekiti. *Journal of Educational Foundations and Management,* Vol. 1, No.1 April.

Osher, D et al (2010) How Can We Improve School Discipline? *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 39, No. 1.

Perry L. R (1972) *What is an Educational Situation? Philosophical Analysis and Education* (ed.) R. D. Archambault. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Punch (2012) Customs Men beat up Teacher for Punishing Officer's Son,   Punch Nigeria's Newspaper, Vol. 17, No. 20,066, www.punchng.com

Rawls J Two Concepts of Rules.*http://ethics.sandiego.edu/Applied/deathpenalty/Rawls.html* (Retrieved June 4, 2010)

Sheldon B. S and Epstein J. L. (2002) Improving Student Behaviour and School Discipline with Family and Community Involvement. *Education and Urban Society, Vol. 35 No. 1.*

Wilson J. (1968) *Thinking with Concepts*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wolfgang, C (2011) Classroom Discipline Theories, Demand Media Inc http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/Positive_Discipline

The IISTE is a pioneer in the Open-Access hosting service and academic event management. The aim of the firm is Accelerating Global Knowledge Sharing.

More information about the firm can be found on the homepage:
http://www.iiste.org

CALL FOR JOURNAL PAPERS

There are more than 30 peer-reviewed academic journals hosted under the hosting platform.

Prospective authors of journals can find the submission instruction on the following page: http://www.iiste.org/journals/   All the journals articles are available online to the readers all over the world without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. Paper version of the journals is also available upon request of readers and authors.

MORE RESOURCES

Book publication information: http://www.iiste.org/book/

Academic conference: http://www.iiste.org/conference/upcoming-conferences-call-for-paper/

IISTE Knowledge Sharing Partners

EBSCO, Index Copernicus, Ulrich's Periodicals Directory, JournalTOCS, PKP Open Archives Harvester, Bielefeld Academic Search Engine, Elektronische Zeitschriftenbibliothek EZB, Open J-Gate, OCLC WorldCat, Universe Digtial Library , NewJour, Google Scholar