

Discipline in Ghanaian Christian Schools: A Shared Responsibility

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Abstract

One observes with great concern the devastating effects of indiscipline in contemporary Ghanaian Christian schools. Colonization came with it literate education and the Bible. Schools set up by missionaries became new spaces for literate education that informs Christian discipline and responsibility. Before then, education depended on parents, family, peer groups, and community. Grave consequences awaited indiscipline in the community, but this traditional measure has broken down. Children need literate education today, but this form of education confines them to the classroom for longer hours thus many think the discipline of the children is dependent solely on teachers. Christian schools which were avenues for Christian formation have been taken over by government, with ambitious political policies that gagged the teachers and have their hands tied. The introduction of secular courses into school curricular has created crisis of discipline in Christian schools, undermining the role of teachers and parents who are expected to nurture their children with Christian principles. In the Bible, for instance, God instructed parents to educate their children (Deut. 6:20-25); unfortunately, indiscipline led Israel into exile. This work studies these two words “discipline” and “responsibility”, within the context of phenomenology, African Biblical hermeneutics, and African Intellectual Traditions to allude that discipline in Christian schools is a shared responsibility of teachers and parents, which includes policy makers and other stakeholders.

Keywords: discipline, responsibility, policy makers, parents, teachers, schools.

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1. Introduction

The decline of discipline in contemporary Ghanaian schools cannot be overemphasized. In this work, Christian schools became the focus. It has become necessary to address this issue since the children of today are the leaders of tomorrow. As already indicated, colonization came with it literate education and the Bible leading to the establishment of schools by missionaries that became new spaces for literate education which informs Christian discipline and responsibility. Before then, education depended on parents, family, peer groups, and community. Grave consequences awaited indiscipline in the community, with a classic example among the Anlo Eve¹- *Tɔkɔ Atɔlia* (the fifth landing stage). This traditional measure with many more others has broken down in these modern times. The *Tɔkɔ Atɔlia* regulations were made to protect the morality of the society. Togbi Tsali oversaw the rules, which did not respect persons or titles, and did not discriminate; justice for all. *Tɔkɔ Atɔlia* became a resting place for deviants, which was meant to separate them from human beings. The convict was buried alive with the head hanging out until vultures fed on it. It sounded barbaric though, yet not an act of punishment but considered a means of cleansing (Ahortor, et. al, 2024) of the entire community to prevent the evil spirit in the convict from reincarnation.² It deterred many from involving in malicious behaviour.

¹ The name Anlo emerged at Anloga. After leaving Notsie and on reaching Anloga, Togbi Uenya said *ye nlo* (he has coiled); hence, Anlo (Anloga).

² The people believe in reincarnation and only good spirits must reincarnate hence *Tɔkɔ Atɔlia*. *Tɔkɔ Atɔlia* was a resting place for deviants in the Anlo land. The rule has no respect for person or titles there was justice for all, even the king. For the dignity of the stool, the execution of a king is not announced publicly. After the execution, the executioners underwent a ritual called “spirit cleansing” in which they washed their hands at a well called *woelifo vudo*, which still exists today at Anloga. At the end of the ritual, some clothing is hoisted as sign of deterrent for the community. People are not just condemned to death; the gods were consulted and the parents of the culprit notified before the execution. The term for the execution is *Enyifofo ko de amedzi*.

Togbi Sri II once said, “my children, forget not the saying, evil doers are the ruin of the nation therefore my children let every crime be punished, the wayward be corrected, the lair must acknowledge the sovereign truth, death must be discouraged, theft, adultery, and evil practice of sorcery must not be tolerated on the land of Anlo”. *“Vinyewo mi ga ɣlɛ be o, nuwɔwɔla wo la dugba la wonye, mi gbenya ne mia viwo eye mia he wo ɔe dzɔedzɔenyenyɛ biblio me, wo tɔe nye du la elabena egbe koe nye mia tɔ.* This proverbial saying of Togbi Sri II underscores the education of children. The need for literate education today confines them to the classroom for longer hours thus making many conclude that discipline of children depends solely on teachers. In recent years, Christian schools which were spaces for Christian formation have been taken over by government, further shifting the domain of child formation to secular discipline, with ambitious political policies that made management of the schools inefficient because the mouths of the teachers are gagged, and their hands tied at their backs. Yet, teachers in Christian schools are expected to water and care for what has been planted and nursed by parents with Christian principles. This has created crisis of discipline in Christian schools. In the Bible, God instructed parents to educate their children (Deut. 6:20-25); unfortunately, they failed, and indiscipline and irresponsibility led Israel into exile (2 Kgs 17:1-23; 25:1-21).

For a society to have a healthy environment, its members must have some discipline in life (Charlton & David, 1993). Every society has its norms and beliefs which are the values of that society. Each of these societies expects its members to live by these values which they translate into habits. These imbibed habits, derived from the norms and beliefs of society, express the desired values of that society. Such desired value is achieved through a process called discipline that starts with children’s upbringing so that they can grow in a particular or a desired manner. It is very easy to bend a tender tree, but not an old one because it may break. As life progresses every sector of life has its own discipline. This discipline needs to be taught and enforced by both parents and teachers, within the informal and formal education. While the home remains the primary platform for children’s formation through parents, the school remains secondary as a complement by teachers in the transformation process.

Indiscipline and irresponsibility in our schools became a challenge for the Association of Catholic Heads of Higher Institutions (ACHHI) that at their 44th Annual National Conference and Workshop in May 2024, it became the theme for discussion: “Promoting Discipline in Our Schools is A Shared Responsibility”. The author became the Guest Speaker for the conference and the result is this article. The article studies these two words “discipline” and “responsibility”, within the framework of phenomenology, qualitative to be précised of 10 headmasters and headmistresses, 12 parents, 16 students, 12 teachers, and 5 non-teaching staff. These were engaged in series of interviews; remember, most of the headmasters, headmistresses, and teachers are parents. And parents here include policy makers, religious leaders, chiefs and queens, artistes, political leaders, and parents of all kinds of work. This framework together with African Biblical hermeneutics as methodology within the context of African Intellectual Traditions allude to the fact that promoting discipline in Christian schools should be a shared responsibility of both teachers and parents. Parents herein include policy makers and other stakeholders. The paper also cites Deut. 6:20-25 to support the need for child education and the consequence of indiscipline. Finally, the article explores probable causes that inhibit discipline in schools and offered some measures for improvement.

2. The Words Discipline and Responsibility

The understanding of these words will help teachers, students, and parents collaborate for the good of the students.

2.1 Discipline

The discipline under study is twofold: moral and academic. Discipline is gained through education, and education transforms the entire human person, that is, academically and morally. Education comes from the Latin word *ēducātiō* meaning “upbringing” of young ones, and in this case, in academia (Glare, 2006:587). In academics, a student is supposed to read, write and articulate, and be able to morally apply what is studied for the good of oneself and the good of the community. Unfortunately, some students graduate half-baked, that is, they read and write, but their way of life does not show that they have ever been to school. The discipline from education must produce “educated literates” and not “uneducated literates”. An educated person is disciplined, imbued with self-control, well taught to behave and when wronged accepts corrections and even if needed to be punished accepts punishment in good faith towards the common good.

2.1.1 The Origin

The word “discipline” has a rich etymology that traces its origins through various languages. The length that the word has traversed has enriched its meaning and offer great clues about its current meanings. The word has an old French and Latin roots dated around 1200 AD. The term “discipline” from the old French *descepline* referred to “physical punishment, teaching, suffering, and martyrdom.” However, the direct source of this word is Latin, the verbal form *discipline* (Latin *disciplinare*) meant “to subject to penitential discipline, correct, chastise, or punish.” Later, it also came to mean “instruct, educate, and train.” The Latin, *disciplina* in the old English version, referred to a branch of knowledge or field of study. *Disciplina* had several meanings: as a given instruction, it encompasses teaching, instruction, and training. As an object of instruction: it refers to the subject matter studied, for example in the discipline of science, mathematics, philosophy, sociology, etc. Therefore, discipline is a system or practice or method or an orderly conduct maintained in a body of people under command based on moral training (Glare, 2006:550). The Latin term *disciplina* itself derived from *discipulus* meant “pupil”, “student”, or “follower” that is disciplined. Students therefore are disciples.

History, across the centuries, has espoused the meaning of “discipline” as follows: In the mid-14th century, the definition included penitential chastisement, that is, punishment for correction and a system of rules and regulations that assumed organized guidelines. By the end of the late 14th century, the term denoted a branch of instruction or education with a specified field of study or knowledge. By the late 15th century, it was associated with military training and emphasized training soldiers to follow orders within the military rank and in the 16th century it assumed church regulations, referring to rules governing church activities. In short, “discipline” with its long history, encompasses education, order, and training. Its roots in Latin and subsequent adaptations within languages highlight its enduring significance in various context.³ Discipline, therefore, is the self-control gained by enforcing obedience or order.⁴ It is the practice of training people to obey rules or codes of behavior, using punishment to correct disobedience.⁵ So, discipline is a training that produces obedience, self-control, perseverance, and responsibility.⁶ Thus, it encourages and motivates one’s ability to keep working at something that seems difficult until it is achieved.⁷ It controls one’s mental activity.⁸

Cambridge dictionary states it an ambiguously “there should be tougher discipline in schools”. With this, it is expedient to say that disciplinarians believe that self-control is of the utmost importance to be disciplined and so, enforce a set of rules that aim to develop self-control. Such enforcement is sometimes based on punishment per definition. In the formation of children, discipline and punishment have a big difference. The root meaning of discipline is “to teach” while the root meaning of punishment is “to correct” or “cause pain”. Punishment may extinguish unwanted behavior temporarily and unfit to sustain long term good behavior, while discipline usually sustains good behavior.⁹ Discipline is proactive, prepares against and focuses on preventing issues rather than correcting them. Discipline, more so, sees the challenges of life as an opportunity for problem-solving rather than punishment.

2.1.2 Discipline in Education

To curb the menace of indiscipline in our schools, both parents and teachers must work together. The study so far reveals that in education, discipline refers to the practice of maintaining order and control within classrooms, schools, and educational institutions. It encompasses various strategies and approaches aimed at promoting

³ Discipline, “Definition, Meaning & Synonyms”. www.vocabulary.com.

⁴ Discipline, “Discipline Definition & Meaning”. www.Merriam-webster.com; “Discipline Definition & Meaning”. www.Britannica.com.

⁵ Discipline. www.Wikipedia.com.

⁶ Definition of Discipline. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press.

⁷ Discipline, “Definition & Meaning” www.britannica.com. Retrieved 2024-05-07.

⁸ Definition of Discipline. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary & Thesaurus © Cambridge University Press.

⁹ “Positive Parenting: Discipline vs Punishment” *Psychology Today*. www.psychologytoday.com. Retrieved 2024-05-07.

positive behaviour, fostering a structured learning environment, and ensuring students' well-being. Discipline thus provides guidance to students, helping them understand appropriate behaviour and to know societal expectations. It is not punitive but embraces natural consequences that arise from actions and giving meaning to desirable and undesirable behaviour for the student to make a choice. It emphasizes the prevention of disruptive behaviour through clear rules through effective communication, which plays a crucial role in maintaining discipline. Discipline models respect and encourage respectful interactions among peers and elders. The discipline of teaching life skills, the sciences, the humanities ensure fairness, integrity, responsibility, and enabled problem-solving skills.

2.1.2.1 Viewpoints of Discipline in Education

There are different viewpoints regarding discipline in education as follows:

- Punishment focuses on punitive measures which are considered not very ideal for fostering a positive learning environment.
- Rule-Driven ideas give clear-cut rules and guidelines for students to follow.
- Motive-Content understanding connects students' interests and motives to the material being taught.
- Personal-Relational concept emphasizes relationships and overcomes egocentric tendencies.

In education, behaviour management approaches should dominate disciplinary practices. This means, for discipline to be educationally justifiable, it needs to be implemented differently because circumstances will differ and that gives fair discipline. Discipline in education is aimed at creating a conducive learning environment while promoting students' growth and development.

2.2 Responsibility

The components of the word "responsibility" are of French origin, the compound appears to have been formed in English.¹⁰ The Latin "responsum" means "to respond", "to be accountable", "answerable", or "trustworthy" (Glare, 2006:1635). The word "responsibility" is the consent to a combination of one's nature in relation to activities within the society that are deliberate and indeliberate input from families and friends within the culture. Hence, "responsibility" is something one is required to embrace as an upstanding member of a community.

Like discipline, the concept of responsibility has evolved over time, shaped by human thought, ethics, and societal changes. In the 17th and 18th centuries, philosophers like Immanuel Kant and Jean-Jacques Rousseau explored ideas of individual responsibility and moral autonomy (Kant, 2007; Stern, 2014; Russell, 2004). They reinforced the notion of personal responsibility for one's actions. The Industrial Revolution gave birth to corporate responsibility, workers' rights, and the impact of industrialization on society. In this modern era, responsibility extends beyond the individual to include global issues like environmental responsibility, which stemmed from the fact that if children are not properly educated and disciplined, they will not be responsible towards the perpetuity of the environment. Social responsibility towards the environment has gained prominence as societies grapple with challenges that they themselves have created. With responsibility, one is obligated and has power over what one is entrusted, in contemporary language, self-empowerment. The mindset of total responsibility as the creator of one's reality is a shift, which is crucial in an age where victimhood prevails (Rankin, 2024). In summary, responsibility has evolved from individual moral duty to encompass global concerns. When it is embraced as a tool for self-empowerment, it allows us to shape reality and to take charge of life. So that those in positions will no longer be robots, with their hands tied and controlled remotely.

2.2.1 Responsibility in Education

Crucial as it is, responsibility in education involves various aspects of life, which includes duty or obligation to fulfill specific roles, tasks, or actions for a worthy cause. Parents and teachers are expected to contribute to the life of their children, likewise the children are expected to reciprocate such responsibilities to ensure their own development.

- Students have personal responsibility towards their learning journey. They are also responsible for attending classes, completing assignments, studying, and actively participating in scholarly discussions. It also includes being accountable for one's behaviour, respecting others' views, and adhering to school

¹⁰ Responsibility. "Responsibility makes one feel good and well fulfilled." Retrieved from <https://blog.cognifit.com/responsibility>.

- rules.
- Teachers have a significant responsibility in educating the students by providing effective and engaging lessons. Fairly assessing and evaluating student progress. Taking control of the management of the classroom, creating positive and organized learning environment, assisting struggling students thus, fostering growth mindset.
- Parents, likewise, must play a vital role in their child's education. As responsible parents they must support in cash and kind, encourage learning, attend parent-teacher meetings, and help with homework. They must communicate and stay informed about school activities, address concerns promptly, cooperating with teachers in forming their own children, and advocating for their child's needs within the educational system.

Society has equal responsibility since discipline extends beyond the classroom. Among the Eve, it is said "one person gives birth to a child, but the child belongs to the whole community", which enjoins responsibility on the community to help raise that child because that child would touch the life of all members of the community. Thus, the community helps to instill ethical behaviour in the child to grow up with habits of the cultural norms, beliefs, and to develop values, like hard work, success, honesty, excellence, empathy, respect, integrity and obedience. This Eve concept instills, in the child, civic responsibility which prepares them to become responsible citizens, creating the awareness that their future depends on their responsible behaviour towards the environment today. Ecological sustainability is vital for future life, but this can only be carried out by people who are disciplined. There is a need for civic engagement, that is, encouraging active participation in community service and social issues. Responsibility in the educational sector is therefore a shared commitment among students, teachers, parents, within society.

Responsibility in Christian schools is more of a role responsibility where teachers, parents, and students have a defined obligation. In the words of Placani and Broadhead (2023), role responsibility involves a future-oriented or prospective responsibility to fulfill a prescribed duty or obligation associated with the role itself. In this case, one may fail or succeed in meeting the role-dependent obligations, however, the basis of responsibility is having assumed the role with its duties or obligations. This, in effect, means one is on the hook in virtue of occupying a role, not necessarily having caused an outcome but in the case of teachers, parents, and students an outcome is expected (see also Adolphus, 1996). So, where everyone plays their part, they contribute to a well-functioning Christian educational ecosystem. Christian schools are informed by the Bible, an example of indiscipline and irresponsibility from the Bible will be a motivation to parents and teachers. Due to indiscipline and irresponsible life, Israel ended up in exile, in effect denying themselves life, forfeiting their peace, prosperity, security, and progress.

3. Discipline and Responsibility in the Bible

Christian education came with it the Bible, which speaks a lot about discipline, and that discipline becomes a responsibility that must be enforced by the elders of Israel. In the Ghanaian context teachers, parents, and family members are held in high esteem when it comes to disciplining children.

3.1 The Text – Deut. 6:20-25

3.1.1 Background to the Text: The Promise of the Land

Judaism started with Yahweh's covenant with Abraham which yielded the land to Israel and was an unconditional gift.¹¹ He was instructed to teach his household about Yahweh (Gen. 18:19). Later, the covenant on Mount Horeb assigned the law to sustain the land promised Abraham. The inheritance of the land became vital in bringing forth "life" for Israel and their recognition as "a people." The life of Israel is always associated with their living on the land (Deut. 4:40; 5:30; 11:9; 25:15; 32:47). Israel's destruction and death is associated with their absence from the land.¹² To remain on the land the children were to be educated on the importance of the celebration of the Passover and the essence of the law. These two sustain the land because in celebrating the Passover, they are reminded of their slavery and the freedom wrought by Yahweh due to the covenantal promise Yahweh made with Abraham; and keeping the law reminds them of the covenant agreement with Yahweh that sustain the land and their livelihood as a people. They are to observe the law, a discipline they need to cultivate

¹¹ See Gen. 13:15; 17:8; 22:16, 18; 26:5; 48:4.

¹² See the following text: Deut. 4:26; 11:17; 28:63; 31:18; Jos. 23:13, 16.

to be a people (Exod. 12:24-27; 13:4-5, 8, 11, 14-15; Deut. 6:7-8, 20-25; cf. 11:18-19; Jos. 4:6-7, 21-24; 5:10-12), failure to that they will be exiled from the land (Deut. 4:25-28). Today, many think they have life because they are living on the land but in essence live in exile in their homes because they refused to observe familial laws (Salakpi, 2019:26). Family members who go against familial law, who are not able to discipline themselves, experience uncomfortable heat within, which ends in broken homes. Indiscipline towards marital vows made some spouses avoid their marital homes, a place that should be welcoming, peaceful, and secure. If indiscipline overrides the citizens of Ghana, that is irresponsibility towards the constitution, Ghanaians will cease to be Ghanaians, they will be exiled within their own country.

3.1.2 The Education of Children

These verses (Deut. 6:20-25) touch on the education of children in Israel. The child's inquiry on seeing the parent observe the law impels the parent to educate the child (Miller, 1990:107-108). The question concerns the history of Israel and the Passover rites which serve as a great period of education of the child. It also forms part of the Exodus' event that recalls Yahweh's fulfilment of promise to Abraham. The promise was responsible for the liberation from Egypt, the crossing of the Red Sea, the election of Israel with its mission, and the possession and dwelling on the Land (Exod. 12:25; 13:4-5; 13:11). Their dwelling on the land depends on the observance of the law. The text is a command to teach successive generations the origin of the law, which should be done within the family (Wright, 2004:106). These questions are only likely when the parents observe the laws that demand discipline and responsibility. This command to teach the children has parallel passages in Exod. 12:24-27; 13:8, 14-15 (Driver, 1996:92).

The continuity of the covenant in Israel depends on the transference of culture from generation to generation. Parents have the responsibility to see to it that the discipline towards the law is observed. A parent without discipline cannot impact that discipline to the child. Unfortunately, the indiscipline of parents towards the law and their irresponsibility to impact this observance to their children sent Israel into exile. The law does become a legacy for generations (Wright, 2004:102). The verb, *rxm* (in time to come v. 20), see Exod. 13: 14 and Josh. 4:6, 21, signal the future education of the child for the perpetuity of the culture through responsible parents.¹³ The combination of these three *xd*[, *qx* and *jPvm* (v. 20) instruct parents to teach their children to observe them.

Children must be made to understand why they must be disciplined and responsible in observing the law (vv. 21-23; Wright, 2004:104). Their liberation started with the plagues (Exod. 7:8-11:10), the drowning of Pharaoh's army in the Red Sea (Exod. 13:17-15:21; Salakpi, 2019:29-31; Mayes, 1979:180; Craigie, 1992: 175) and their adoption as a nation (Exod. 19:5-6). All these barred them to be disciplined in observing the law. For Israel to sustain its stay on the land then it must be responsible in observing the law and remain obedient to Yahweh.¹⁴ To dwell on a different land denies Israel of Yahweh's protection (v. 23).¹⁵ The land referred to as, "the land of milk and honey"¹⁶ and variety of foods and minerals (Deut. 8:7-9) was watered from heaven (Deut. 11:11). The land is holy and has no impurity and the reason the land will vomit out Israel if they defile it (Lev. 18:28) and exiled (Deut. 4:25-28). The loss of the land does not necessarily mean Israel will go into extinction, but if Israel returns to Yahweh, he will bring them back to the land (Deut. 4:27-31; 30:1-10). The land has a peculiar importance in the life of Israel because the law can only be practiced on the land of Israel. Therefore, inheriting the land is so crucial that, without which Israel cannot worship Yahweh (Deut. 12:1).

The discipline to observe and to revere the law is a command from Yahweh (v. 24). Adhering to the law ensures life, but failure to observe the law deprives them of peace and well-being (*shalom*). The discipline to observe the law is for the good of Israel the reason for their liberation from Egypt to live freely on their land and to fulfill their duty as a chosen people (Exod. 19:6). The word, *hqdc* (righteousness) is their acceptance and the willingness to observe the law (v. 25);¹⁷ and it does become a moral justification and acquittal in a legal sense

¹³ See Gen. 30:33; Josh. 22:24, 27; Isa. 30:8.

¹⁴ See Exod. 19:1-25; 20:1-17; Deut. 11:22-25; Josh. 24.

¹⁵ See the following texts: 1Sam. 26:19; Josh. 22:16-19; Hos. 9:3-5; Amos 7:17.

¹⁶ The following are the texts that allude to that Exod. 3:8, 17; 3:5; 33:3; Lev. 20:24; Num. 13:27; 14.

¹⁷ It is like Deut. 24:13 and Ezek. 18:5-9. The term involves claims of one person from another and in this case, it is Israel from Yahweh as in Gen. 15:6: the relationship of Abraham and Yahweh. For further clarification see Mayes, *Deuteronomy*.180.

(Weinfeld, 1991:349; Driver, 1996:96). The discipline in observing the law is an act of appreciation and acceptance of Yahweh, and in return Israel will receive blessings from Yahweh to remain on the land (Wright, 2004:104). The instruction of Moses to educate the children in this text is because Israel failed to fulfil her responsibility and so forfeited the land and went on exile (Salakpi, 2019:31-36, 41-46). The adherence and the observation of norms, values, and beliefs of a culture become necessary to live a peaceful, healthy and prosperous life within the community. Eli and Samuel produced a good example of indiscipline and irresponsible children, who were vomited by the land.

3.2. Indiscipline Children

Indiscipline children become a problem to society and a destruction to the environment. Child morality is very essential for a humane society; the children of Eli (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25, 27-36; 4:10-22) and Samuel (1 Sam. 8:1-5) are good lessons for guidance. The worrying issue is Eli's inability to raise his own children but Samuel (1 Sam. 3:1-21); and Samuel's inability to raise his own children. Eli accepted Samuel into custody, someone's child, and molded him to become a leader of a nation. Eli trained Samuel and warned his children of their evil deeds (1 Sam. 2:12-17, 22-25), but their pride and arrogance would not allow them to listen to their father. Maybe, their father's status within society made them become arrogant. There are several examples of children of elites in society who behave likewise. Parents and guardians have a prime responsibility to ensure that their children are disciplined with a good moral life. As stewards of creation, failures in familial, civic, and religious commitments are failures to society because they affect, endanger, and ruin the society for the future generation while discipline is essential for schools to raise responsible citizens.

4. Promoting Discipline in Our Schools

Discipline is essential for peaceful coexistence among human beings. Without peace there can't be progress and development, and living on the land will be a challenge; Israelites became indiscipline and forfeited their land, their peace and their livelihood so, they were taken into exile. Today, Ghanaians can experience exile in their homes, workplace, within the society, and in the nation. Nobody will force Ghanaians out of their country, they will live within their country but will experience no peace, no progress and no development in their homes, workplaces, within their communities and in the country if adequate disciplinary education is not received by their children. Today, one observes four categories of people within society: educated literates, uneducated literates, educated illiterates, and uneducated illiterates. What is common among the four is uneducated literates. They know how to read and write but cannot apply what they read and write.

Discipline should be a shared responsibility among parents, teachers, and students, but this unfortunately seemed to be left for teachers alone to shoulder. Within this unfortunate situation some parents exacerbate the problem of the teachers by giving the students space to operate as they wish. Educational policy makers, who are equally parents, become unaware that they are parents, and the students are their own children so make policies that cut the throat of teachers. In view of the devastating consequences of indiscipline, the call to promote discipline should be a partnership among teachers, parents, which includes policy makers, and students. Within the blind side, majority of the teachers are either parents or potential parents. Parents, therefore, include teachers, policy makers, pastors, market women and men, lawmakers, the judiciary, the executive, masons, carpenters, steel benders, messengers, etc. The question is, what do these categories of people expect of their children, the students? What do they expect them to become? So, a policy maker knowing very well that he or she has a student and knowing very well that a teacher is equally a parent will make a policy that will favor both the student and the teacher. Where "my only child" syndrome is sung a student may not receive the best of education. One basic fact is that teachers should inherit and nurture what parents have already sown in their children, the students. So, teachers are supposed to work on what has started growing in the student; unfortunately, it is not always so and when teachers attempt to reset these children then they meet the wrath of their parents. For effective education, parents and teachers must work hand in hand. What a parent observes in his or her child should be discussed with the teacher and vice versa.

Some years back, when someone outside the home came to tell parents that their child misbehaved outside the home, those parents would first punish that child even before his or her offence could be enquired of. It may not be acceptable, but it rings a bell since parents consider misconduct outside the home a disgrace to the family. But today, if an outsider does that, that person will receive insults and may even be beaten up by some parents. Some adults, today, may blame nuns for mishandling their students or wards but that discipline brought the best out of them and were the good times enjoyed in schools as compared to schools today. Today's policies are yielding

less fruits than that of the nuns. While it is accepted that there were excesses in the discipline meted out by parents and nuns at that time, it evolved humanness and informed a responsible life; a good look at some of them will be helpful for our future leaders. It is good to know that freedom has a limit, one's freedom ends where another person's nose begins.

To effectively inculcate discipline, there are two ways: good example and good communication (Griffin, 1994).

Good Example

Both parents and teachers are to be examples to their children or students, they have become "role models" for their children to emulate. Parents are primary role models, but many of them have reneged on their responsibilities and so, lost their values due to economic pressure, power, wealth, and fame. The values of sincerity, honesty, integrity, love, trustworthiness, respect, dignity, kindness, humility, service have disappeared from Ghanaian cultural vocabulary and replaced with dishonesty, arrogance, pride, lies, theft, deceit, and wickedness. These are what the children imbibe from their parents. A parent who says good things about others inspires the child to see good things in others, but a parent who says evil things about others to a child encourages stereotyping; and it is worse off if it is about neighbors, family members, gender, governments, race, religion, and other ethnic groups. So, a parent who condemns a teacher in the presence of his or her child has empowered that child not to respect that teacher and other teachers as well.

Communication

Responsibilities must be well communicated to students through questions and unambiguous answers. They should not be looked down upon or making them feel stupid but rather making them feel like responsible future leaders. There should be no assumptions. Things must be explained to the barest minimum stressing on "acceptable" and "unacceptable" behaviors. Good communication usually help to limit factors that promote indiscipline among students.

4.1 Probable Factors Inhibiting Adequate Discipline

In Ghana, disciplinary challenges have become a pressing issue in many Senior High Secondary Schools (SHSS). As indicated earlier, among the Anlo, there was a place reserved called *Tɔko Atɔlia* for people with vile attitudes, such as indiscipline and irresponsible behaviour. Recalcitrant members of the community are sanctioned to that place. This place, although it does not exist again yet still reminds the people of Anlo of good behaviour. Indiscipline and irresponsibility are abhorred in society because indiscipline in schools adversely affects the quality of teaching and learning. It leads to poor results, dropouts, chaos, and resource wastage.¹⁸ Here are some possible factors that might influence indiscipline in schools.

4.1.1 The Economy of the Nation

- **Parents:**

The economy of today demands that both parents must work and therefore have no time for the children; they leave at dawn and return at night, neglecting supervision (Salakpi, 2023:139-144). It is always said "it is for the good of the children". But what is the gain of acquiring wealth when the children for whom you have toiled become wayward? Nannies and other aides are employed, they may give their best but that will never equal parental love. A child's health and development are very important. In their attempt, most often, to occupy their children, parents rather expose them to the Internet and its nuisances without guidance and strict supervision. The Internet use and its consequences tend to be obvious platforms for children's answers. The unavailability of parents may lead to undone school assignments or not well done; sometimes 'others' help their children to do them, but that leaves the parents in the dark on what their children study in school. Some students go to school late when school resumes because their parents could not afford to give them money for school and that creates problems for school management. SHSS is claimed free, but parents spend money on their children (Gyan & et.al, 2015:19).

- **Teachers:**

¹⁸ Dr Kwame Addo Kuffour, Ghana's Minister of Defence at the 30th Anniversary and Speech & Prize Giving Day of Anglican Secondary School, Kumasi. See, D. E. Frimpong, "Kumasi Anglican gets government fund". *Daily Graphic* (No.148877; July 21, 2003), p. 20.

A 'broken' economy affects the pocket of the teachers, which results largely in teachers engaging in unwarranted extra classes for more money. Things that can be taught during the regular session are reserved for extra classes for students to pay for. Sometimes, handouts are made and sold, and students who do not buy those handouts are made to fail the examination. Some teachers also engage in exam malpractices including stealing exams questions or copying and providing answers for students during exams for money. In an out-of-campus case, some teachers absent themselves for other businesses to make more money. Lack of accommodation is another cause of concern for some teachers. Teachers are not housed in the vicinity of schools and sometimes also, the houses are too expensive for them to rent. The presence of a teacher in the community in which he or she teaches is very helpful.

4.1.2 Religious Practices

Religion is always in crisis because it runs against inhuman choices. Where there is discipline, life is better organized as people become responsible. Most of the Christian schools have nothing to show as such and the Christian God seems ineffective when it comes to chastisement and when rules are flouted without recourse. In the traditional set up, the mention of taboo alone incite fear, nobody dares go against such rules where there is fear of the sacred, but that is not the case with Christianity, the Christian God is deemed merciful, and it is taken for granted. If a place is declared an evil forest no one enters to take anything and certainly, illegal mining (galamsey) will never have taken place.

4.1.3 Social Influences

Society influences the life of its members and students inclusive. Many of the things that happen in schools feature prominently daily within society, which also means the behaviour of each individual student influences the school environment. School environment plays a significant role in causing indiscipline in schools like inadequate classrooms, insufficient food, limited dormitories, teaching aids, overpopulation and many more. All these become a concern for the students, teachers, parents, elders in the community, and governmental educational policy makers.

- Students

Student behaviour is common to all students but majority of acts of school indiscipline hinges around students themselves (Beebejaun-Muslum, 2014: 124-135; Gyan, et. al. 2015:19). Some students come to school late, some use the fees or money given to keep body and soul together to bet, leading to gross irresponsibility. Some of the things they see in the media are displayed in school and not at home out of fear for the parents. Some use the Internet to cheat in exams and in assignments forgetting that what the Internet provides is only an aid. A close investigation into some student unrest revealed that sometimes it is misjudgments on the part of the students but in some other cases are the failures of school management.

- Teachers

Most teachers are obsessed with the use of social media. Some physically have long and undue conversations with colleague teachers outside or inside the classroom leaving the student unattended to. In some cases, teachers are not friendly with their students or even with their parents; they are always indifferent and sometimes wicked in their acts or unfriendly rules (Gitonga, 2018:172). Conversations with some teachers revealed that they are "opportunistic teachers" because they really do not want to be teachers, but their intelligence could not enable them to achieve their aim and are beefed up. Some also, due to the economy and the consequent lack of jobs, made their way into the teaching field and graduated themselves into unhappy souls, always nursing their disappointment and failure. Since they have not come to terms with their present condition, they have become nothing more than poison for the students, as such need to be counselled or removed altogether from the schools. More importantly, teachers need motivation from the community in which they live. They equally need respect and support since many may not be indigenes, and sometimes, gifts without strings attached to them, could be a source of empowerment from parents and the community for them to put out their best.

- Parents

Some parents do not have quality time with their children during the week as they are out at work and when they return from work, they are too tired to listen to their children, while weekends are for funerals and weddings. This attitude creates a vacuum in parent-child relationships, and today social media is filling that vacuum, which may not be good enough. Parents may end up raising monsters in their homes because parents do not know what their children consume, digest and assimilate within that media space. Corruption and bribery primarily start with children; a parent who always promises a gift to a child to do house chores corrupts that child with bribery.

That child belongs to that home and is supposed to do that chore. The ideal thing should be after the child had cleaned the dishes, he or she is given something like the “favorite ice cream” for motivation but even that not every time. The promise of ice cream should not come before asking him or her to do the dishes. Bribery and corruption, I think linger on because of how society motivates children. Finish your homework and I will give you ice cream. Clean your room and come for toys. Similar examples I think corrupt the child to grow up thinking to be rewarded after every deed done. Chores or homework are essential things for the child to learn to do without promises, parents must gain control over their child.

- Community Leaders and Artistes

Community leaders serve as role models for many of these students. These leaders include:

- a. Traditional rulers – chiefs, queen mothers and elders.
- b. Religious leaders – priests, pastors, prophets, and ministers.
- c. The arms of government – the executive, parliamentarians, judiciary, public servants.
- d. The media – Radio, Television and journalism.
- e. Artistes – musicians, sports men and women, actors and actresses, and comedians.
- f. Social media – Internet, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Facebook, WhatsApp, and so on.

All these exert a lot of influences on students’ life; and also, those involved in leadership positions must show that they have become “signpost” for students.

- Policy Makers

Policy makers do not find it easy making guidelines concerning students and children. Policy makers should also bear in mind that students are their own children, and most of the teachers are parents just like the policy makers themselves. Within such understanding, policies towards the discipline of students must take into consideration the well-being of the teachers as well as the students. Students normally take advantage of policies embedded with loopholes and teachers who fall victim to such a law rather stay aloof which ultimately affects the entire school environment.

In the school system today exists what is called “protocol list” that favors qualified and unqualified child to become a student. This leads to an intake of students with poor grades and bad manners, which affects academic and moral discipline. Such students think they own the school because they know very well that they are not qualified yet, they are in school and those who are qualified are at home and so, become pompous. Likewise, “mass promotion” does not encourage students to learn because they know that whether they study or not, they will earn promotion to the next level.

Two educational policies – school feeding and free SHS – introduced in Ghana in recent times have somehow enhanced discipline in schools and need be sustained. The challenge with the former policy, however, has to do with numerous middlemen and women who parade themselves manipulating the finances before the money gets to the actual caterers. The latter – the Free SHS, even though also good, has become an albatross the country is battling with. It requires serious improvements for the utmost benefit. Some parents can afford to pay school fees for their children and so, should be allowed whilst those who cannot be supported. The funds coming from the government are inadequate to meet the demands of SHS in areas of inadequate food. Inadequacy of food can result in indiscipline in schools. In the present program, some parents send food to their children or wards twice a week, and during holidays, parents recruit teachers for their children or wards at extra cost; all of these, fall short of the policy considered to be free. Other shortfalls include inadequate facilities – classrooms, dormitories, and teaching aids. The academic calendar also requires recalibration to ensure uniformity within the entire general programme at the pre-tertiary level. The curriculum is another challenge. It is full of foreign cultures leading to discrimination of many ethnic groups in the syllabus. Finally, to have responsible citizens, students must be introduced to the Ghanaian Constitution whilst in school.

With cautious consideration of these economic, religious, and social factors when addressed can mitigate indiscipline and irresponsible behavior in schools. The disciplined private schools perform better than government (public) schools. Many parents want their children or wards to attend private schools, and as such, it is an irony that a teacher in government school sends the child to a private school. Studies reveal that even children of educational policy formulators themselves send their children to private schools. This is unacceptable. How efficient and effective would those policies become if their own children do not attend those schools where policies are implemented.

4.2 Probable Measures to Improve Discipline

This section explores possible measures by which to improve discipline in schools. These measures include but

are not limited to respect for school rules, exercising self-control, and teachers and parents living a life of integrity for emulation. To adequately enforce these three points, below are possible suggestions to measure out the needed discipline (Gyan, et. al, 2015:23):

- Respect for school rules by both teachers, parents and students.
- School regulations should be clearly stated without ambiguity.
- Respect for teachers by parents and students.
- Renumeration for teachers as people who nurture future leaders of the nation.
- A motivation to appreciate teachers and well-behaved students.
- Friendly teachers: some teachers turn out to be unfriendly and wicked towards students.
- There is a need for cooperation between parents and teachers.
- To some extent students should be included in making decisions (Gitonga, 2018:172).
- There should be counselling centers to aid students and more especially students with challenges.
- Obstinate students should be expelled but only after every help has been given to them without success. Those who may conform could be made to sign a bond of good behaviour.
- Corporal punishment should not be totally exempted from punishments to culprits.
- School should admit only qualified and also the required number of students.
- Staff and students' hour should be strengthened. It is a platform where staff and students interact for the common good.

In a related development, teachers are required to adopt positive and constructive approaches to discipline as enshrined in the codes of Ghana Education Service (GES). In 2017, the GES officially banned all forms of corporal punishment. Teachers are supposed to know the consequences of the code, which includes possible legal action and prosecution. The code is of human rights laws, which include verbal abuse, raising of voice, physical abuse and others. With these, it becomes difficult for a teacher to discern and not to violate these laws. The students are aware of these codes and sometimes play the game to have their way. Some teachers, to avoid victimization, stay aloof and would not do or say anything, hence indiscipline.

For effective discipline in Ghanaian schools, parents and teachers need to collaborate as their engagement on the academic and the moral journey in the life of the students will produce excellent results. The Eve proverb *gbe eve me hena vi o* (two voices do not raise a child) become very applicable here. Both the voice of the teacher and the parent must be one in forming or nurturing students. Good relationships between teachers and students will enhance discipline if the teachers take the students as their children and the students look to their teachers as their parents because, after all, the students are their children. Parent-student relationships should also be improved and encouraged in that parents should know what their children are doing in school; they must have quality time with their children to get to know them.

5. Conclusion

Discipline of students is a shared adult responsibility. The article unveils the need for adults to be disciplined and responsible for their children to emulate. Accordingly, they must know that they are “role models” for their children or wards. With that, parents and teachers need to be disciplined without which the student cannot be disciplined. *Nemo dat cur non habent* “You can’t give what you don’t have.” Discipline in schools should be collaborative work, a collective responsibility knowing that education is to make the educated apply knowledge and reasoning but unfortunately, the number of uneducated literates is rather escalating. Such people can read and write but their actions are not transformed by their education as they are mostly, morally indiscipline. This may be due to the learning environment. There is therefore the need to promote positive learning environments and to encourage respectful behavior in schools, which are very essential and non-negotiable. With good communication and good examples as essential tools, indiscipline can be curbed within schools and within society.

It is evident that school focuses more on academics than on moral life of students. Academics should inform moral life but somehow become unfortunate today. Moral education demands serious attention, which should emphasize life skills orientation, leadership skills and roles, and the adoption of behavior accountability policy. This, the paper emphasis can only be achieved with healthy cooperation between teachers and parents; teacher-parent dialogue is essential within the lens of Christian principles to instill that discipline in students. Students equally must avail themselves to be transformed into disciplined and responsible adults. This discipline is crucial for academic and moral success, because it gears towards the overall well-being of students and transforms them into holistic human beings. These students are the future leaders, and every community expects descent future

leaders; the discipline needed to achieve this decency is a shared responsibility among teachers, parents, and students.

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