

# DISCIPLINARY ATTITUDES OF UGANDAN DAY PUPILS AND BOARDERS ATTENDING THE SAME SECONDARY SCHOOL

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## Summary

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The problem of discipline in secondary schools and teacher colleges has been highlighted in recent years by strikes. Investigation revealed that some schools had repeated trouble while 60% of the secondary schools and colleges had not a single strike. Nevertheless, such strikes as occurred were dramatic symptoms of a widespread disease. This study attempts to diagnose the disease as revealed in the disciplinary attitudes of "matched" groups of secondary school boarders and day students from several pilot studies. Attitude scales were devised to test

- i) attitude to teachers's leadership
- ii) attitude to teacher control
- iii) attitude to independent work

In the final forms the tests were administered to the pupils of the complete 3rd forms of 2 secondary schools in Kampala, the ratio of boarders to day pupils being kept equal.

The results showed no consistent difference between the day pupils' and boarders' attitudes.

The refinement of the 'Scale' after validation against an external criterion, or factor analysis has yet to be undertaken.

## Report

### I. The Problem

The problem of discipline in secondary schools and teacher training colleges in Uganda - as in many other African countries - has been highlighted in recent years by the so-called strikes.

Head teachers and college principals consulted by the Ugandan Ministry of Education's School Discipline Committee, which produced its report in December, 1967, saw the term strike as a definite misnomer - given that strikers' tactics included anything from mild dissent such as reluctance to sing in chapel or turn out for games, to outright riot and violence such as stoning a head's office, fire-raising, attacking a principal's

home, damaging staff cars, or mass insult and defiance of a District Education Officer, school governors and police officers. All this is apart from what could more reasonably be termed strike tactics, namely boycotting of classes or meals.

In secondary schools and teacher training colleges there were twenty-two serious disturbances between 1955 and 1969, and as many as nine in 1965 alone. There were several more during the period of the writer's research in Uganda between 1969 and 1971. At no time during the period from 1955 onwards was the number of secondary schools and teacher training colleges greater than one hundred.

The importance of the strike in the context of school discipline as a whole has to be kept in the proper perspective. On the one hand, while some schools had repeated trouble, slightly more than 60% of schools and colleges had never experienced a strike. On the other hand, the Report (1967) showed concern that co-operative relationships between students and heads, principals and staff were often seriously impaired, producing bad disciplinary atmosphere without outright defiance. Strikes were merely the most dramatic symptom of a widespread malaise.

The report was able to produce the following profile: strikers were predominantly boy boarders in post-primary schools or colleges which select students of well above average ability and in which the students are articulate and vocal; strikes were almost unknown with girls. An obvious caveat is attached to use of the term 'boy' in East African schools: in 1969, 42% of Ugandan Form I boys were 16 or over and 21% of boys in Forms III and IV, 20 or over.

The single-sex boarding institution predominates in Ugandan post-Primary education, only 11% of schools and colleges taking day pupils, and a further 10% taking both day pupils and boarders. The day schools' significance is increased however by their individual rolls being far larger: several day schools in the capital city of Kampala are forced to employ morning and afternoon shift systems.

The boarding tradition was begun at the turn of the century by the Anglican and Roman Catholic missions, with the aim of the adaptation of our English public school method to the African race. Responsibility for Secondary schooling in Uganda has passed from the voluntary agencies to the government of the Republic, but the legacy of elitism is still strong in the boarding schools. Most are highly selective, creaming off the best material according to the criterion of the Primary Leaving Examination. Most schools which take boarders and day pupils award boarding places to the ablest. Most day schools in Uganda were originally established for urban pupils and children of Uganda's Asian community still receive their education in these schools. African pupils now attending day schools tend to be those who have failed to gain places at boarding schools, and day schools have lower prestige in the eyes of African parents and public.

Causes of strikes and indiscipline, as suggested by the ministry's Report (1967), by an analysis of head teachers' and principals' views and by drawing on pupils' and students own opinions can be categorized into nine groups.

(i) Causes related to the teachers, including high percentage of inexperienced staff, poor professional standards in Primary schools, high percentage of expatriate staff unfamiliar with the African situation, and misunderstandings and suspicion caused by the linguistic and cultural gap between expatriate teachers and African pupils.

(ii) Causes associated with school administration, that is, lack of continuity of head teachers, shortage of experienced African teachers to assume headships, and tendencies especially in boarding situations to impose a multiplicity of negative rules on older pupils.

(iii) Causes emerging from the educational system in general, especially from its excessive orientation towards examination requirements - which has produced in pupils a twisted idea of what school is for, preference of spoon-feeding and rote-learning methods, with the attendant over-dependence on teachers, widespread lack of real interest in school subjects, and extremes of anxiety over examinations, given the make-or-break significance of school certificates.

(iv) Causes emerging from economic pressures, including the pre-occupation with examination success as an economic passport, but also involving the strain on pupils of only moderate ability, whose parents and families have sacrificed to provide school fees.

(v) Causes related to political influences, in that African nationalism has compromised previous unquestioning acceptance of European teachers' authority - even though no evidence exists of widespread resentment of European teachers as such, a few strikes during the 1960's have been traceable to youth winger agitation with an anti-European bias.

(vi) Causes related to inadequate educational facilities in some schools - namely insufficient, overcrowded classrooms, deficiencies in laboratories, workshops and libraries, and shortage of books and materials.

(vii) Causes related to boarding schools' living facilities - namely poor food, overcrowding and lack of recreational facilities in some schools, with the strains of an institutionalized life applying for all boarding establishments, however well-appointed.

(viii) Causes related to the African home background - especially to the tendency for boys to be accorded men's freedoms at home in mid-teens making it difficult for them to accept boarding schools' restrictions, and also to the sheer cultural gap between the requirements of the uneducated African home and those of the Westernized school environment staffed mainly by foreigners.

(ix) Causes emerging from the near-universal problem whereby extension of young people's education has put them into an ambiguous position where restriction of freedom is coupled with lack of real adult responsibilities - producing frustration, resentment and nihilism among many young adults.

All these sets of causes - except the seventh - applied for day pupils as well as boarders. But day pupils in Uganda have their own problems. The circumstances under which day pupils lived and worked in Kampala ranged between the inconvenient and the downright squalid. Even living happily at home with his parents, the day pupil typically had to attempt homework in the noisy, usually crowded, dimly-lit room which the whole family shared. Many

day pupils are put up by relatives, paying their keep by chores around the house. With inconsiderate relatives, this can necessitate very early rising, and further work after school, leaving the pupil tired by the time homework can be begun. Many have to walk several miles per day to and from school, and may have only one proper meal per day. Worst-off of all are day pupils who live independently, say in Kampala, and can only rent squalid sleeping space, surrounded by the worst manifestations of African slum dwelling. Serious organized indiscipline among day pupils has been very rare however.

However austere and poorly-equipped his school may be, the boarder gets three meals a day, clean sleeping accommodation and a well-lit, quiet room in which to study in the evenings; at least some organized recreations and entertainments are available, and the boarder has very little work to do apart from his studies. Perhaps this has been part of the trouble - the insulated, introverted boarding community with time on its hands to magnify minor irritations and petty grievances, and allow anxiety over academic success to reach an unrealistic or even neurotic level.

The Ministry's Report and other surveys made it clear that serious indiscipline was associated almost exclusively with boarding schools, particularly since outbreaks typically involved disturbances in the evening, outside the school day proper.

## II Preliminary Hypothesis

The real enigma emerged from inspection of any list of Ugandan Secondary schools where serious indiscipline had occurred. Here it became obvious that strikes had been occurring, and recurring, in boarding schools where, at the time of the trouble, all the facilities were adequate, the heads experienced, the staff well qualified, the school regimes far from oppressive, and where efforts were made to deinsulate the boarders by encouraging activities outside in the community, such as Red Cross work, voluntary work camps, community development projects and scouts and guides, in addition to the usual sports and recreations.

A tentative hypothesis was formed and became the basis for the planning of the research investigation eventually conducted from 1970-71. It was hypothesised that the boarding situation in itself, as opposed to day school attendance, had a distinctive effect on Ugandan pupils' disciplinary attitudes, quite independently of school facilities, school administration and the professional and personal qualities of teachers.

To attempt to control all the variables apart from boarding as opposed to day school attendance, measurement was aimed at comparing disciplinary attitudes of day pupils and boarders of the same age and ability ranges, not only attending the same schools, but also sharing classrooms and the same sets of teachers. That is, the subjects were to be pupils from the relatively small number of schools in Uganda with both day pupils and boarders on their rolls. It was hypothesised that the day pupils would display more favourable disciplinary attitudes than boarders in terms of attitude scale scores.

## III Attitude Measurement

In the modern Secondary school context, pupils' ability to work independently and achieve self-discipline, and the teachers' ability to promote this through his actual subject teaching methods are largely inseparable from

the sheer control aspect of discipline. Four attitudes among the Ugandan pupils were to be assessed:

(i) Attitude to teachers' leadership in the learning process - whereby favourable responses denoted preference for being required to think and work independently, involving discussions and assisting the teacher in planning and decision-making, and unfavourable responses denoted preference of spoon-feeding and leaving all decision-making to the teacher.

(ii) Attitude to teacher control - whereby favourable responses denoted responsible, well-balanced views of school rules and sanctions currently in effect, and unfavourable denoted a hostile, resentful and ill-balanced reaction.

(iii) Attitude to independent work - in projected situations where difficulties obstructed work, where opportunity arose to be lazy or take an easy way out, and where the teacher was inadequate. Original measures were constructed for the above.

(iv) Attitude to school - a more general assessment, by an existing Thurstone-type scale, that was devised for Primary and Secondary pupils in New Zealand by Fitt (1956), in which the scale statements cover whether school is worthwhile, whether time at school is happy, whether school work is hard, and whether time out of school is better.

Measurement by attitude scale was considered particularly useful for this research, because of the advantages of quick, easy, unambiguous registering of responses, and objectivity of scoring. Scale statement technique (Thurstone 1960 pp. 216-232; Vernon 1953 pp. 144-154; Likert, Roslow and Murphy 1934) was used to measure (i) attitude to teachers' leadership in the learning process and (ii) attitude to teacher control.

Presentation of the statements for (i) was modelled on the technique of Forrester (1951), who set out her scale in a quasi-dramatic form, with the statements grouped together in sets of five and given the format of speeches in a discussion among teenagers of the subjects' own age.

The approach for (iii) attitude to independent work was based on the technique of Bronfenbrenner (1966) in experimental studies of the socialization of American and Soviet children of late Primary school stage. Bronfenbrenner confronted the children with imaginary dilemma situations where they had to choose between endorsing adult-approved and adult-disapproved behaviour and then register on a six-point scale how sure they were of the course of action they would take.

Subjective assessment of the content validity of the sets of statements of items was implied in the criticisms and recommendations of a panel of eight Makerere University College education tutors who were asked to consider how effectively the batches of items represented the first three attitude topics.

A crucial problem was ensuring the suitability of the language of the whole forms - rubric, instructions and examples as well as the items proper. The subjects were exclusively African middle school pupils, taught through the medium of English, but for whom English was a second language. A considerable range of ability in English was to be expected.

In the administration of intelligence tests to African children, printed instructions have proved far less effective than demonstration of

required responses, and ideally are kept to a minimum, expressed in language empirically found to communicate effectively with the subjects. Printed instructions were minimized in this study and the whole groups of subjects were taken through demonstrated examples.

A three-stage procedure was used to eliminate the linguistically unsuitable from the forms:

- (i) objective assessment against the vocabulary criteria of West's (1963) General Service List of English Words (G.S.L.), and sentence structure criteria in the New Oxford English Course book for Primary leaving stage (See Wingard and Bright 1963, revised Harrison 1969)
- (ii) subjective assessment by the panel of eight education staff, including African tutors and specialists in teaching English as a second language
- (iii) indication of linguistic difficulties by the pupils themselves at the pilot study stage.

#### IV Research in the Schools

According to the headmasters' opinions as analysed by El-Abd Secondary Form III pupils were the most frequent source of serious disciplinary trouble, so the final study involved a total of 266 boarders and day pupils in Form III. As a further precaution to ensure their usability, the pilot study provisional forms were administered to 112 unstreamed boarders and day pupils from one of the schools whose Form III was to provide subjects for the study proper.

Two class units of 38 and one of 36 were used. Each provisional form was administered by the writer, and assigned to a separate forty minute period, allowing more than enough time for demonstration and ensuring that pupils indicated any parts which they could not understand. They were also questioned orally concerning such difficulties and sources of difficulty noted. Pupils were assured of anonymity through numbers alone being used to identify each individual's separate forms.

Three very obvious sources of linguistic difficulty emerged and were eliminated from the final forms. No difficulty was indicated with the Fitt scale, and it showed an uncorrected reliability in the pilot study at 0.76, by the same split-half reliability check as used by Fitt, namely arriving at two half-tests by pairing statements of similar scale value.

Scores on each of the provisional forms were reasonably well spread, suggesting that elimination of poorly discriminating statements and items in the first three would produce attitude measurement forms suitable for use in the research paper.

The form for (i) attitude to teachers' leadership in the learning process was reduced from 50 to 25 statements; that for (ii) attitude to teacher control from 64 to 30; and that for (iii) attitude to independent work from 15 items to 9.

The final forms were administered to a total of 266 pupils, the complete third forms of two Secondary schools in Kampala. Both schools

provided third form classes in which the ratio of boarders to day pupils was almost equal; in neither school were boarders selected on the basis of academic ability, and all seven classes involved were unstreamed. 53 day pupils and 55 boarders were used in a six-year Secondary school, and 86 day pupils and 72 boarders in a four-year Secondary. In neither school was there a significant difference between the mean ages of third form day pupils and boarders: 16.73 and 16.72 respectively in the six-year school and 16.48 and 16.58 in the four-year school. Both schools had expatriate headmasters and a majority of expatriate staff. Both schools had some experience of strike trouble, the six-year school having had a very serious and violent outbreak in 1965.

The hypothesis was that day pupils would display more favourable disciplinary attitudes than boarders in the same school environment, in terms of their scores on the final forms, because of day pupils' greater opportunity to assert and use independence, greater freedom from the strains of institutional life, and their avoidance of possible friction with school authority after class hours.

Results provided virtually no support for the hypothesis.

There was no significant difference between the means of the six-year school day pupils and boarders on any of the forms - except that there was an almost significant difference in favour of the day pupils on attitude to teacher control. The four-year school day pupils produced a significantly more favourable score than their boarder classmates only for attitude to school. In the latter case, 8.3% of the boarders endorsed the least favourable statement on Fitt's scale (value 10.5) while none of the day pupils endorsed it. This statement is "I hate school more than anything else". Also, 13.8% of the boarders endorsed the high value (unfavourable) statements: "I think life would be better if all the schools were closed" (9.6), and "School is a waste of time" (9.2). Again no day pupils endorsed these statements. It might have been the case that for some of the boarders in that school attitude to school was adversely affected by supervision after school hours and just not getting completely away from school atmosphere after classes.

Reliability estimates were gained for each form by alternate item split-half technique (Thorndike 1951 pp.579-586) for the first three forms, and by pairing statements of the similar scale value in Fitt's scale. The estimates were based on the scripts of 120 subjects. Form 2, for attitude to teacher control, gained an uncorrected estimate of 0.84, while Fitt's scale this time gained an uncorrected reliability of 0.71. The forms for attitude to teachers' leadership in the learning process, and attitude to independent work were far less satisfactory - with estimates of 0.58 and 0.49 respectively.

## V Conclusions

Lack of consistent differences between the day pupils' and boarders' attitudes in terms of their scores was encouraging from the point of view of concern over the effects of day pupils' living conditions and widespread lack of adequate study facilities in the evenings: their attitudes did not seem to have been adversely affected. Also, institutional routine, regularized meals and sleep, extra amenities and evening study facilities did not seem to have given boarders in these schools any distinct advantage in terms of disciplinary attitudes.

Form 2 emerged as a reasonably successfully constructed scale which might be applicable in further research in East Africa - after validation against an external criterion, or factor analysis, which have yet to be undertaken. It seemed to have sampled content better than any of the others. Fitt's scale was as reliable as when applied in New Zealand, Form 1, at 25 statements, was probably too brief, especially in the quasi-dramatic format, and Form 3 probably too susceptible to guarded, conservative or even faked responses.

From experience here it would seem necessary to take considerable care over ensuring the suitability of the language of scales or standardized questionnaires for East African school pupils. Systematic checking, involving African teachers or college and university staff, and specialists in English as a second language seems desirable, although linguistic suitability can only ultimately be established empirically.

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