



BOOK REVIEW

TEACHERS AS AGENTS OF PUPIL INDISCIPLINE, BANJA, M.K., UNIVERSITY OF ZAMBIA PRESS, LUSAKA, 2013, 79 PAGES, ISBN: 978-9982-03-068-7. Review by **Gabriel Walubita**, George Benson College of Education, Zambia.

Parents are usually answerable for their children's misbehaviour at home, just like teachers are often held accountable for their learners' failure to perform academically to the expected levels. The recent announcement of the 2013 Examination Council of Zambia poor results for their grade twelve examinations had ignited debate among various stakeholders in the education sector, some of whom blamed teachers for this poor performance. In Madalitso Khulupirika Banja's book, *Teachers as Agents of Pupil Indiscipline* (2013) he cites teacher indiscipline as the source for pupil indiscipline in Zambian schools while acknowledging that "this book is not intended to unfairly and wholesomely portray all teachers as ill behaved" (xi), but as portrays the majority of teachers as dedicated and committed professionals who are committed to duty.

The informative book is filled with both African and European literature that shows the sources and the effects of pupil and teacher indiscipline. Banja also presents the common forms of pupil and teacher indiscipline in secondary schools derived from studies not only conducted in Zambia but also in other countries. The main objective of the book is to show how teacher indiscipline adversely affects the academic performance of pupils in secondary and tertiary institutions. The author argues that teachers are responsible for some of the learners' maladaptive behaviour observed in school.

The reasons for writing this book are provided. First, this book raises awareness that learner and teacher indiscipline is a huge crisis facing secondary schools in Zambia and that this problem needs to be addressed in the education system. Second, the book attempts to make an original contribution to the limited literature on learner and teacher indiscipline in Zambia. Finally, in his foreword to this book, Dr. John Phiri, former Zambia Minister of Education, welcomes the book and says that it serves to remind teachers that "they carry on their shoulders a huge responsibility of turning young people into responsible adults" (xi).

Banja's book is divided into four parts. Part one presents a discussion on the common forms and causes of pupil indiscipline which cut across Africa, Europe, and America. The second part of the book explains the conduct of teachers and head teachers where it is emphasized that a basic understanding of teacher behaviour can aid in knowing learner behaviour and can also help in strengthening interventions to curb problematic behaviours exhibited by learners and teachers. Banja asserts that the performance of some teachers and head teachers is commendable, while that of others leaves much to be desired.

Part two discusses the outcomes of a qualitative study conducted among 160 respondents drawn from 4 government secondary schools in Zambia. The study revealed that some of the offences committed by teachers included leaking examination content, flirting with school girls, reporting late and drunk for work, engaging in illegal class enrolments and obtaining money from pupils for preferential treatment (16). The study also reported that head teachers also committed these offences which had detrimental effects on the pupils' behaviour and school performance. For instance, some head teachers' were either too harsh toward pupils, overlooked students' concerns or showed signs of favouritism towards certain pupils. One of the most outstanding observations made was that some teachers used sarcastic and abusive language towards pupils noted in statements such as "put your stinking anus down," "you stink," or "she is just a prostitute, just leave her" (29). The author noted that these comments were very demeaning to the learners and must be strongly discouraged. Banja applies social learning theory by Bandura and Walters (1963) as a theoretical framework used to explain "the nature and quality of the interaction between pupils and their teachers; and between pupils and head teachers as well as in the manner of making decisions that affect their pupils." (16)

Banja also presents the causes of teacher indiscipline which include lack of teacher socialisation, poor conditions of service, teacher stress, poor professional training, and lack of effective school management. The effects of pupil and teacher indiscipline on the school are also examined such as absenteeism, disobedience to school authority, truancy, fighting, substance abuse and classroom disruption. The author argues that pupils are not passive (as they are perceived to be by some teachers) but active players in imitating their head teachers' and teachers' behaviour during continued interaction at school. Banja indicates, "there is an urgent need to tackle teachers' indiscipline in order to reduce pupils' indiscipline, which affects educational attainment" (18).

Part three of Banja's book moves from the secondary school setting to a tertiary setting where very important discussions are presented on the factors that affect the relationship between the student and the lecturer in the university. Emphasis here is placed on the need for inexperienced lecturers to be professional in the way they conduct themselves. The other concerns raised are the old fashioned ways of teaching demonstrated by the older, experienced lecturers. He describes as having fallen in academic slumber and are likely to operate like programmed robots, always teaching the same material in almost the same way for decades. The author also explains that examination leakages, student over-enrolment, inadequate teaching infrastructure, and lack of effective institutional management are among the main challenges faced by tertiary institutions that need to be addressed.

Banja remains optimistic in confronting pupil and teacher indiscipline by proposing that parents need to be actively involved in inculcating moral values in the pupils because they are role models who spend most of their time with the pupils outside school. Other solutions to the problem of pupil and teacher misconduct that the author suggests include: prompt and adequate use of reinforcement instead of punishment; hosting regular morally-focussed teacher training workshops; intensifying teacher training in counselling and behaviour management techniques; provision of comprehensive management training to school managers; massive reduction of pupil class size; and improvement of teacher conditions of service in schools.

In order to rein in lecturers' misconduct in tertiary institutions, Banja advocates for the introduction of lecturer appraisal systems by students that will keep the teaching staff in check so that "students can indicate whether they found the lecturer to be enthusiastic and stimulating, whether material has been clearly presented and whether they were challenged by it" (64). Finally, teachers and lecturers are reminded to take responsibility for their actions, set a good example, and encourage good behaviour.

This book is an excellent must-read book, because in no uncertain terms it presents topics that are rarely or ever covered in Zambian literature on student and lecturer indiscipline in tertiary institutions. For example, lecturer indiscipline and how it can be solved in tertiary institutions is one of the topics in this book. Second, the issues presented in the book are consistent with global literature on significant effect of teacher behaviour on pupil indiscipline in secondary schools. The information contained in this book depicts a typical Zambian learning environment that needs attention.

Although there is no dearth of literature on pupil and teacher indiscipline in Africa, it is clear that most of these do not present the Zambia specific context of Banja's work or his connection across secondary and tertiary education. That is student indiscipline as it relates to the principal, teacher, and lecturers' misconduct in both secondary and tertiary institutions. The author's detailed descriptions of how lecturers relate to students allows the reader to experience the most realistic and honest vision of university life. Thus, there is no doubt that the book is unique and will fill the existing knowledge gap. Banja's book can not disappoint anyone because it makes it evident that teachers have a role to play in pupil misconduct. This is in line with findings that the involvement of dedicated teachers with appropriate professional skills in the enforcement of school rules and regulations help to guard against misbehaviour.

It is also worth noting that the book title *Teachers as Agents of Pupil Indiscipline* arouses one's curiosity as it raises a red flag that teachers are not setting a good example for pupils. This title provokes the reader to examine the role of the teacher in the school. This book also draws attention to the deteriorating standards in the education sector which to some extent are caused by both teachers' and head teachers' misconduct.

Although the findings presented in the book were based on qualitative analysis, the author could pay more attention to the quantitative analysis. Specifically, there is a need to validate the internal consistency of the self-administered questionnaire used in this study to assess its reliability for application to Zambian secondary schools.

The argument advanced in the book that “whatever misbehaviour pupils may bring from home is reinforced and supported by the school itself through its teachers and head teacher” (48). This statement is not applicable to all teachers because for most teachers, it is their goal to make pupils perform better. This goal is supported by the fact that sometimes teachers’ promotions and appointments are determined by the academic excellence of their pupils, so why should they support pupil indiscipline?

Although the book was published by a renowned, credible and experienced publisher and the price is affordable to the least paid teacher, the book is not attractive to the reader. The publisher needs to add a picture to the cover and pictures to the text to break the narrative’s monotony.

It is evident that the merits prevail over the demerits of the book making it relevant and resourceful to most readers. Banja argues that in order to profit from the school as a social entity, the school should be free from pupil and teacher indiscipline. It is well known by society that a school is a formal organisation of instruction where people learn about the customs, attitudes, and ways to improve in the society. As stakeholders, teachers and pupils should work together towards creating a favourable teaching and learning environment.

The quality of Banja’s work presented in this book definitely compels one to put it among their “must read” books. The book is handy not only to the field of Sociology of Education but also to other disciplines, especially Teacher Education program’s classroom management courses. Another unique quality of the book is that it provides valuable information on how lecturers’ should relate to their students in tertiary institutions.

Banja emphasizes that “this book might be of great importance to teachers, head teachers, policy makers and other stakeholders in education who value a favourable learning environment” (14). The book appeals to other potential readers like parents and community members due to its relevant topics and easy readability.

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