

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the study

“Education refers to the social institution through which society provides its members with important knowledge, including facts, skills and values”. (Macionis, 1995).

According to Plato, education is “the training in excellence from youth upwards which makes man passionately desire to be a perfect citizen and teaches him how to rule and obey justice”.

Aristotle, the renowned Greek scholar and philosopher believed that the primary purpose of education was the development of good character.

Theivananthampillai (1972) viewed education as a process that helped an individual realize his full potential to enable the individual to be of maximum use not only to him but to the society as well. He assumes that the higher the level of education that an individual attains, the closer the individual comes to helping himself and society.

The Education Review Committee of 1979 placed great emphasis on the need to build a truly Malaysian society for the future. “To that effect, it emphasizes at all levels of schooling, a holistic (intellectual, spiritual, physical and emotional) approach to quality human development to ensure development from all domains – cognitive, affective and psychomotor. This is to characterize individuals to cope with the demands of the future. (Rahimah Haji Ahmad, 1998)

The results and suggestion of the Cabinet Committee Report (1979) culminated in the formulation National Education Policy by the Ministry of Education in 1987. The policy states:

“Education in Malaysia is a continuous process towards further enhancing the potentials of individuals in a comprehensive and integrated manner in order to bring about a balanced and harmonious personality from the intellectual, spiritual, emotional and physical aspects based on the belief and obedience to God. This effort is aimed at developing Malaysian citizens who are endowed with knowledge of good character, responsible and capable of achieving personal well-being as well as contributing towards harmony, prosperity for the society and the nation.”

This policy places great emphasis on the teaching of values in order to enhance the development of individual through education as education is generally viewed as a social good. Despite this, numerous press reports on breaches of discipline by students seems to indicate the decadence of values among students. A tabloid distributed in the Klang Valley reported, “Throughout the nation, a total of 11 cases involving juvenile delinquents were recorded daily in 1993. The following year, the figure rose to 12 cases daily.” (Muslimmedia: April 1996-August 1996). A New Straits Times report, dated March 15, 1993, stated that, “in 1991, more than 126,000 students were hauled up nationwide for breaches of discipline ranging from criminal activities such as theft and gambling to vandalism and truancy.” (p.5)

In another report, it was stated that in 1993, 6,276 students committed various offences in or outside their schools, out of which 2,510 were caught for gambling, 2,939 for petty thefts and 727 for taking part in thefts. (New Straits Times, December 8, 1994, p.6)

According to statistics from the Social Welfare Department, 668 delinquent cases were recorded in Selangor in 1993 and this figure rose to 986 in 1994. In Kuala Lumpur, 698 cases were recorded in 1993 and in 1994, 668 cases.

In a study conducted in 1995 at the Henry Gurney School, Teluk Mas, Malacca, it was discovered that 501 of the 536 residents of the school were of the school-going age. (Norbani, 1995)

The former Deputy Home Minister, Datuk Seri Megat Junid Megat Ayub, stated that statistics compiled by the Home Ministry indicated that an estimated 20,000 students were involved in "dadah" abuse. (New Straits Times, March 9, 1997)

Delinquency among students as indicated by the figures above and also by various other studies, is not a new insurgent problem. This social problem, which is a major problem in society all over the world, seems to be on the rise. In a public opinion poll conducted in the United States, discipline was ranked as the biggest problem that was faced by public." (Gallup, 1980).

Diana Hinds, in an article entitled, "Please, Sir, why don't you go and get lost?", stated that all the teachers interviewed admitted that pupil behaviour at schools, in England, was getting worse and that it had worsened over the years. (July, 1998).

In Malaysia, although various quarters involved in education have acknowledged the problem of delinquency among students, nevertheless, according to Siva Subramaniam, the Secretary-General of the National Union of

Teaching Profession (NUTP), "... the public is greatly underestimating the extent and nature of crimes students today are involved in ..." (January, 1998).

1.2* Problem Statement

"... our educational philosophy is and should be based on competitive goals with responsibility and social equity. ... Therefore, although education is fast becoming competitive, we still need to provide guidelines which are imbued with the sense of responsibility and which must still be tailored to our national goals and aspirations." (YB Dato' Sri Mohamad Najib Tun Razak, 1995)

In line with the aim of producing a future generation imbued with good character, which would play a pivotal role in ensuring the continued success and progress of the nation, the educational system continues to acknowledge the importance of teaching values. This is evidenced by the Ministry's announcement that requires all institutions on higher education to include Islamic and Asian civilization in its curriculum. Despite various changes and improvement to the educational system aimed at developing well-balanced citizens, statistics seem to indicate that delinquency among students is on the rise in Malaysian schools.

According to Abdul Razak Ahmad, "... no school in Malaysia is free from discipline problems. A mere blot on a piece of clean white paper the problem of discipline may be, but the very nature of the blot threatens to spoil the picture." (STAR, January, 1998).

"When children are remonstrated with by staff, they answer back and argue with you, taking it as a personal criticism. When the teacher becomes more

forceful, they become abusive and walk out of the classroom. If the teacher tries to intervene, they become violent.” (Roger Kirk, 1998)

These and many other delinquent behaviour, which is widespread in schools as well as in institutions of higher learning, is being constantly highlighted by the media in recent times. The upsurge in media reports and public outcry on the alarming increase in delinquency among students mooted the researcher to examine the occurrence of this social problem at an institution of higher learning in Kuala Lumpur.

Corollary to this is the role of the school administrators in ensuring effective educational process by allaying the sources of disruption. According to Lewis, Bookbinder and Bower (1972), education today is beset with many ills. As such, “general building discipline is and should be the prime responsibility of the building principal. This includes problems in which there is general concurrence in non- conformity...”

Blandford (1998) stated that, “school leaders should reflect on what they do and this affects discipline in their school. A headteacher should have sufficient management skill to support his or her staff and pupils in maintaining acceptable levels of discipline and behaviour.

As various studies have shown that schools have an effect on student behaviour, this study attempts to examine, from an administrator’s viewpoint, the extent of the problem and to identify the role of the institution in generating such behaviour in its students.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on what this study attempts to examine and identify, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the common delinquent acts committed by the students?
2. What is the regularity and seriousness of these occurrences?
3. What are the causes of delinquency among the students?
4. What have the school authorities done to reduce and offset delinquency among the students?

1.4 Significance of the Study

Although the educational development in this country has undergone various reforms, nevertheless, delinquency continues to plague educational institutions, with the institution in question being no exception. Since the inception of this institution and with the increase in delinquent acts among students generally, no studies have been carried out to determine existence and extent of this social phenomenon in this institution. This study therefore aims to ascertain the extent of delinquency and the factors that contributed to its existence. This is because, as stated by Lawrence, Steed and Young (1984, p.11):

“... in many urban schools there are appreciable numbers of problem children sometimes unrecognised, sometimes unacknowledged, because of ... inability of teachers to label them as disturbed, or simply because diagnosis is futile ... Schools do have a duty of care for all their members both pupils and teachers ... Schools need to consider carefully what sort of support system to establish and the relationship of this system to teaching groups, remedial assistance, pastoral care and punishment systems.”

The researcher, being a staff at this institution, has been aware of a few instances of delinquents acts committed in the past. Although the occurrences of this acts were very minimal nevertheless, as stated by Sullivan, “deviance can act as a warning signal that there is a serious inconsistency or defect” and it was further stated that such occurrences may suggest that “the structure has failed to provide meaningful or satisfying positions for some ...” (p.134). The researcher hopes the findings of this study would help the school authorities to nip the problem in its bud. This is in line with the view of the Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline (1982):

“Discipline is learned and can be taught – indeed, must be taught. One principal goal of education is to teach discipline. ... The challenge for educators... is to help children develop the skills of responsible behaviour by creating an environment in which children may acquire these skills.”

1.5 Limitations of the Study

Survey techniques are used to study major social issues, such as delinquency, where a set of questions, would normally be administered to a large number of population in order to gather responses. One of the limitations of this study is that only a fraction of the student population at the institution were involved in this study and from this, a number of the sample were randomly chosen from the classes that are currently in-house at the institution. As such the findings of this study, especially in relation to the types of delinquent acts and their causes, may be somewhat incomplete.

Another limitation is the context of the study itself. “Delinquency”, which is generally recognised as a law-violating behaviour, varies from society to society. In this study, the researcher was only concerned with certain types of delinquent acts.

The limited duration of this study is another limitation.

1.6 Definition of Terms

1.6.1: Delinquency

“Delinquency”, has been defined in the Oxford Students’ Dictionary of Current English, as “wrong-doing”. (A S Hornby, 1979). According to Therese L. Baker, delinquency is the committing of actions that are illegal. The New York State Children’s Court Act, Article I, Section 2 subsection 2 defines delinquent acts as:

“... children who are “incorrigible, ungovernable or habitually disobedient”, those who are “habitually truant”, who desert their homes or places of abode without consent of parents or guardians, who associate “with moral or vicious persons”, frequent places “the existence of which is a violation of the law”, habitually use obscene language ...”

According to Gibbons (1981), “ ... delinquency takes a variety of form; ... Delinquent behaviour varies in frequency, duration and seriousness, and sometimes involves different forms of specialization” (p.8)

“A specific behaviour may be regarded delinquent in one society while it may not be so regarded in another. In the various American states, for example, a wide variety of behaviours are considered delinquent. Some examples are:

violation of any law; immoral or indecent conduct; engaging in illegal occupation; knowingly associating with immoral persons;... Wandering in streets at night, not on lawful business; habitually remaining absent from school; ... smoking cigarettes around public places; ...” .

For the purpose of this study, the researcher has decided to confine the definition of delinquency to behaviour such as ebullience, latent aggression, boisterousness, disruptive behaviour, aggressive reaction to criticism, truancy and “lepak” (loafing) culture (i.e. loitering or wandering aimlessly in public places).

1.6.2 : Private Institution of Higher Learning

The institution selected for this study is Taylor’s College: School of Hotel Management, which is situated in Taman Miharja, Cheras, Kuala Lumpur. The student population at this institution is approximately 450. The researcher is a member of the academic staff at the institution.

1.6.3: Disruptive Behaviour

Lawrence, Steed and Young (1984) stated “Disruptive behaviour may refer to the occasional or persistent behaviour of individuals, groups or whole classes, and very rarely, to the behaviour typical of large numbers of children in a “difficult” school.”

Lee (1992) stated “disruptive behaviour in school is ... different types of behaviour which are perceived as inappropriate”.

1.6.4: Truancy

For the purpose of this study, truancy can be defined as an act of staying away from school without permission and also without any valid and acceptable reasons.