

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Delinquency, a persistent universal problem has evoked widespread concern not only among educationists and sociologists but the general public as well.

“... Delinquency is neither an inborn disposition nor something the child has contrived by himself; ... (Cohen, 1955 p.11) Delinquency, ... is not an expression or contrivance of a particular kind of personality; it may be imposed upon any kind of personality if circumstances favor intimate association with delinquent models.” (p.14)

2.1 Causes of Delinquency: Western Context

“What are the causes of deviance and delinquency? The citizen’s answer usually centres around biological defects, inadequacies of family life or similar forces thought to be unique to deviant persons. The particular factor or factors that are singled out as responsible for juvenile misconduct vary from person to person, but most fall within what Cohen has called the “evil causes evil” fallacy.” (Gibbons, 1981, p.2)

According to the psychogenic theories on delinquency, personality problem is presumed to result in juvenile misbehaviour. August Aichborn asserted, “There must be something in the child himself which the environment brings out in the form of delinquency.” (1955). This theory also assumes that the environment is also a precipitating force which leads to delinquent behaviour.

Psychogenic theorists also content that personality problem also causes delinquent behaviour.

The strain theory asserts that all human beings desire to conform and obey rules of society, and that delinquency is the result of an individual's inability to adjust to such rules and norms. Robert K. Merton (1957) stated that certain inconsistencies and contradictions of a society generate deviant behaviour. Everyone in a society was urged to pursue certain goals but approved means of achieving the goals were not provided. The strain that results from this pursuit prompts deviance -- pursuing the goals through disapproved means.

According to Travis Hirschi (1969), those who break the law are usually motivated by their inability to fit into normal, cohesive order. They are "discontent", frustrated and deprived". (p.6)

The social control theory posits that delinquent acts are committed when ties to the conventional order are broken. Emile Durkheim associated the weakening of social bonds in industrial societies to the weaker ties to family, community and church. Strong bonds to the family or church restrained people from engaging in socially disapproved activities. According to Durkheim, "deviance is one of the costs that we must pay to live in the type of society we do." (Sullivan).

Hirschi explored the attachment of youth to parents, school and peers in the Richmond Youth Project (1969) and reported, "that the closer the child's relations with his parents, the more he is attached to and identifies with them, the lower his chances of delinquency." (p 94).

According to Toby (1967), in traditional societies, youths were members of a large, extended kinship groups; however, in developing countries, due to the increased gulf between parents and their offspring, parents do not have control over their adolescent offspring thus, resulting in these youths' involvement in delinquent acts.

2.2 Causes of Delinquency: Malaysian Context

One of the main causes of delinquency, as cited by various quarters in Malaysia, is lack of parental control. The economic boom resulted in a rat race among parents to increase wealth for the benefit of the family. The inevitable result of this materialistic eagerness was the loosening of family bonds. According to Vijayakumari Pillai, Petaling Juvenile Welfare Committee secretary, "the reasons for teenagers' waywardness are common, one of them is parents who spend too much time making ends meet." (Sunday STAR, February, 1999)

In a research commissioned by the Ministry of Education, it was reported that a school principle stated neglect as an important reason for the rise in juvenile crime. "Parents are too busy nowadays, which makes it harder for them to pay attention to their children. Neglect plays a big part in the manifestation of negative traits in a child's behaviour." (Norbani, 1995)

According to Professor Suraidi Salim, "children who do not get adequate guidance, attention and love from their family tend to succumb easily to social ills ..."

“The parents were less concerned with their children’s education and relied on the school. They did not discipline their children nor helped them solve their learning problems. As a result, the subjects had difficulty in obeying the school rules.” (Marinal, 1998)

Another cause of delinquency is the heavy examination-oriented school system and its emphasis on academic achievement. “A curriculum that stresses on academic performance and excellence in examinations are major contributions to the frustration of intellectual ability pupils. Status deprivation would lead to the formation of groups who, finding themselves in a low status position, develop a certain subculture that goes against the very value propagated by the school.” This view is in tandem with Hirschi’s research on causes of delinquency, which found that lower academic aptitude was related to delinquency.

2.3 School System as a Cause of Delinquency

There are evidence from studies conducted in the West that schools do affect behaviour of the pupils within the school (Hargaveas, 1967; Rutter et al., 1979; Galloway and Goodwin 1987; Reynolds and Cuttance, 1992).

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In the Richmond Youth Project which explored the relationship between delinquency and attachment to school, it was observed that, delinquency resulted due to a general dislike of the school and also because of the belief that the school did not have the right to supervise behaviour. It was found that, the more attached a student to the school, its environment and norms, the less likely he was to be delinquent. (Hirschi, 1969)

Schafer and Polk (1967) posit that “school promotes delinquency when it offers irrelevant curriculum, reinforces the student’s tendencies towards failure and relies on inappropriate teaching methods. Too few of the school courses are designed for those not academically inclined ... It is not surprising to find that many potential delinquent displays an unmistakable dislike for the school ... The school’s contribution ... lies primarily in its presenting difficult tasks to the already troubled youths ...”

According to William Glasser (1969), “very few children come to school labelled failures. It is the school and school alone, which pins the label of failures on children. In school they expect to achieve recognition, they hope to gain love and respect of their teachers and classmates. The shattering of their optimistic outlook is the most serious problem of the school.”

In an article concerning school and discipline, Marimuthu (1981) stated his concern about school being the generator of disciplinary problems. He further stated that the internal organization of schools, high exam-orientation, reward and punishment system and teachers’ attitudes and expectations led to disciplinary problems especially among those who were academically weak.

Frude and Gault (1984) reported that various reports on incidents of school-based behavioural problems “indicated some weakness in the school organization, sometimes relating to the use of buildings, sometimes in the curriculum, or timetable and sometimes in the teaching or pastoral context.”
(p.36)

The above views are supported by the findings of a study conducted by Loke (1981). One of the main findings of the study was that :-

“Most delinquents had negative perceptions of certain aspects of school as compared to the more positive perceptions of the non-delinquents. Thus, to the delinquents,

- a. school lessons were generally thought to be not challenging and not interesting.
- b. Teachers were perceived to be not competent and not able to explain well the lessons they conducted.
- c. The social environment of the school was considered to be not conducive to their general social adjustment."

In a study by Wong, "School Ecology and its Contribution towards Students' Indiscipline" (1993), it was revealed "that a number of undesirable behaviour was predisposed by factors in the school environment. ... the main components being the quality of the teachers, the curriculum and the control."

Continuous neglect by the school authority to address learning problems encountered by its students also contributed to the commission of delinquent acts, as illustrated in a case study of four boys by Marinal (1998).

2.4 Delinquency and the Role of School Administrators

“Discipline is seen as an integral part of the educative process, inseparable from curriculum and guidance.” As such, a school with an ineffective disciplinary policy will not be able to function as an effective centre for teaching and learning.

According to the Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline (1982), “poor discipline is the inevitable result in schools where there is an atmosphere that demoralizes teachers, depersonalizes students and stultifies enthusiasm.” The Committee further stated that in schools where teachers and principals “set high expectations and help students to achieve them ..., the students know what they are there to do, and they have a sense that it is important.” (1982).

Parenthetic to this, developing a good school climate is the challenging responsibility of educational administrators. This is because:

“A positive school climate is both a means and an end. A good climate makes it possible to work productively toward important goals, such as academic learning, social development and curriculum improvement.”(Fox et.al; 1973).

Further, it was stated that, “if schools perpetuate an anti-humane climate in which apathy, failure, punishment and inadequate success in achieving the curriculum are characteristics, they may guarantee their own demise...”(1973)

“Today school administrators at every level – elementary, high school and college – bear heavy burdens and face many challenges. There is a renewed demand not only for quality education but also quality education for increased

numbers of students who are more diverse in their abilities and interests than students of previous generations.” (Lewis, Bookbinder, Bauer, 1972).

Numerous studies on the relationship between school and delinquency have indicated school as an important factor in delinquency. According to Philipson (1971), the low image of teachers and low institutional pride among students had negative impact on student discipline. Schools with high staff turnover and absenteeism rates gave rise to delinquent behaviour.

School administrators therefore have to develop a humane school climate for teaching and learning which would eventually make it possible to achieve the institutions’ goal. Studies in the West have shown that “what schools offer and how they offer it helps determine whether pupils respond in desirable ways, and the reasons for pupils misbehaviour may have as much (if not more) to do with their experiences at school...” (Charlton and David, 1993)

Successful schools are managed not only by successful teachers but also by good administrators (or managers). “A manager in education is, in practice, a teacher, a leader and a team member. Discipline is a fundamental aspect of the daily lives of pupils, teachers and members of the school community and, as such, it requires clarity of understanding, consistency of practice and sound leadership based on shared beliefs and values. (Blandford, 1998). Therefore, “effective management of the school community is central to the roles and responsibilities of senior management teams and headteachers.” (Blandford, 1998). This is because, “all teachers and managers have a responsibility to pupils to develop their self-

esteem and self-confidence and to give them the opportunity to learn.” (Blandford, 1998).

The Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline (1982) described the school principal as the key person who has a great impact on the discipline climate of a school. According to the Commission:

“When the impact is positive, and the mix is right, and the school seems to be excellent, the principal’s influence is usually the determining factor.” (1982)

However the Commission admitted that, “no one person alone can make a good school” as the staff too have to co-operate to make the school a well-disciplined school. “A strong principal with a dedicated and energetic staff share in making decisions on what is good for students.” (Phi Delta Kappa Commission on Discipline, 1982).

The besetting challenges faced by school administrators today was aptly described by Lewis, Bookbinder and Bauer (1972) as:

“It is very much to the administrator’s benefit if he is able to contain any problem so that there is no significant interference or disruption of the educational process.”

Sidhhu (1999) described the challenging responsibility of a school head as follows:

“For quality education to become a reality, it must begin with dynamic leadership.

If you want your children to do well all round (mentally, emotionally, socially, physically and spiritually), acquire meaningful knowledge and master new skills, leave it to a good school head.

It is he who should have it in him to set the purpose, direction and values of the school and personnel he leads. It is he who has to answer for the progress children and teachers make or do not make in the field of

education. It is he who has to be focussed on providing a good education and he who should be able to inspire others to be equally focused on the same goal.” (SUNDAY STAR, April 25, 1999).

The pivotal importance of a school administrator’s personality and aptitude in ensuring quality education can also be seen from the view of principalship, as stated by the United States Senate Select Committee:

“In many ways the school principal is the most important and influential individual in any school. He is the person responsible for all the activities that occur in and around the school building. It is his leadership that sets the tone of the school, the climate for learning, the level of professionalism and morale of the teachers and the degree of concern for what students may or may not become. ... If a school is vibrant, innovative, child-centred place, if it has a reputation for excellence in teaching, if students are performing to the best of their ability, one can almost point to the principal’s leadership as the key to success.” (1971)

In conclusion, it can be summarised that “a school administrator occupies a unique and delicate position among leaders.” (Lewis, Bookbinder, Bauer, 1972). Being responsible for discipline, the school administrator must ensure that the disciplinary methods devised are realistic and effective in furthering educational goals.

“Teaching and leadership of teachers is a demanding job, for families are producing pupils who are lively, less disciplined and more difficult to motivate. Good headteachers eventually produce good school, ...” (David, 1993).