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PROBLEM PUPILS

1. FRIDAY

Introduction

Although the names of the persons in this case have been changed and the location can only be described as a 'rural secondary school in an African country', the events as described are based on an actual happening.

Facts of the Case

Friday Chisano was a Form III pupil and a self taught repairer of radios and other electrical appliances. One afternoon, Friday was given permission by his expatriate teacher, Mr Thomas, to absent himself from class so that he could go and repair the teacher's radio. The boy obliged and went to the teacher's house, collected the radio, cassettes and some handtools. He carried the radio to his workshop in his father's house.

A week later, Friday returned the radio to his teacher. Mr Thomas was pleased when he saw that the radio was in working condition, but less happy when he discovered that some handtools and tapes were missing from the house. He suspected Friday Chisano to have taken them.

Mr. Thomas and his house servant decided to conduct a house search at Mr Chisano's home and while there he is alleged to have abused Mrs Chisano and broken some household items. When Friday went home and found Mr Thomas at his father's house he was very angry. The two people exchanged very unpleasant words which almost resulted in a fight. Mr Thomas left and later returned with two policemen and a teacher. This time Mr Thomas managed to retrieve a few items including his servant's radio which Friday was repairing.

Friday and his parents decided to summon his teacher Mr Thomas to court. They complained that Mr Thomas had abused their family by calling Friday a thief and conducting a house search without a warrant.

The acting headmaster, Mr Jackman, summoned Friday to his office and ordered the boy to withdraw the case against his teacher or face suspension from school if the court found the accusations against Mr Thomas baseless. When the Chisanos decided to go ahead with the court proceedings the local Magistrate threw the case out and ruled that Mr Thomas had no case to answer.

On 22nd June 1979 the acting headmaster suspended Friday Chisano from school and recommended to the Chief Education Officer of the region that the boy be expelled from school permanently. In his letter of suspension the Acting Headmaster charged that Friday Chisano was being suspended from school because:

1. The boy was a truant and his record of attendance was poor.
2. For going to law against a teacher without trying to get his grievances redressed through proper channels thereby setting a bad precedent. The headmaster feared that if a number of pupils followed Friday's example, the discipline of the school would be undermined.

The Chief Education Officer for the region agreed with the headmaster and decided that Friday Chisano be permanently expelled from school. Mr Chisano, Friday's father, was not happy with the decision. He therefore appealed to the Minister of Education and Culture against the decision. He asked the Minister to reinstate his son.

Discussion

Consider the following points:

1. Was Friday Chisano suspended and ultimately expelled from school because he summoned his teacher Mr Thomas to court or because he stole some items from Mr Thomas' house?
2. Were the mitigating circumstances strong enough to suggest that Friday deserved more lenient treatment?
3. Is it fair to say the pupil was truant when in fact the teacher asked him to be absent from class in order to attend to the teacher's private assignments.
4. Mr Thomas did not report to the headmaster or police that items were missing from his house; he decided to search Mr Chisano's home, which is a serious offence in itself. The Magistrate found Mr Thomas innocent. But as an education officer, would you reprimand the teacher for unseemly behaviour. His action could have caused a racial confrontation between Mr Chisano's family and himself.
5. If you were asked to process Mr Chisano's appeal, would you reinstate the boy or support the Chief Education Officer's decision to expel the boy from school permanently?

2. CLEM BROWN - THE CLASS PEST

Miss May teaches a bright class of eleven and twelve-year olds and the class is run on a democratic basis whereby the pupils in their class meetings decide various issues concerning class management and disciplinary measures.

On the whole, the class is very well behaved but one boy tends to make a continuous nuisance of himself. Clem Brown is always pestering the other pupils, appears restless most times and annoys Miss May considerably at times. He has become so intolerable that he is now made to sit by himself in front of the room by the teacher's desk. Clem is the only boy in a family of four, and was brought up by an uncle but is at the moment back with his parents.

On this particular day the class held a meeting, Miss May was not present but at the meeting the pupils decided that anyone who misbehaved in the absence of their teacher would be severely punished. The form of punishment they agreed upon was that the class would line up in two lines and as the culprit walked down between the two lines, each pupil would give him a slap, a bang or a knock.

As the days went by, Miss May continued to be with her class but one day she was called to take one of the pupils to hospital. The class was now left to the care of the class captain. Young Clem seized his opportunity to get up to his usual tricks and started to create a lot of disturbance in the class. The class captain, being reminded by the secretary about the decision made in the class meeting for pupils who misbehaved in the absence of their teacher, decided to punish Clem in accordance with what the class had agreed upon.

The class lined up in two files and Clem was asked to walk through the two files. As he walked through, each pupil gave him either a knock, a bang or a slap. At first Clem took it all as one big joke but towards the end of the file, he could stand it no more and broke down sobbing very loudly. He then ran to the headmaster and reported on the incident. By the time Miss May returned from the hospital, Clem was still in the headmaster's office. As soon as Miss May saw Clem, she sensed that something was amiss.

The headmaster took Miss May to the Staff Room and related the incident which had occurred in the room during her absence. Miss May expressed disbelief in Clem's story and said that she'd have to check the minute to find out whether such an agreement had been decided upon.

On returning to the room, Miss May asked the class captain what had happened and also asked to see the minute book. The class captain told Miss May of the decision made in the class meeting and looking through the minute book, Miss May came across the decision made a few weeks back and it was written down in bold print, staring her right in the face.

She stood there a while wondering - "Why didn't I keep a constant check on the minute book?"

In the meantime the headteacher went back to his office, looked at Clem and asked himself - "What am I to do about this boy? And about Miss May?"

3. RULE NO 10

STUDENTS MUST NOT EAT ON THE STREETS, IN BUSES OR OTHER PUBLIC PLACES WHEN WEARING THE SCHOOL UNIFORM

Susan a 4th former, generally well-behaved but not renowned for her brightness, is seen in the bus stand at about 4.30 on Tuesday afternoon by a teacher. Susan, in her school uniform, is eating a hamburger, which the teacher orders her to throw in the nearby garbage bin. Susan explains that she had been delayed in town running an errand for her mother; she was very hungry and would not reach home until late as she had to travel a long journey. The teacher insists and threatens to report her to the head for disobedience, as well as for breaking the school rules. Susan, feeling angry at what she termed the teacher's 'unreasonableness', says, "I bought this hamburger with my pocket money. Furthermore, people all over the world are suffering from want of food, and it is not right to throw away food," and stamps away to her bus which had just arrived.

Wednesday a.m.

Susan is summoned by the head to her office. Susan, on the head's invitation, recounts accurately and in detail the incident of the preceding evening. The head is sympathetic, shows Susan where she thought she was wrong and tells her that she wanted her to apologise to Miss X and that would be the end of the matter. Susan agrees to this and Miss X is summoned to the office where the head explains her action and asks Susan to apologise. Miss X is furious. She feels that Susan should be severely punished for not only breaking the rules - why do we have rules if they are not kept - but more so for her rudeness and insolence. She let her views be known there and then, and indicates to them both that that is not the end of the matter. She would deal with Susan in her own way.

Susan returns to her class but when the Maths period comes, Miss X the Maths teacher sends her out of class. She accepts this, but when it happens again the next day, she reports the matter to the head. The head speaks to Miss X and firmly tells her she must not exclude Susan from classes again. Susan is allowed to join her classes and the head satisfies herself on this by noticeably checking on the classes during Maths period.

Two weeks later the head receives the following letter:

Dear Headteacher,

I am a poor man with not much education, but I know right from wrong and I am interested in my children education. About 2 weeks ago Susan Maths teacher accost her in the bus stand about eating in the uniform and the child explain the situation. Yet she make a big fuss and although you dealt with it in a sensible way, I must say the teacher still taking it out on my child. She never ask her no questions in class, and when the child ask her to explain something she don't understand, the teacher don't even

answer at all. And to beside, the teacher never take up her book to mark her homework or any work she does in class. Susan want to do a career and she need Maths for what she want to do. I know Susan is too bright but she willing and she need help with her work. I am sending this letter to the Ministry too.

Thank you

John E.

Discussion

1. Identify and describe the problems/issues raised in the case study.
2. Using your knowledge of administrative theory, models, concepts etc, suggest some solutions.
3. Show how you would resolve the situation.

4. TIME FOR DECISION

Discussion

Read the following case study, identify the problem(s) and describe how you would seek a satisfactory resolution of the problem(s). Be sure to note the implications for the teacher and student roles.

Background

Joan was fourteen years and had just entered third form of one of the secondary schools. She lived with her mother and step-father in a newly-developed middle-class area in St Michael, in which the headteacher lived.

From the first day of school, it was apparent that she had serious emotional and adjustment problems. She seemed determined not to get along with most people, especially teachers. She, however, was admired by a small group of whom she was the natural leader. She showed displeasure and irritability toward any attempt at kindness or friendliness. Her characteristic attitude was one of sarcasm and belligerence. She had given the Physical Education teacher a rough time. For example, if he demonstrated a skill, she would swear under her breath and say out loud, "Do you expect me to do that? I might as well try to fly." She didn't seem to understand his attitude when he tried to help her, and when he tried to speak to her about her behaviour, she would turn away and say she hadn't done anything wrong, or simply reply "O.K., I heard you!" No matter what approach he tried, he didn't seem able to reach her. This belligerent attitude to the P.E. teacher was typical of her attitude to most other teachers. For example, she frequently diverted the English teacher from her planned activities to the delight of her clique. Further, she always attempted to defend the diversion even though the majority of the class were fed up with her behaviour.

She was often the topic of discussion in the staff room.

Joan, however, always managed to secure creditable marks.

Incident

One Wednesday afternoon the English teacher set some homework for the next day. Joan stated that the assignment did not make sense in relation to the topics which they were doing at present and she would not do it. An argument ensued in which she became openly disrespectful. The entire incident was reported to the headteacher, whose initial reaction was that the teachers generally had not shown enough consideration for Joan, and children in similar circumstances. She indicated that she would give a decision the following day.

5. SUSAN

Susan, a twelve year old girl, was a pupil in a co-educational institution. She often discussed her most intimate business with other children far younger than herself.

This business was soon the school's business. The headteacher, Mr Phillips, spoke to Susan repeatedly about not sharing her personal business with the public. Susan persisted. Eventually the headteacher administered corporal punishment.

The following day Susan's irate mother visited the school and would not be pacified. The headteacher was absent. Teachers made attempts to restrain her from using abusive language and threats, but to no avail.

When the headteacher arrived at the school, during the luncheon period, Susan's mother was still there. In spite of her mouthings, the headteacher invited her into the office. She refused, but threatened to "beat" the headteacher. The headteacher again invited her to his office to discuss her problem. She continued her refusals. The headteacher then politely informed her he could only speak with her if she came to the office and sat down to talk.

Some minutes later, the mother came to the office and took a seat. She accused the headteacher of whipping her daughter without cause, being brutal and of hating her family. The headteacher pointed out his reasons for administering corporal punishment and expressed some measure of joy at seeing the mother so involved in the daughter's personal affairs. He also informed the mother that it was his love for her family that caused him to use such harsh measures.

The mother then invited the daughter to the headteacher's office and listed a number of untruths which her daughter had told. The mother then apologised for her past behaviour and promised that she would assist the Headteacher in his efforts to uphold the school's rules and principles.

Discussion

1. Should corporal punishment be used in an effort to alter personal attitudes?
2. Was the headteacher justified in using corporal punishment in the case?
3. What other corrective measures can be used in such instances?
4. Should not the police have been called to restrain the mother who was using abusive language and threats on school premises?
5. What does this incident tell you about the headteacher's leadership style?

6. FIGHTING IN SCHOOL

Mr Chan, the principal of St Andrew's Primary School, noted that there had been an increase of fighting cases among the pupils in the school recently. To identify the problem, he discussed the matter with the discipline master of the school. He was then informed that the increase was mainly due to a particular pupil, Ismael Makuna, who had been involved in nearly all the fighting cases.

An investigation carried out by the form teacher revealed that Ismael's parents neglected the boy and that he was associating with a group of older trouble-makers in the apartment building where he lived.

Mr Chan considered the possibility that Ismael should be expelled on grounds of misbehaviour but he realised that this would simply transfer the problem from the school to the neighbourhood. Whatever course Mr Chan took he realised that he would need the cooperation of teachers who were already incensed by Ismael's general misbehaviour.

Discussion

What alternatives are available to this principal?

7. UNFAIR PUNISHMENT?

Amongst his mail one morning a District Education Officer found a letter written by an angry parent. The parent claimed that his son had been unfairly punished by the headteacher of his school for an offence which he had not committed. The parent had gone personally to the school to complain to the headteacher but alleged that the headteacher became angry and ordered him from the school. Because of this the parent had withdrawn his son from the school and he was no longer attending school as there was no other school in the locality.

Discussion

1. Do you think the headteacher was right to order the parent from the school?
2. Has the District Education Officer got sufficient information to take immediate action?
3. If you were the District Education Officer what action would you take?
4. Do you think the parent was right to withdraw his son from the school?

8. THE YOUNG SMOKERS

At recess, the headteacher was told by the class 9 teacher that two of his boys were found smoking and when they were told that smoking was prohibited in school, they replied that their parents had allowed them to smoke.

After school the headteacher paid a visit to the boys' home and learned that two boys were permitted to smoke by the parents.

Discussion

1. Do you think that the parents of these boys were right to permit the boys to smoke?
2. Were the boys right to smoke at school?
3. If you were headteacher of the school what steps would you take to solve the problem?

9. DRUNK BUT NOT DISORDERLY

One day two senior boys were brought to the headteacher's office because they were drunk. The head sent them home with a strongly worded letter to their parents saying that their children had broken one of the most important rules of the school, and because of this, their children were expelled from school. The parents on receiving this letter paid a visit to the DEO and complained to him that their children had been unfairly expelled. They demanded that their children be re-instated mentioning in their defence that this was the first time their children had committed this offence and that when they were drunk they didn't damage things or cause a disturbance in the school. The DEO paid a visit to the school the next day and talked with the headteacher about this. The result of this discussion was that the two boys should be expelled. However, the matter didn't end there, because the parents didn't feel satisfied with this decision, so as their next step they approached the President of the Island Council. This man, on learning of this incident, immediately promised the parents his full support. On hearing this, the headteacher was naturally worried and felt insecure in his position.

Discussion

1. Had the headteacher the right to expel the two boys?
2. Would you have taken this action if you had been the headteacher?
3. Should the headteacher have consulted anyone else before expelling the two boys from school?
4. Was the action of the District Education Officer in order?
5. Do you think the President of the Island Council was right to offer his support to the parents?
6. Has the President of the Island Council any authority in such a case?

10. A QUESTION OF ETHICS

Stella Lamont, a retired principal, was delighted to meet her former pupil, Melanie Nicolas, and to learn that she had become a teacher. It was not long before Melanie was confiding her story to her former mentor.

"I am working in a Secondary School in Rose Hill with girls of Form 1. Most of the pupils come from rural areas - from families with a low income. Many of them are often ill-fed, ill-clothed and ill-informed about the little troubles awaiting adolescents.

"Classrooms are generally over-crowded, dark and uncomfortable. Discipline in the eyes of the administration means only wearing the uniform, paying the school fees before a certain date and keeping silent. So the teacher is left on his own to tackle the various problems arising in the classroom. Apart from those inherent to instruction, I have to deal with problems of untidiness, bad manners, ill-health, dishonesty, lack of text-books and so on.

"I could not settle down to real work before the second term. The first one was devoted mainly to getting the pupils 'run in'. I usually divided the class into 4 groups of 10. The group leaders were given certain responsibilities checking and collecting copy-books, fetching text-books from other forms and distributing them and keeping the class quiet between classes. They proved very helpful.

"I had a very tough trouble-maker. She was of the restless and noisy sort: talkative, lazy and rough. She was labelled as hopeless and some teachers even threw her out of the class as soon as they got her in - a decision that suited our trouble-maker as she could then roam about.

"I placed her in the front row where I could keep a close watch on her. I checked her work every day, and had her re-write any careless work, then I gave her some responsibilities. Fetching text-books and cleaning the blackboard occupied her as well as provided me with a breathing space. By the middle of the second term, she was doing her homework almost regularly, was more or less quiet and had stopped trying to bribe me with fruits and flowers from her garden, but I still could not leave her out of my sight.

"One day after recess, I found the class in a turmoil. Even after silence had been restored, I could feel something was wrong. As soon as I had my head bent, I heard a shout. My trouble-maker was in the middle of the classroom, crying. She had been hit by a girl who still had a ruler in her hand. I summoned both girls to my desk and questioned them. At first I obtained no answer then the other girl said: 'Teacher, she is saying that my mother goes out with a Chinese. That's a lie.' I was shocked. I ordered my trouble maker out of the class and later took her to the principal who threatened to call her parents. The threat was never carried out.

"The next day she came in the classroom. I was still upset and ignored her. From that day onwards she refused to do any home-work. She pretended to follow the class and kept silent, though. I once tried to renew our relationship but soon gave up. By that time we were getting ready for the mid-year exams and then came the holidays.

"Months later I talked to one of her few friends. 'You know teacher, children blamed her for things she never did. She is not a bad kid.' I did not know what to say. That conversation made me uneasy, and I have been left with a deep feeling of guilt."

Stella was concerned for the welfare of Melanie. Clearly the school principal had not been very helpful in the matter.

Discussion

1. Was it ethical to advise a staff member of another principal?
2. Should she insist that now she was retired it was no longer her concern?
3. Would she be regarded as a busybody if she approached the principal?
4. Was her former responsibility for Melanie now at an end?
5. If not, what counsel should Stella offer?

11. PROVOCATIVE BEHAVIOUR

Mr Tan has been principal of his present school for seven years now. Life in his school has been peaceful enough, and hitherto, he has not met with any situation which has made him doubtful about the appropriate action to take. He is known for his ability to solve problems and above all he prides himself as a reformer.

Miss Lee is a teacher in Mr Tan's school. She is an experienced and competent teacher who has devoted much of her time to the growth and improvement of the pupils under her charge. She is respected by her pupils and gets along handsomely with them. Like many good and capable teachers, she has successfully handled numerous disciplinary cases.

Kwee Chai, a secondary 3 boy in Mr Tan's school, is a tough, rude and arrogant character. Somehow his two previous form teachers have managed to ignore him and thus Kwee Chai has been able to behave as he pleases in school. He has done no work in school and he still does not do his work in the class where Miss Lee is currently the form teacher. Dutifully, Miss Lee has tried very hard to help him; but unfortunately, her efforts have been to no avail. Instead of responding positively to her attempts to help, he openly threatens to bring to bear the influence of one of his relatives who is a political figure.

One day, during an art lesson, Kwee Chai chooses to eat his favourite variety of preserved fruit in the class while his class-mates are busy painting. The still life models for his friend's painting are some fresh cucumbers, tomatoes and the like. Suddenly, Kwee Chai picks up a cucumber in front of him and without hesitation hurls it at Miss Lee who is then giving another boy some hints on the proper technique of painting. The vegetable projectile finds its mark and lands squarely on the chest of a very shocked Miss Lee. Feeling very upset, she finally brings the matter to the attention of Mr Tan.

On seeing Kwee Chai, Mr Tan quickly recalls to mind the two warnings he has personally given to the boy. Kwee Chai Senior must be politely invited to come to school immediately. Soon enough, a very agitated K C Sr appears and unmistakably assists Mr Tan to convince himself that the son is just a tiny chip off the proverbial block!

Discussion

What will Mr Tan do next?

12. A COMPLAINT

Mrs Tay is a principal in a primary school. She is diligent and interested in the welfare of both her teachers and pupils.

Mary Wee, a pupil in this school, has been irregular in her attendance at Brownie meetings. Recently her Brownie Mistress did not include her name in a forthcoming excursion as a form of punishment. By doing so she hoped Mary's attendance at meetings would improve. There were also four other Brownies who were disciplined in this way. (In Singapore Brownie packs are organised as part of the extra curricular activities of the school).

However, only Mary complained to her mother about this and Mary's mother, who was a member of the school's Advisory Committee insisted to Mrs Tay that Mary be included in the excursion. The principal advised the mother that her daughter should accept discipline. The mother, not being satisfied, wrote a letter of complaint to the Director of Education. Although the principal feels that a big issue has been made out of a small incident she is now obliged to take further action.

13. NEGLECTED CHILD

Sereima's father is an influential executive. The family lives in a large, modern newly-built home. Sereima invariably comes to school late. She is untidy, dirty, frequently has broken sandals and her uniform generally misses buttons, hooks, a belt etc and is torn. She is rude and discourteous to the staff members.

Her principal finds it difficult to make contact with her parents and to obtain satisfaction and co-operation when he does. They fail to answer requests to visit the school to discuss the matter.

The situation deteriorates.

Discussion

What action should the principal take?

14. ANA

Ana's home is on a distant island to which there is an irregular and infrequent shipping service. She is attending boarding school in Viti Levu and is sitting Fiji Junior in seven subjects. Her last paper (Fijian) is on the last day of the examination of the last day of the school term. The boat to her island taking children home for the holidays leaves the day before. It is possible there will not be another boat before Christmas. Her parents at home, unaware of the situation, have for the first time, booked and paid her passage for this trip. In the past the money has come too late for her to get a passage.

Ana herself has been suspended during the year for misbehaviour and the principal feels that if she stays for the exam and goes to relatives to wait for the next boat she may not go on it.

Discussion

Should the principal put her on the boat or keep her at school for the exam?