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Assessing Discipline Handling and Grievance Management Procedure in Educational Service in Ghana

Lydia Sylvia Danku¹, Adokou Faustin Apelety², Johnson Aboagye³, Cletus Benyebaar⁴

^{1,2}Department of Secretaryship and Management Studies ho Polytechnic, p.o. box hp 217, Ghana, ³Registrar’s Department, ho Polytechnic, p.o. box hp 217, Ghana, ⁴Ghana Education Service, ho.

Corresponding Author Email: kotowaa@yahoo.com

Abstract

Discipline and grievance management is part of organizational management. This study was carried out to assess the knowledge level of educational service employees concerning discipline and grievance handling procedure. Questionnaires were adminis. 耳. 灿Ō82□82□8282□82□8282□82□82璿豔.Ūᄁᄁ晉82阁`瘡Ū癩Āᄁ癩Ū嚆

ᄁ 鐮\$琊82`ᄁ08282y828282y828282y8282ᄁ828282y8282ᄁ=ᄁᄁ헬ᄁ헬ᄁ The result indicated that conflict of interest and disobedience are the main forms of indiscipline among the educational service workers sampled. The result further indicated that educational workers had adequate knowledge about the disciplinary actions stipulated in the educational service statutes for corresponding offences. In addition, there is a grievance handling procedure which all the workers are aware of and management team members followed this procedure in addressing employee’s grievances brought before them. The study revealed that this procedure is every effective and management attached seriousness to decisions emanating from it. Hence employees also have some level of trust in the grievance procedure in the educational service. The study concludes that seminars should be organize for management team members to beef up their capacity in grievance management and grievances handling should be introduce at colleges to equip the trainees.

Keywords: Discipline, Grievance Handling, Management, Educational Service, Ghana

Introduction

Discipline and grievance management has become a concern for each and every one. People talk about it in cars, offices, churches and institutions. According to some explanations, discipline is viewed from three basic perspectives being training that corrects, moulds, strengthens, or

perfects. The second and third perspectives are control gained by enforcing obedience and punishment or chastisement respectively (Bingham, 2004). In organizations, discipline is a procedure that correct or punishes an employee because a rule or procedure has been violated (Dessler, 2001). Therefore, within an organization, discipline must be viewed as a condition whereby employees know what is expected of them in terms of organization's rules, standards and policies and what the consequences are of infractions (Rue & Byars, 1996). Various organizations have their own set of disciplinary actions. This is because of the diversification of the employees' traits and characteristics in relation to the organization's ethics. Sometimes, these violations lead to accidents, loss of important documents and finances in organizations. Because organizations are made up of people, there are chances that there will be collision and clash of ideas which might turn into arguments which may result in violations of the organization's rules (Bemmels and Foley, 1996). Violation of organization's rules, standards and policies comes in different ways which leads to disciplinary action against the victim(s). This is because disciplinary actions or procedures ensure that organization's standards of conduct and performance at work are followed. They also provide a fair and humane method of dealing with workers who fail to meet these standards.

In order to maintain harmony in organizations, management of organizations normally has grievance procedure for handling different faces of issues to protect the life and the employees' relationship. Grievance handling is a key component in organization management. This is because grievance procedures are means for employees to raise concerns about management practices or decisions and have these investigated and resolved (Hardman, 2004). In every organization, employees are important so managers try to minimize any conflicts and other problems that arise within the workplace, by handling them using laid down procedure (ACAS, 2011). Grievances which are not handled at all or improperly handled have a profoundly influence on motivation, morale, industrial peace and productivity in the organization. Thus it is normally tackled with seriousness.

Reports show that discipline and grievances handling have been well studied in developed countries. However, in developing countries such as Ghana, there is little or no documentation concerning organization's discipline and grievance management. There are different organizations both in the informal and formal sectors in Ghana that have little or no documentation concerning discipline and grievance management. The formal sector comprised of mostly government institutions. One key organization is the educational sector which has a lot of workers. The core objectives of the educational service is to providing quality education to the citizens of Ghana, good infrastructure, available teaching and learning materials and good remuneration for their employees. Discipline and grievance management in the educational services has been well documented. However, it has been observed that majority of the employees in the educational service are not aware of the procedures in handling discipline and grievances. This study was therefore carried out to assess the knowledge level of educational service employees concerning discipline and grievance handling procedure.

Methodology

Population and Sampling

The population of the study comprised of all educational service workers in the study area. It was made of people at different ranks and departments in the educational service. Out of an estimated population of about 1200 educational workers, 540 was the sample size. The data collection instrument was pre-tested in different educational organizations with similar settings as the samples. This was done to correct any ambiguous questions and determine the duration for filling the questionnaires. Questionnaires were randomly administered to the workers who participated in the study by the researchers and their trained assistants. The questions were both closed and open ones and focused on issues of discipline and grievance management in the educational service.

Data Analysis

The data was edited, coded and entered into Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) version 16 software for analysis. The data was categorized and tabulated according to the concepts in order to address the purpose of the study. Pie and bar charts were also used for result representation.

Results and Discussions

Biodata of Respondents

Out of the 540 questionnaires administered, all were retrieved given a returned rate of 100% of which most respondents were males (51%). Majority of the respondents also belongs to the 31-40 years age bracket (Table1). This age group constitute the active workforce age of Ghana, where workers output is usually very high. Furthermore, most of the respondents (63.9%) were married people and “fully responsible” which could add a strong advantage to the quality of the results obtained. The assumption is that because of their marital status, they may encounter some form of conflicts and complaints (grievances), the ways these grievances were handled could add to the quality of their responses. In addition, respondents had different working experiences with most of them (29.9%) in the educational service for over 20 years (Table 1). Because of several working experiences most respondents had in the educational service, their knowledge in discipline and grievance handling would contribute significantly to the study. The result further shows that the respondents were from various ranks within the educational service with most of them being in the managerial ranks of Assistant Director (32%) and Principal Superintendent (42.3%). These categories of people are mostly the ones who are responsible for handling discipline and grievances in their various departments.

Table 1: *Biodata of respondents*

Biodata	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	275	51
Female	265	49
Age (years)		
20-30	22	4.1
31-40	228	42.3
41-50	195	36.1
Above 50	94	17.5
Marital status		
Married	345	63.9
Divorced	100	18.6
Single	78	14.4
Separated	17	3.1
Working Experience (Years)		
Less than 2	10	2.1
2-5	39	7.2
6-10	57	10.3
11-15	150	27.8
16-20	123	22.7
Over 20	161	29.9
Ranks		
Senior Superintendent	95	17.5
Principal Superintendent	228	42.3
Assistant Director	173	32.0
Superintendent	28	5.2
Assistant Superintendent	5	1.0
Senior matron	11	2.1

Issues on Discipline

The nature of a workplace is that from time to time complaints and disputes will arise. These complaints need to be address based on the rules and regulations including grievance handling procedure within the organization. New employees are exposed to these rules and regulations during orientation. Thus orientation for new employees in an organization is a very important activity and must be carried out with all importance and seriousness. The results indicated that most respondents (86.6%) said they organize orientation for new employees when appointed or recruited in the educational service or at the departmental levels. During the orientation, employees are educated on the various rules and regulations, procedures, policies, work schedule, rules and job training. This clearly shows that employees within the educational service are exposed to the statutes and procedures which are guiding them. Hence are supposed to adhere to these rules. According to the study, majority of the respondents (52%) mentioned that employees flout the organization's rules and regulations. This is inevitable since workplaces are

occupied by humans (human institutions) and their activities could result in some level of rules and regulations flouting.

Out of the respondents who mentioned that employees flout the organization’s rules and regulations, 32.7% mentioned that disobedience is the main cause of violating rules and regulations (Table 2). In addition, significant proportion of the respondents also believed that conflict of interest between employers and employees are another source of violating rules and regulations. This could be true due to different interests of the employer and the employee. According to a study conducted, the most common causes of violation of rules and regulations at workplaces are hours of work and overtime, job postings and seniority (Human Resource, 2009). For instance, when a staff is supposed to work under pressure to meet prescribed deadline and has refused to carry out such activity result in violation of the rule.

Table 2: Causes of violation of rules and regulations

Causes	Frequency	Percentage
Conflict of interest	143	26.5
Conflict of interest and poor human relation	22	4.1
Family problems	88	16.3
Management not strict	33	6.1
Ignorance of rules and regulation	77	14.3
Disobedience	177	32.7
Total	540	100.0

Flouting of rules and regulations goes with corresponding disciplinary actions. These actions are for corrections to prevent recurring of such events. Some disciplinary actions are taken immediately the flouting occurs whiles some are forwarded to the appropriate disciplinary committee or sector to handle. The result shows that majority of the respondents (60.8%) said they immediately discipline an employee for flouting any rules and regulations governing them. They believe doing this would show that they are in control of their departments and puts fear in other employees to prevent them from repeating the same flouting.

Table 3 shows disciplinary action or means stated by respondents. They mentioned that the kind of disciplinary action implemented depends on the type of offense the worker has committed. All the respondents (100%) mentioned that disciplinary actions taken against employees varied. This is because affected employees commit varied offences and all could not be subjected to equal and the same disciplinary action. In a standard practice, various offences and their corresponding disciplinary actions are normally stipulated in a guide, handbook or statutes of the institution or organization. The result indicated that the commonest disciplinary action or means is worker suspension (44.1%). However, in practice, the researcher believes that suspension comes after some warnings have been issued to the affected employee. This is because suspension action sometimes leads to laying embargo on salary of affected employee. Significant proportion of respondents also believed that, the use of query letters as an immediate disciplinary action is the best, where serious warnings are written to the employee. Furthermore, it is believed that alerting an offender about one’s offence could easily prevent the reoccurrence

of such offence. Thus, talking to employees about them flouting rules and regulations could be the best immediate disciplinary practice unless the employee repeated the flouting again before it could result in suspension.

Table 3: Means of disciplining employee who flout rules and regulations

Disciplinary actions	Frequency	Percentage
Warning for the first offence	73	13.6
Based on policy of organization	55	10.2
Giving person query letter	91	16.9
Transfer of employee	46	8.5
Suspension	238	44.1
Dismissal if offence is serious	39	6.8
Total	540	100.0

The study further shows that majority of respondents (97%) said there is provision for discipline in the educational service or sector conditions of service. Since disciplinary actions were stipulated in the conditions of service, it is then an obligation for all employees in the educational service to be abreast with these actions. This is because they are being guided by the conditions of service. Majority of respondents (90.7%) were aware and had adequate knowledge about the provision of discipline in the educational service condition of service. They mentioned that there is no need for modification whiles 9.3% of respondents were of the view that some sections of the condition of service about discipline should be modified. Most respondents (50%) who are concerned with modification of condition of service mentioned that, the section on transfer should be modified. Their concerns were frequent transfer within the service and also management transfer people as a disciplinary action to “hinter lands” and would refer culprits to the condition of service (transfer section). Thus a clear distinction should be made between a normal transfer and transfer serving as a disciplinary action.

Grievance Management

At workplaces, complaints and disputes are inevitable. However, a procedure is laid down to address such situations. One commonest procedure is the use of grievance procedure established within the organization. A grievance can be defined as any work-related dispute arising out of the interpretation, application, administration or alleged violation of the specific terms of the collective agreement. In short, a grievance is essentially a complaint filed by an employee based on his or her interpretation of the collective agreement (Human Resource, 2009). Good relationship between workers and management is an indication of a good industrial harmony. The result shows that, most respondents (50.5%) mentioned that very cordial relationship existed between employees and education service management team members (i.e. Regional Directors and Head Teachers) (Table 4).

Table 4: Relationship between employees and Management team members

Management	Responses (Percentage)			
	Very cordial	Cordial	Fairly Good	Not Good
Regional Director	50.5	37.1	12.4	0.0
District Director	33.0	54.6	12.4	0.0
Head Teachers	42.3	39.2	16.5	2.1

The study further indicated that majority of management team members (75%) stated that they receive grievances from employees. This is not surprising because grievance is unavoidable at work places and could be caused by both senior and junior employees. To address an employee's grievance, a laid down procedure must be followed. The grievance procedure is a process through which an employee can bring workplace concerns to upper levels of management. This process is more formal than mediation and requires that rules be followed strictly (Arvey and Jones, 1985). In this study, all the respondents (100%) mentioned that they followed laid down procedure in solving employee's grievances. When this is done, it brings fairness and accuracy in decisions taken to prevent bias judgment. In practice, grievance handling procedure is divided into steps. A grievance can have up to four phases: (1) the management resolution steps; (2) qualification for hearing; (3) hearing; and (4) review of the hearing decision. Not all grievances are qualified for hearing. For example, under the grievance statues, grievances that relate solely to layoffs, transfers, assignments, or the content of personnel policies, cannot proceed on to a hearing. On the other hand, some issues are automatically qualified for hearing, such as formal discipline or dismissal for unsatisfactory performance (Arvey and Jones, 1985). Majority of the respondents (54.6%) said that the laid down grievance procedure in the educational service to address grievances is very effective (Table 5). This is because they have followed this procedure to address some grievances which have yielded good results and brought about industrial harmony.

Table 5: Effectiveness of laid down grievance procedure

Effectiveness	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	295	54.6
Effective	234	43.3
Not effective	11	2.1
Total	540	100.0

According to the study, most respondents (58%) believed that management is serious with grievance handling. The seriousness of management in addressing employee's grievances would build trust in the employees and could result in better work output. Furthermore, it brings peace and tranquility in work place environment, which may encourage employees to work better. The respondents suggested some ways to make grievance handling procedure efficient in the educational service. Most respondents (30.9%) stated that teaching of grievance handling at

training colleges would position teachers to handle grievance better when they are teaching in the field (Table 6).

Table 6: Suggested ways on how to make grievance handling procedure efficient in Education Service

Suggested Ways	Frequency	Percentage
Management should adhere to grievance procedure	95	17.5
Improvement in human relation between employees and management	39	7.2
Organize seminars on grievance handling	156	28.9
Teach grievance handling at colleges	167	30.9
Grievance office should be opened	83	15.5
Total	540	100.0

They believed introduction of grievance handling at the training level would equip the trainees with the basic knowledge in grievance handling and its practice would be more efficient and easy for them. Thus, it would bring improvement in handling grievance within the educational service. Organization of seminars for those who handle grievance would also increase its efficiency. In addition, some proportions of respondents were also of the view that creating a special grievance office would also be appropriate to improve on grievance handling currently.

Conclusions

The study showed that some level of indiscipline and grievance handling procedure existed in the educational service. Conflict of interest and disobedience is the main forms of indiscipline witnessed in the education service. Disciplinary actions are stipulated in the educational service statutes for corresponding offences; some offences with immediate disciplinary actions while some offences are referred to the appropriate disciplinary committee. The workers had adequate knowledge about the grievance handling procedure within the education service which all management team members followed in addressing employee's grievances. This procedure is very effective and management attached seriousness to decisions emanating from it. Hence employees also have some level of trust in the grievance procedure in the educational service. It is recommended that the education service should organize seminars on grievance handling for those who are handling grievance currently to increase their capacity in grievance handling. Furthermore, introduction of grievance handling at colleges would also equip the trainees in grievance handling and its application in the field would be efficient and easy for them. In all, special office should be opened for grievance handling in the education service so that all grievances should be addressed to this office.

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