

IN-LOCO PARENTIS TAKEN TOO FAR: A PERCEPTION OF PARENTAL ROLE NEGLIGENCE ON BOARDING STUDENTS IN MODEL SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN LAGOS STATE, NIGERIA

Dr Ganiyu Abiona IBIKUNLE¹, Sewanu Jesukon ISAAC²

ganiyu.ibikunle@lasu.edu.ng <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3373-5831>¹,
sewanu.isaac@postgrad.plymouth.ac.uk <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-1595-0993>²

Department of Educational Management, Lagos State University, Ojo, Nigeria¹
Plymouth Institute of Education Management, University of Plymouth, United
Kingdom²

Abstract

This paper aimed to bring to light the consequences of parents' negligence on students of boarding schools which do not promote the proper practice of in-loco-parentis. Conceptual methodology was adopted to examine relevant concepts to the study. Observation on the impetus of the study was made in model boarding schools in Lagos State. In furtherance, the roles of boarding school teachers and the parents of the boarding school students regarding in-loco parentis were examined in addition to the challenges that abound on the subject matter. Though in-loco parentis allows teachers to perform some responsibilities of parents in discharging their duties over their students, the study concluded that the roles of parents of students in boarding schools should not be put on hold because the students are not under the care of their parents for some periods, parents are first teacher, mentor, and guidance to their children. There are limits to what teachers in boarding schools can do on in-loco parentis. Based on the conclusions, it was recommended among others that parents should ensure that their children are well-nurtured, trained, and of good conduct before sending them to a boarding school.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Academic Performance, In-loco parentis, Negligence, Visiting Day

Introduction

Education is a lifelong process of transmitting values, discovering and developing latent abilities inherent in learners, especially in schools or colleges, to develop knowledge, acquire skills and exhibit positive attitudes. The ultimate purpose of education is to empower an individual to excel in a chosen field of endeavor or career, and to be able to positively impact his/her environment. Secondary schools, colleges and universities have no worth without students. Students are most essential asset for any educational institute. The social, political and economic development of a country is directly linked with the quality of students that are graduated on yearly basis from her schools because the graduated students will become part of the human resources that serve as inputs into the production and consumption cycle. However, students' academic achievement plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates who will become great leader and manpower for the country thus responsible for the country's economic and social development (Ali *et al*, 2009).

Academic achievement is an apparent phenomenon in many developing countries like Nigeria since it is measured by students' summative academic performance final examinations and inclusive of how well students meet standards set out by the National policy on Education (Adepoju, 2020). Some parents, therefore, continue to search for sound education that is all encompassing for their children, such that will not disturb their

occupational responsibilities hence they patronise boarding schools not minding the financial obligations required in such schools. It has been observed that due to accommodative modus operandi of boarding schools, some parents of boarding school students believe that the full responsibility of their children while in school is fully on their teachers and they do not have any part to play since they have satisfied all the conditions required. To support the afore-stated observation, a parent who came on visiting day to one of the model boarding schools in Lagos state, was overheard telling her daughter “Go and meet your mummy, do not call me for anything till vacation”, she was referring to her daughter’s teacher as “mummy”, indirectly she has handed over all her obligation as a mother to the teacher. Alas! As a parent, nobody can take full responsibility of your duties over your children whether through loco parentis or not. The overall well-being of children should be parents’ main priority, which cannot be fully taken care of by the teacher, guardian, neighbor, employees and so on. In-Locho Parentis does not necessarily mean that teachers should take complete charge of students or being responsible for the wellbeing of students without the input of the parents. There are limit to in-locho parentis and this cannot be overemphasized hence the need for this awareness study.

Concept of In-Locho Parentis

The Latin word "in loco parentis" denotes the act of assuming parental responsibilities for a kid in the absence of their parents, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary (2022). "In loco parentis" is used to describe the duties or roles of the teacher on students. According to Oxford Dictionary of Rhymes in Mohammed, Gbenu and Lawal (2014), In-locho Parentis is described as “a legal responsibility of a person or organisation to take on some of the functions and responsibilities of a parent”. It is applied in two separate areas of the law according to the Oxford Dictionary. First, it permits organizations like colleges and schools to act in the students' best interests as they see proper, while disallowing actions that might be regarded as infringing on their civil liberties. Second, if a non-biological parent has represented themselves as the parent, this concept may allow them to be granted the legal rights and obligations of a biological parent. Whilst the boarding students are within the school for a long period, the teachers are expected to take responsibility for all students within the confinement of the school. Thus, this should not give the teacher full responsibility for the students.

Roles of Boarding School Teachers in In-Locho Parentis

Teachers at boarding schools act as unofficial parents to the children enrolled there. Because they think their kids won't be capable adults, parents commit their kids to school staff and management. In addition to instructing students, teachers are also in charge of enforcing rules and preserving order. The students are under the teachers’ watch for the period they would be spending in the school environment. According to Igbiniedion, Nwogu, and Abraham (2016), “Parents entrust their children to school teachers and management because they believe that they will be in capable hands”. Nakpodia (2012) listed the roles of teacher in-locho Parentis as follow:

- i. Teachers oversee carrying out a school's disciplinary policy and have all necessary power and authority. The program aligns with the goals of the school.
- ii. A teacher to a certain extent, assumes the roles of a parent regarding the students in his care, and he or she may exercise whatever powers of supervision, restraint, and

discipline deemed reasonably necessary for him to carry out his teaching duties and achieve the goal of education.

- iii. Teachers care about their pupils' mental, moral, and physical development.

Hunt offered some specific roles or responsibilities the teacher is supposed to do while serving as a parent, as mentioned by Mohammed, Gbenu, and Lawal (2014). These roles are listed below:

- i. Teachers oversee planning school trips.
- ii. Teachers oversee students' welfare, social and physical wellbeing.
- iii. Teachers must be confidential: The teacher must document any issues, keeping in mind that any disclosures must be reported, which is why confidentiality must be maintained.
- iv. Teachers must always give feedback to the school authority on the students' emotional psychological and mental health.

Roles of Parents of Boarding Students in In-Locho Parentis

Parents are the first and most important teachers, disciplinarians, and mentors to their children. Children, who are properly nurtured and trained by their parents are better disposed, better behaved, more hygienic and associate better in the school environment (Onyeike in Igbinedion, Nwogu & Abraham 2016). According to Onyeike (2014) "parents have an irreplaceable role as the first educators of the children in the early years of life during which a child's intellect, character and temperament are better formed for later life in school". According to Philips (2013) "Parents have the primary responsibility for educating their children". The school only acts as a professional service provider for the parents' children's education. Cooperation with parents is required to provide these services. The roles of parents of boarding students in in-locho parentis are listed below:

- i. Parents are fully responsible for the welfare, emotional and mental health of their children while in school.
- ii. Parents should always be in touch with teachers in order for them to know how their children are faring.
- iii. Parents should check on their children at least twice a week on phone or visit their children during the visiting days.
- iv. Parents should constantly be in touch with the class teacher of their children. It will encourage the teacher to monitor the child's well-being.
- v. Parents should not delegate their full responsible as parents to the teacher.
- vi. Parents in this regard need to be closer to their children, this will give them access to vital information.

Challenges Encountered by Boarding School Teachers for Effective In-Locho Parentis

Teachers do not have full responsibility for taking care of students in boarding schools. Hunt (in Mohammed, Gbenu, & Lawal, 2014) posited that "A teacher is not obliged to administer medicines to pupils without the consent of their parent, although the teacher may be asked to oversee children's use of asthma pumps, for example, the teacher must keep a list of pupils who have medical conditions". Teachers have limits to what they can do, or else they will be held responsible if anything negative happens to students who are under their care. Teachers in most cases are faced with the challenges listed below;

- i. Government policy on corporal punishment: According to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (2006), corporal or physical punishment is defined as the use of physical force with the intention of causing some level of pain or distress, even if it is mild. In this regard, teachers are prohibited from beating or punishing students.
- ii. Students' attitude towards learning: Student objection to learning encompasses a variety of adverse feelings, emotions, or actions displayed by students in reaction to educational activities, assignments, or the learning environment. The presence of negative attitudes towards learning poses a significant problem for instructors. However, maintaining regular communication between parents and teachers can help mitigate these negative attitudes (Harris and Goodall, 2007).
- iii. Parents' physical abuse on teachers: Parental physical abuse of teachers refers to situations in which parents display hostile or violent behaviour towards educators, either on school grounds or at school-related activities. This parent may seek to communicate with the teachers due to reasons such as their children being scolded by teachers or the teachers displaying a poor attitude towards the students.
- iv. Parent's negligence towards solving problems being encountered by their children: Some students face some challenges which parents are aware of but fails to act and if such problems was not attended to at home, it will be a challenge for teachers in schools.
- v. Teacher's inability to carry out official duties due to their health, emotional, mental and psychological challenges. This might affect the student's academic performance.

Consequences of Parents Negligence on Students of Boarding Schools

Some parents believe that some of their responsibilities over their children should stop or being transferred to the teacher, since the children are in boarding school. This can be tagged as an act of negligence of parental duties over their children. This act has great consequences on the children. Some parents are so comfortable with any decision made by the teacher over their children. Some of the consequences such negligence are listed below:

- i. Lack of intimate relationship between the parent and their children: If parents fail to fulfill their responsibilities and delegate them to teachers, a reciprocal bond between children and parents will not exist.
- ii. Lack of trust, confidence: Due to the absence of a reciprocal bond between parents and children, the latter may encounter challenges while attempting to share their thoughts and feelings with their parents.
- iii. Inability of children to give vital information to their parents on issues bothering their mind.
- iv. Teachers can take advantage of the students since the parents are not bothered about their children: Certain teachers may exploit the strained relationship between parents and their children to commit harmful acts against the child.
- v. It can affect students' academic performance since the parents are not monitoring the progress of their children at school.
- vi. Negligence of parents can lead to molestation of students by fellow students and some unscrupulous teaching/non-teaching members of staff in the school.

- vii. Negligence of parents can affect the emotional, psychological and mental health of students: when children fail to have close and intimate relationship with their parents, they might get affected both emotionally, psychologically and mentally.
- viii. Involvement in cult-related activities and being a prey to bullying in the school: Children without a harmonious relationship with their parents are susceptible to being influenced and coerced into joining cults.

Conclusion

Parents should be aware that they are their children's first teacher, mentor, and source of advice, and that school should be viewed as their second rather than their first home. The relationships between teachers and students are quite different from those between parents and their kids. Parents are quick to blame the government, the school administration, the teachers in their classes, and other students for harmful behaviours that endanger their children at school, but they frequently neglect some of the responsibilities. Parents of boarding students are also guilty of abandoning their children for weeks without checking on their well-being. Teachers in boarding schools are expected to do their part in taking care of the students but parents must take responsibility.

Recommendations

Considering the conclusion of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Parents should ensure that their children are well nurtured, trained and of good conduct before sending them to a boarding school.
- ii. Parents should not stop attending to their responsibilities over their children because they are in boarding school.
- iii. Parents should ensure that they attend parents' forum meeting regularly, visiting day and open day on one hand. On the other hand, Boarding school management should invoke sanctions on students whose parent did not come for either open or visiting day through suspension of not less than two weeks from school.
- iv. The boarding school management should make a policy of mandatory weekly call-in period (via telephone) between parent and students.
- v. Parents should always be in touch with their children class teacher in order to know how their children are faring.

References

- Ali, N., Jusoff, K., Ali, S., Mokhtar, N., & Salamat, A. S. A. (2009). The factors influencing students' performance at Universiti Teknologi MARA Kedah, Malaysia. *Management Science and Engineering*, 3(4), 81-90
- Cambridge Dictionary (2022). UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Correlates of Academic Performance in Lagos State Secondary Schools, Nigeria. Unpublished Master's Dissertation. Department of Educational Management. Faculty of Education. Lagos State University, Nigeria.
- Harris, A., & Goodall, J. (2007). *Engaging parents in raising achievement: Do parents know they matter?*. London: Department for Children, Schools and Families.

- Igbinedion, D.A., Nwogu, U.J Abraham, N.M. (2016). Lacuna in the Practice of In-Locho-Parentis in Nigerian Schools: The Pot Calling the Kettle Black. *Journal of Education and Practice* Vol.7, No.12, 2016
- Mohammed, M.O.B., Gbenu, J.P. & Lawal, R.O. (2014). Planning the teacher as in loco-parentis for an effective school system. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. 5(16), 318-321.
- Nakpodia, E. D. (2012). The relevance of sex education in secondary school curricula in Abraka metropolis, Delta state, Nigeria. *Scholarly Journal of Business Administration*, 2(2), 36-41.
- Onyieke, V.C. (2014). The influence of family, society, and the economy on the school in Nigeria. In N.C. Okorie, L.E.B. Igwe, J.D. Asodike, V.C. Onyieke & R.O. Anyaogo (Eds). Teachers, schools, and society. Port Harcourt: Pearl Publishers.
- Oxford Dictionary of Rhymes (2006). UK: Oxford University Press.
- Philip, J. (2013). The role of parents in the dynamics of school discipline. *Intentional Journal of Independent Research and Studies – IJIRS*. 2(1), 45-50.
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), *General comment No. 8 (2006): The Right of the Child to Protection from Corporal Punishment and Other Cruel or Degrading Forms of Punishment (Arts. 19; 28, Para. 2; and 37, inter alia)*, 2 March 2007, CRC/C/GC/8, available at: https://www.unicef.org/bulgaria/sites/unicef.org.bulgaria/files/2018-09/GC_7_EN.pdf (Accessed 12 January 2024)