

Chapter 3: The Discipline Master/Mistress: roles and duties

Roles of the discipline master/mistress

3.1 The discipline master/mistress is the leader of the school discipline team. He/She is in charge of the planning, organization, development and monitoring of matters relating to student discipline at school. Administratively, he/she is responsible for recommending to the school head the deployment of school staff to the discipline team and allocation of duties and resources for student discipline to ensure collaboration among members of the discipline team and other functional teams as well as with the school social worker. He/She should also coordinate with other government departments such as the Hong Kong Police Force, the Social Welfare Department etc. to draw on their expertise and resources to provide an integrated support service in developing proactive and/or preventive programmes in managing students' behaviour problems at school. A detailed description of the duties and responsibilities of a discipline master/mistress is listed below.

I. Administrative duties

- a) to assist the school head in making decision on the staffing of the school discipline team;
- b) to assist the school head in developing a school discipline policy;
- c) to handle administrative matters relating to student discipline work;
- d) to form and lead a school discipline team to plan and develop student discipline work with specific objectives for the school year;
- e) to coordinate all functions organized by the school discipline team;
- f) to participate in other functional team meetings to ensure that the concerns of school discipline will not be contravened by any other school matters;
- g) to liaise with outside organizations and agencies concerned and coordinate their services to strengthen school discipline work; and
- h) to monitor the use of resources allocated to school discipline work.

II. Operational duties

- a) to implement and enforce the school discipline policy and school rules;
- b) to work in collaboration with other functional teams and/or subject committees in running preventive and developmental programmes pertaining to student discipline upon arriving at a consensus on discipline work;

- c) to assist other teachers in managing students with serious behaviour problems;
- d) to collaborate with parents of students with behaviour problems in helping the students overcome their difficulties;
- e) to attend to individual cases and conduct case conferences with relevant functional teams and teachers;
- f) to refer students wherever necessary, to the guidance team, the school social worker or outside bodies for follow-up work;
- g) to take the lead in conducting investigation of complaints from students, parents, teachers and the public; and
- h) to review the school discipline policy, school rules and the work of the discipline team and make changes according to the needs of the students, the school and the community.

III. Supportive duties

- a) to develop resource materials and programmes relating to student discipline for teachers' reference and use;
- b) to assist in running staff development programmes to strengthen teachers' skills in managing students' misbehaviour;
- c) to advise on programmes regarding parent education;
- d) to act as an advisor on student discipline matters; and
- e) to attend professional meetings and seminars to keep abreast of the recent development in the subject.

3.2 As can be seen, the duties of the discipline master/mistress could be very diverse but the work focus reflects the orientation and the needs of the school at a particular point of time. Therefore, when deciding whether to pay special emphasis on a certain work area, the discipline master/mistress should not just consider the need of the students but also the ability of the discipline teachers. If the discipline teachers are not able to manage the new tasks or expanded work areas, the discipline master/mistress should consider the following actions:

- clarifying the missions of the discipline team;
- empowering the team members to innovate; and
- reviewing and improving the team members' attitude and strategies of student management according to the needs of the students, the school and the community.

We attempt to illustrate the situation using "patrolling duties" as an example.

(Please refer to Appendix III & Appendix IV)

What kind of a teacher/discipline teacher do you think you are?

Have you ever stopped and pondered over what kind of a discipline teacher you are:

- An autocratic teacher?
- A permissive teacher?
- A democratic teacher?

Before planning your next step forward, it is crucial to be clear about your own belief and your management style. The following is a self-appraisal exercise. The questionnaire is made up of two parts. Part one is prepared to help you identify your belief about student discipline. Part two is about your actions and their possible outcomes. As you read each statement, decide how much you agree with it. Then choose the number from 1 to 5 that corresponds to your level of agreement:

The questionnaire	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
Part One – Your belief					
1. It is better to give in a little and protect the peace in the classroom than to stand firm and provoke a fight.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Students need strong discipline that hurt a little so that they will remember the lesson longer and learn better.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Students should not always get their way, but usually we ought to listen to what they have to say.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The teacher-student relationship is like a war in which if the teacher wins, both sides win, but if the teacher loses, both side lose.	1	2	3	4	5
5. If teachers provide a free environment to learning, students will very likely behave themselves and learn.	1	2	3	4	5
6. The teacher's role is like that of a parent who is preparing the students for life and for whole-person development.	1	2	3	4	5
7. School life is short and teachers should do everything to make it a happy time.	1	2	3	4	5

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| 8. "Spare the rod and spoil the child" is still the best policy. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Students need to learn what they may or may not do, but we do not have to use punishment to teach. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Students function better when they are respected by their teachers. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. If you let students have plenty of freedom, they will eventually learn from the consequences of their behaviour what is appropriate. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Students first have to learn that the teacher is the boss. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. Too many students today talk back to their teachers when they should just quietly obey them. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. If we want students to respect us, we must first treat them with respect. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. You can never do too much for your students if you aim at fulfilling their demands. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Part Two – Your action

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|---|-------------------|---|----------|---|---------|--|-------|--|----------------|
| | strongly disagree | | disagree | | neutral | | agree | | strongly agree |
| 16. Despite constant reminding, my students fail to complete their work during class. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 17. I have to constantly be in control of my students to conduct a lesson smoothly. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 18. When my students misbehave, they usually know what the consequences will be. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 19. I often get angry and yell at my students. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 20. I often feel that my students are taking advantage of my good nature. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 21. I have discussed class rules with my students and everybody takes part in giving ideas for the smooth running of the class. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 22. My students get a good scolding from me or the discipline teacher at least once every month. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |
| 23. I often have to solicit my students' cooperation so as to facilitate the smooth operation of class teaching. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | |

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| 24. I usually give my students clear instructions as to how I want to maintain discipline in my class. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. For disruptive students, I have to please them to prevent them from mischief. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I respect my students by giving my best in preparing the lessons and I expect my students to work hard in class. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I usually give my students choices between two appropriate alternatives rather than telling them what to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I have to threaten my students with punishment like giving demerit points, detention and suspension from school at least once a week. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. I wish my students will not interrupt my teaching during class so often. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. My students usually complete their class work without my coercion. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Scoring your questionnaire

3.3 To determine your style as a teacher/discipline teacher, first transfer your score for each item to the blanks beside the following item numbers listed in parentheses. i.e. put your score for item #2 in the first blank, item #4 in the second blank and so on. Then add your score in each row across, and put the sum in the blank marked Total.

Autocratic belief:	
(2) _____ + (4) _____ + (8) _____ + (12) _____ + (13) _____ = _____	(Total)
Permissive belief:	
(1) _____ + (5) _____ + (7) _____ + (11) _____ + (15) _____ = _____	(Total)
Democratic belief:	
(3) _____ + (6) _____ + (9) _____ + (10) _____ + (14) _____ = _____	(Total)

Autocratic action:
 (17) _____ + (19) _____ + (22) _____ + (24) _____ + (28) _____ = _____ (Total)

Permissive action:
 (16) _____ + (20) _____ + (23) _____ + (25) _____ + (29) _____ = _____ (Total)

Democratic action:
 (18) _____ + (21) _____ + (26) _____ + (27) _____ + (30) _____ = _____ (Total)

	Belief (Total)		Action (Total)		Combined Score
Autocratic	_____	+	_____	=	_____
Permissive	_____	+	_____	=	_____
Democratic	_____	+	_____	=	_____

What do your scores mean?

- 3.4 The highest combined score possible for each style is 50. The higher your score, the more you tend towards that style as a teacher/discipline teacher. Your highest combined score, therefore, suggests the style of teaching you are currently using. If either of the other combined scores is within fifteen points of your highest score, consider your use of the two styles as about equal. The greater the difference among the scores, the greater your current preference for the style with the highest score.
- 3.5 There will be cases of differences of more than fifteen points between belief and action scores for any style. This suggests that you tend to believe in one thing and do another. Do not be alarmed by this. It is common and understandable and you will find the possible reasons in the following paragraphs. As you practise more the skills mentioned on this guide, you will probably develop a greater consistency between what you believe in and what you do.

Autocratic Teacher

3.6 You probably score higher on autocratic than you have expected. But after all, this was the predominant style teachers used during your days as a young student. If you score highest on this style, you probably find yourself in frequent battles with your students as you desire absolute control. Anger and frustration probably

characterize the power struggles that you and your students experience.

- 3.7 You may be angry that as teachers today you are being robbed of the many rights and power bestowed on you in the dear old days merely because you were a teacher. However, we have to admit that the teacher-student relationship today is built on mutual understanding, trust, respect and acceptance instead of authority and coercion. Once a close relationship is established between you and your students, the influence you have on your students is tremendous and lasting.

Permissive Teacher

- 3.8 In an attempt to avoid being autocratic, you may have overcompensated and developed a permissive style. If you are in this group, your relationship with your students may be quite good as long as you do what your students want. But you probably find that your students get very hostile and perhaps even out of control when you say no or make a demand on them. You have to continuously serve and please them in order to maintain a good relationship. You may have already begun to resent this unfairness. If so, you probably scored higher on the autocratic scale than you would appear. It is easy to get fed up with a permissive style and flip back to an autocratic approach, so your thoughts differ from your actions.
- 3.9 To maintain an environment conducive to learning, the teacher should adopt a balanced discipline approach of control and freedom, so that students understand the limits of their behaviours. Teachers should enforce the school rules consistently, firmly and kindly.

Democratic Teacher

- 3.10 If your score is highest on this style, you probably believe that freedom is ideal, but so are the rights of others and the responsibilities of all. Furthermore, your relationship with your students is probably positive. Under an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, the students will be more willing to take responsibility for their behaviour and identify with class regulations and school rules. You can handle them without hurt or resentment.

Comparing the three different teaching styles

3.11 The following table compares the three different styles of teaching.

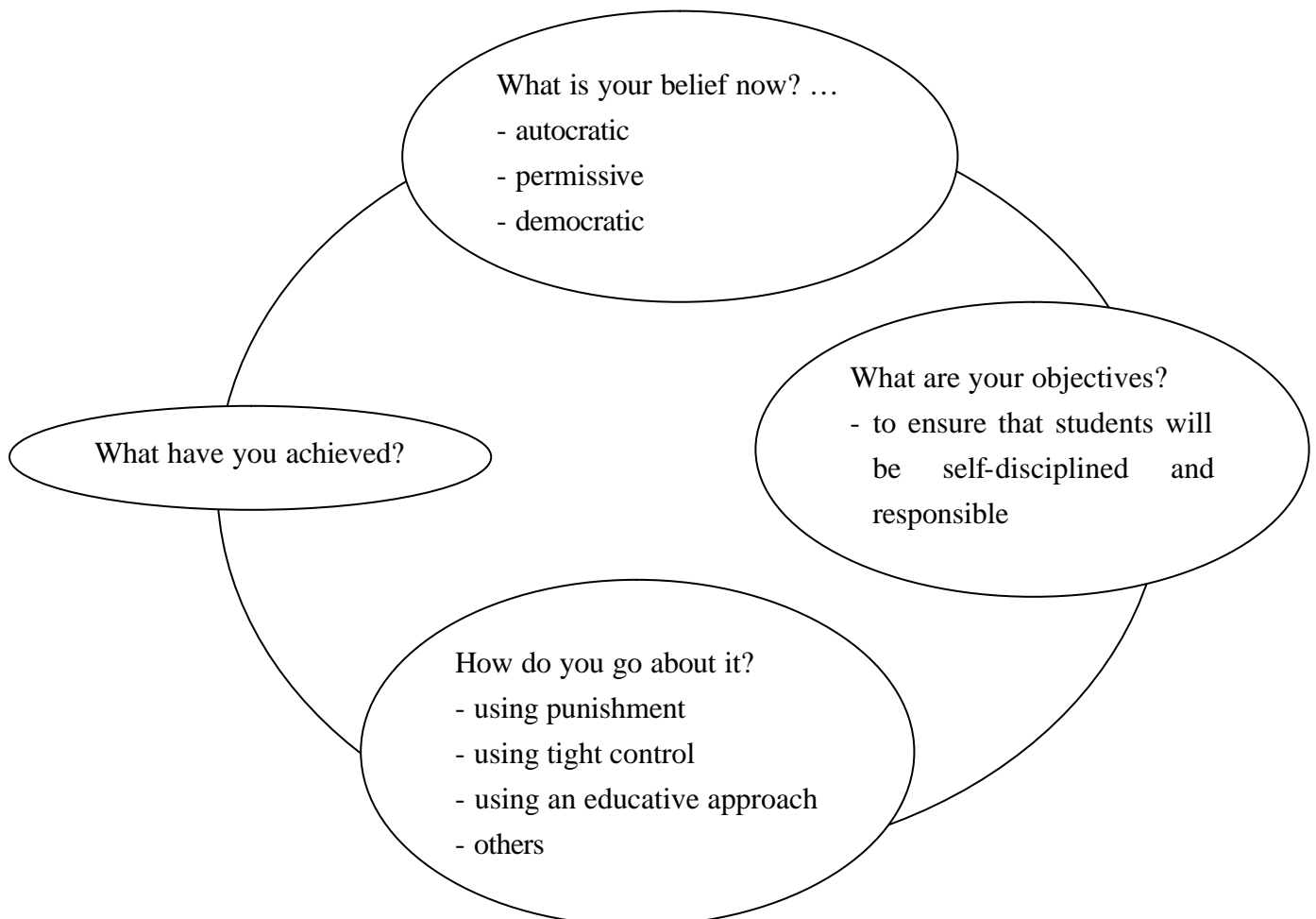
	Autocratic	Permissive	Democratic
Goal for self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● power ● ease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● peace ● ease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● guidance ● satisfaction
Accompanying belief	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I must control my students” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I must please my students” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● “I must lead my students”
Teacher’s goal for students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● obedience ● respect for authority ● a healthy “fear” ● responsibility to others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● freedom ● respect for self ● a “go for it mentality” ● responsibility to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cooperation ● respect for self and others ● courage ● responsibility to self and others
Discipline tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● rewards ● punishment ● threats ● bribes ● yelling ● coercive demand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● pleasing ● hoping ● pleading ● giving in ● giving up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● logical consequence ● natural consequence ● class meetings ● negotiation ● reasonable demand
Characteristics of teacher-student relationship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● power struggle ● anger ● rebellion ● coldness ● distrust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● service by teacher ● demand by students ● resentment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● warmth ● sharing ● mutual respect ● conflict resolution
Qualities of teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● controlling ● critical ● harsh ● strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● indecisive ● accepting ● timid ● inconsistent; when frustrated, teacher may swing to autocratic style, then back ● weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● firm ● kind ● encouraging ● cooperative ● strong
Typical quality of students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● disobedient ● sneaky ● strong-willed ● rebellious ● lacking self-discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● disrespectful ● spoiled ● insecure ● self-centred ● lacking self-discipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● cooperative ● responsible ● courageous ● team-centered ● self-disciplined

Adapted from Michael Popkin, Ph. D., Active Parenting. San Francisco: Harper & Row 1987.

3.12 So you find the table interesting. Do you not? The table helps you understand your belief and actions better not just as a teacher, but also as a fellow colleague or even as a parent. You may find that you do not fit neatly into anyone of the descriptions. That is not unusual. In fact that is the way it is in real life situations. Further, your beliefs about children and student discipline, the age of your students, your personal experience, the school policies and other contextual factors like what have taken place on that particular day before you enter the class or before you embark on this exercise have an effect on you. While you are affecting the classroom situation, other factors around you are also casting an influence on you. You may also have a desire to move further towards a certain direction on the scale but you are concerned with your distance from the target. Don't you worry! Below is a developmental cycle designed for your self evaluation.

The developmental cycle of raising your quotient in student management

If there is a discrepancy between what you achieve and what you believe, then you may have to adjust one or both directions to make both ends meet.



Summary

- * The discipline master/mistress is the leader of the school discipline team who is in charge of the planning, organization, development and monitoring of matters relating to student discipline at school.
- * The decision of whether discipline teachers should take up patrolling duties depends on the policy and the needs of the school.
- * Autocratic teachers desire control. Their discipline tools are characterized by the use of rewards and punishment, threats, bribes, yelling and demands. The typical quality of the students includes disobedience, sneakiness, being rebellious and lacking self-discipline.
- * Permissive teachers believe that given sufficient freedom, students are capable of self-regulation. Their discipline tools are characterized by pleading, giving in and giving up. The typical behaviour of their students is characterized by disrespectfulness, insecurity, self-centredness, lacking self-discipline etc.
- * Democratic teachers foster ideas that freedom is ideal, but so are the rights of others and the responsibilities of all. Their typical discipline tools are the use of logical consequences, class discussions, conflict resolution and so forth. The typical quality of their students includes being cooperative, responsible, courageous, team-centred and self-disciplined.
- * Your belief about student discipline, the age of your students, your personal experience, the school policies and other contextual factors like what have taken place on that particular day before you enter the class or before you embark on this exercise all have an effect on you. While you are affecting the classroom situation, other factors around you are also casting an influence on you.