

# Attribution and path analysis of punishment dilemma in primary and secondary school education from the perspective of stakeholder theory

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**Abstract:** Educational discipline is a necessary tool for schools and teachers to effectively educate and manage students. However, challenges in implementation often stem from incomplete laws, strained relationships between home and school, and negative societal attitudes. To address these challenges, collaboration between parents, schools, and society is crucial. This involves improving laws regarding teacher disciplinary rights, enhancing communication between home and school, and promoting a positive view of disciplinary actions. By working together, we can ensure that disciplinary measures are implemented effectively.

**Key words:** the theory of attributing; stakeholders to the logic; dilemma of educational; punishments

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## 1 Introduction

With the frequent exposure of negative educational incidents, lack of communication between home and school, and escalating conflicts between teachers and students, the issue of educational discipline has drawn widespread attention. In order to protect themselves, teachers may choose to respond to students' misconduct with indifference, neglect, or avoidance, rather than resorting to educational discipline. On the other hand, due to the imperfect legal framework, insufficient regulations, and ineffective collaboration between home and school, there are divergent interpretations of educational discipline, leading to the possibility of teachers applying discipline excessively or without limits [1].

In December 2020, after extensive solicitation of opinions from various stakeholders, the Ministry of Education officially released the "Rules for Educational Discipline in Primary and Secondary Schools (Trial)". This document reveals the complexity of the issues related to educational discipline [2]. Drawing on stakeholder theory, this paper will discuss the generation logic, attribution of challenges, and rational implementation of educational discipline, taking into account the interests, rights, and well-being of teachers, students, parents, educational administrators, and policymakers.

## 2 The logic of discipline generation in primary and secondary education based on stakeholder theory

### 2.1 Educational punishment is a product of teacher-student interaction

In the realm of teacher-student relationships, the logic behind the discipline in primary and secondary education

involves the interplay of teacher-student interactions, authority dynamics, and the impact on instructional effectiveness. Firstly, teachers, serving as guides and knowledge providers to students, inherently possess a certain level of authority. Educational discipline is often employed to maintain classroom order and foster a conducive learning environment. When a student's behavior violates rules, teachers may choose to implement disciplinary measures to ensure the smooth functioning of the classroom. This disciplinary action serves, to some extent, as a manifestation of authority in the teacher-student relationship, aiming to make students realize the importance of rules [3].

Secondly, within teacher-student interactions, educational discipline reflects attention to and feedback on student behavior. Through disciplinary actions, teachers convey an educational intention – guiding students to regulate their own behavior through punishment. However, this interactive process may also lead to students developing a rebellious mindset, perceiving teachers as imposing restrictions rather than providing guidance. Thus, in teacher-student interactions, the logic of disciplinary generation needs to consider how to strike a balance between authority and respect to promote a positive learning atmosphere [4].

Finally, the logic behind educational discipline also involves instructional effectiveness. By employing certain disciplinary measures, teachers can better steer students' focus towards learning and enhance classroom efficiency [5]. However, this must also take into account students' psychological states and motivation, as excessive discipline may lead to emotional downturns, subsequently affecting academic performance. Therefore, while balancing teacher-student interactions, authority dynamics, and instructional effectiveness, the logic behind disciplinary actions in education should comprehensively consider how to achieve a balance between behavior regulation and individual student development in the teaching process.

## 2.2 Educational punishment is the legal guarantee for teacher teaching

Firstly, educational discipline is a necessary means to maintain instructional order. In an educational environment, a well-established order is the foundation of student learning. Educational discipline helps teachers effectively manage the classroom, ensuring the smooth progression of learning activities. For example, promptly addressing students' misconduct and applying appropriate disciplinary measures to those who violate rules can prevent the spread of undesirable behavior, thereby maintaining the stability of the entire teaching environment.

Secondly, educational discipline contributes to shaping students' behavioral norms and values. Education is not only about imparting knowledge but also about molding character and conduct. Through reasonable disciplinary measures, students can recognize their erroneous behavior and be guided to embrace correct behavioral and value perspectives. This aids in cultivating students' self-discipline and sense of responsibility, elevating their levels of behavioral standards and laying a solid foundation for their future growth and development.

Lastly, educational discipline is a crucial means to ensure school safety. Schools are vital places for student learning and growth, and it is imperative to ensure a secure environment for them. Disciplining rule violations effectively helps prevent incidents such as campus violence and bullying, safeguarding the physical and mental well-being of students. Additionally, educational discipline contributes to instilling legal compliance in students, enhancing their awareness of the rule of law, and fostering them into citizens who are socially responsible, law-abiding individuals [6].

## 2.3 Educational punishment is a social demand

Firstly, educational discipline is a manifestation of society's expectations for the quality of school education and the development of students. Society expects schools to be not only institutions for imparting knowledge but also places for cultivating character and discipline. Educational discipline, as an educational tool, is a crucial means of helping students establish proper behavioral norms and moral values. There is a widespread societal expectation that schools, while

fostering students' academic knowledge, guide them to become responsible and disciplined members of society through appropriate educational disciplinary methods.

Secondly, educational discipline emphasizes societal expectations for student behavioral standards. With an increasing focus on the cultivation of civic qualities in society, students, as future members of society, attract considerable attention to their conduct. Against this backdrop, educational discipline becomes a tool for shaping students' good character and correcting inappropriate behavior. Society expects schools to use moderate and fair educational discipline to guide students in developing habits of respecting others and adhering to rules, laying the foundation for future social interactions [7].

Lastly, educational discipline is a necessary measure taken by society to maintain campus order and student safety. In certain situations, schools may face issues such as student misconduct and bullying, directly impacting campus safety and order. Society expresses its concern for maintaining the school environment and ensuring student safety through effective educational disciplinary measures. Through appropriate discipline, society expects schools to uphold order and guarantee that students can learn and grow in a conducive environment.

### **3 Attribution of disciplinary dilemma in primary and secondary education based on stakeholder theory**

#### 3.1 The legal system for educational punishment is incomplete

From a theoretical perspective, a comprehensive system of educational discipline norms should be composed of constitutional provisions, laws, regulations, rules, and normative legal documents, forming a mutually reinforcing "pyramid" structure to provide a logical foundation for resolving disputes related to educational discipline. However, in practical terms, apart from the constitutional provisions on the right to education and the right to receive education, which provide constitutional-level legal basis for primary and secondary education discipline, laws such as the "Education Law of the People's Republic of China", the "Teachers Law of the People's Republic of China", the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Minors" and the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency" have relatively vague provisions regarding the authority for educational discipline, failing to explicitly specify the legal basis for educational discipline.

On the local regulatory front, while the "Qingdao Municipal Regulations on the Management of Primary and Secondary Schools" released by the Qingdao Municipal Government in 2017 introduced the concept of "discipline" for the first time, there are few local regulations, rules, or normative documents nationwide governing educational discipline. Although the "Rules" confirm the authority of primary and secondary school teachers in the broad legal sense, its nature as a departmental regulation limits its effectiveness on a narrow legal level. Therefore, the regulatory system for educational discipline in primary and secondary schools lacks systematicity and completeness, insufficient legislation results in a lack of specific guidelines and legal safeguards for teachers implementing educational discipline, leading to the emergence of chaotic issues.

#### 3.2 Separation of family school relationship

Currently, the communication between primary and secondary school teachers and parents in China is relatively limited in terms of methods. The primary communication channel is typically restricted to parent-teacher conferences, with the format usually confined to the class unit and led by the class teacher in the form of a "report meeting". In this model, discussions primarily focus on the recent academic performance of students, with explicit criticism for students with poor grades and admonitions for those with unsatisfactory performance. The discussions lack in-depth exploration of issues related to students' thoughts, emotions, behavior patterns, long-term development, and educational discipline.

Apart from parent-teacher conferences, communication between primary and secondary school teachers and parents is

rather limited. Generally, one-on-one communication between teachers and parents only occurs when a student's academic performance declines or when they make mistakes. This communication often remains confined to the student's exam rankings and recent behavior, typically conducted through online means such as WeChat, phone calls, or text messages. Due to the lack of a platform to facilitate broader communication between parents and teachers, parent-teacher conferences often turn into one-sided lectures by teachers. There is almost no discussion or exchange regarding the educational discipline practices of primary and secondary school teachers, and even if there is, it is scarce. Additionally, since parent-teacher conferences usually occur once a semester, the infrequency of these interactions makes it challenging for deep communication and exchange between schools and parents, thus complicating the effective implementation of educational discipline practices by primary and secondary school teachers.

### 3.3 Excessive social public opinion pressure

In recent years, with the rapid development of the Internet era, information transmission has become extremely convenient, allowing people to stay informed about events thousands of miles away without leaving their homes. However, some primary and secondary schools and teachers have faced issues of excessive disciplinary measures, leading to frequent incidents of corporal punishment on students, and even evolving into tragic accidents, raising significant societal concerns. The focal point of public attention is primarily on the implementation of educational discipline by primary and secondary school teachers. Even when teachers criticize or administer other forms of educational discipline to students within normal boundaries, there is in-depth discussion and scrutiny of the methods employed by teachers, with more attention focused on the reactions of students to disciplinary measures. This inadvertently imposes certain constraints on the exercise of the authority of primary and secondary school teachers in implementing educational discipline.

Furthermore, due to the widespread exposure of inappropriate corporal punishment incidents by social media, teachers face immense pressure from society, schools, and parents. To avoid being entangled in public opinion storms, teachers may choose to intervene less and ask fewer questions about students' misbehavior, or even turn a blind eye and let things slide. While news and cases regarding inappropriate discipline by primary and secondary school teachers are frequently reported, there is relatively little coverage on instances where teachers reasonably and legally exercise their authority in educational discipline. This reflects that the overall societal environment has not created a positive atmosphere for the proper exercise of educational discipline by primary and secondary school teachers. Consequently, teachers may develop an unwilling attitude towards engaging in disciplinary actions, leading to a sense of disillusionment and a decline in the practical exercise of their authority in educational discipline.

## **4 Analysis of the educational punishment path based on stakeholder theory**

### 4.1 Improve the legal system of educational punishment rights

Firstly, clarify the principles governing the exercise of educational discipline by primary and secondary school teachers. Disciplinary actions must be legitimate, reasonable, and within limits. Basic principles agreed upon by the legal and educational communities regarding the exercise of disciplinary authority include the educational principle, fairness principle, and proportionality principle. The primary principle in the implementation of educational discipline is the educational principle, emphasizing that disciplinary actions by primary and secondary school teachers should inherently have an educational purpose, a crucial distinction from other punitive measures.

Secondly, define the reasonable boundaries of the authority for educational discipline by primary and secondary school teachers. Establishing limits and boundaries for the exercise of educational discipline by teachers not only protects the legitimate rights of students from excessive infringement by teachers but also prevents the occurrence of excessive discipline during the process. However, setting boundaries and reasonable limits for the authority of educational discipline

by primary and secondary school teachers does not exclude or eliminate it entirely. Teachers still have a certain degree of discretionary authority to autonomously administer disciplinary actions for students who display behavior misconduct.

Thirdly, specify the procedures for the exercise of the authority for educational discipline by primary and secondary school teachers. Clearly defining the procedures for the exercise of disciplinary authority is essential to prevent arbitrary actions by teachers. This not only safeguards the legitimate rights of students but also contributes to the establishment of a harmonious and positive teacher-student relationship. There are two types of procedures for implementing educational discipline: a simplified procedure and a complex procedure. The simplified procedure is applicable when the disciplinary measures and consequences have minimal impact on the rights of students. The complex procedure is applied when the disciplinary actions and consequences are expected to have a significant impact on the rights of students.

#### 4.2 Strengthen communication and cooperation between families and schools

In the partnership between home and school, it's essential for parents to advocate for the rational expression of educational needs and actively engage in collaborative child-rearing efforts. Firstly, parents should acknowledge their crucial role in their children's education, willingly embracing the responsibility of nurturing them, avoiding the casual transfer of educational duties, and fulfilling their role in family education. Secondly, parents should consciously update their understanding of educational discipline, avoiding the simplistic adoption of outdated practices like "spare the rod, spoil the child" without scientific backing. Finally, parents should approach teachers' methods and management practices thoughtfully, selecting strategies to safeguard their rights and seeking resolution through legal avenues in case of disputes, without resorting to malicious attacks on teachers.

Furthermore, in the collaboration between schools and families, educational institutions should aid parents in comprehending educational philosophies and collectively fostering student development. Schools can heighten parental awareness through diverse means, such as establishing parent education programs, inviting educational experts to educate parents, and assisting them in discarding antiquated educational beliefs. Schools could also arrange parent forums to facilitate dialogue between teachers and parents, allowing for the exchange of child-rearing experiences and the enhancement of educational ideologies. Additionally, schools and educators should uphold transparency in educational practices, ensuring that disciplinary measures are openly discussed and involving parents in student governance. Through collaborative discussions on disciplinary matters, parental concerns can be addressed, and disciplinary actions can be justified and rational.

#### 4.3 Promote the correct concept of education and punishment

Additionally, mass media can play a crucial role in fostering dialogue and understanding between stakeholders involved in educational discipline. By providing platforms for educators, parents, policymakers, and students to share their perspectives and experiences, the media can facilitate constructive discussions aimed at improving disciplinary practices and promoting collaboration among all parties.

Furthermore, mass media can educate the public about the legal frameworks and guidelines governing educational discipline in primary and secondary schools. By disseminating accurate information about relevant laws, regulations, and policies, the media can help dispel misconceptions and ensure that disciplinary measures are implemented in accordance with legal standards and principles of fairness.

Moreover, mass media can highlight the importance of professional development and ongoing training for teachers in the area of educational discipline. By showcasing initiatives, workshops, and resources aimed at enhancing teachers' skills in classroom management, conflict resolution, and positive discipline techniques, the media can empower educators to effectively address behavioral issues while fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment.

Lastly, mass media can advocate for greater support and resources for schools and educators in addressing the underlying factors contributing to student misbehavior. By shedding light on issues such as inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, and lack of access to mental health services, the media can mobilize public awareness and support for initiatives aimed at addressing these systemic challenges and promoting positive outcomes for all students.

## **5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of educational punishment in primary and secondary education, touching upon its roots in teacher-student interactions, its role in maintaining teaching standards, and its reflection of societal expectations. The analysis reveals challenges stemming from an incomplete legal framework, strained parent-school relationships, and societal pressures.

Moving forward, it's crucial to refine the legal system governing educational punishment, enhance communication between families and schools, and promote a balanced understanding of discipline. The media can play a pivotal role in fostering dialogue, disseminating accurate information, advocating for teacher development, and addressing systemic challenges.

## **Conflicts of interest**

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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