

The effectiveness of teachers' classroom management in improving elementary school students' learning

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Abstract

Management is one of the most important issues of the present that has a direct impact on student learning. Management has existed at various times and has not disappeared. It has only changed from one form to another. Classroom management is one of the most important issues in teaching-learning situations and is in fact one of the criteria for effective teaching research. Classroom management includes the actions that the teacher takes to create order, motivate, engage students, and attract their participation in the learning process. This research is qualitative and interviews and scientific sources were used to collect information. The results of this research show that students being silent in the classroom is not a sign of proper teacher management. The teacher can use active teaching methods and modern management techniques to implement his/her demands and achieve an ideal teaching that brings the most learning.

Key words: Elementary school, teaching methods, management, learning

Introduction

Proper classroom management is an important educational issue because in this way, the teacher can correct destructive and disruptive behaviors and increase student participation in learning activities by creating a calm and stress-free environment. Classroom management effectively maximizes learning activities in students. Daniel Book describes classroom management as "the provision and adoption of the necessary methods to create and maintain an environment in which teaching and learning can take place." The most fundamental factor for the success of the primary education system in achieving educational goals is the teacher. The primary school, which is the foundation of higher education courses, has a very influential impact on the amount and quality of education in this course.

The researcher's questions in the present study are as follows:

What is the relationship between classroom management and learning of primary school students?

What solutions can be adopted for better management of the primary school classroom?

Does classroom management mean that students are quiet?

Problem statement

Today, the purpose of teaching is not only to transfer existing knowledge to students, but also includes teaching methods that teach students how to learn. Creating and maintaining a suitable environment for teaching and learning activities, obstacles and obstacles to teaching-learning, and solutions require that teachers have sufficient knowledge of the characteristics of their classrooms. Numerous studies have shown that many of our students' moral and social problems indicate that the school environment is not attractive, and conflicts between such students and teachers, and the teachers' efficiency and creation of the necessary conditions for their academic learning facilities.

An Account of the Evolution of Beliefs, Knowledge and Perspectives about Classroom Management

The systematic study of effective classroom management is a relatively recent phenomenon. Prior to the work of Jacob Kounin (1970), little empirical research had been done on effective classroom management. Anecdotal advice to teachers was of the "don't smile until Easter" variety and most was based on the old proverb "spare the rod spoil the child". One way to better understand approaches to classroom management is to understand the conceptual frameworks that categorize them into logical groupings or types in terms of how much direct control or power a teacher has over students. Originally adopted to describe parenting styles (Baumrind, 1970) the types of authority – authoritarian, authoritative and permissive – are also widely used to hypothesize approaches to classroom management.

How teachers interact with students is often based on their personal sets of beliefs regarding how children develop (Erden & Wolfgang, 2004). The teacher's objectives and approach will vary depending on the theoretical lens through which he or she views their students. Glickman and Tamashiro (1980) and Wolfgang (1995) conceptualized a framework to explain teacher beliefs along a control continuum, with relationship-listening, non-interventionist types, such as Gordon's (1974) "Teacher Effectiveness Training," at the least controlling end; rules/rewards-punishment, interventionist types, such as the Canter's "Assertive Discipline" (Canter & Canter, 1976) at the most controlling end; and confronting-contracting, interactionalist types, such as Glasser's (1992) approach, in the middle. The non-interventionist, the least directive and controlling, assumes the child has an inner drive that needs to find its expression in the real world and that children develop through unfolding of potential via acceptance and empathy. Interventionists, the most controlling, are at the opposite end of the continuum and emphasize what the outer environment does to shape the human organism in a particular way, via reinforcement and punishment.

What is Effective Classroom Management?

Whilst order is clearly important, it is not the primary goal, but it does serve a purpose in enabling student learning and social and moral growth. Henley (2010) identifies classroom management as the "essential teaching skill" (p. 4) and suggests effective teachers minimise misbehaviours to reduce interruptions and create learning environments that allow for students' intellectual and emotional growth. Henley takes a very restorative approach to classroom

management, using more time in the classroom to teach discipline and therefore facilitating activities that enable student self-control. He believes that in doing this, a teacher is less likely to spend time dealing with misbehaviour, and more time on meaningful academic instruction and learning. In other words, effective classroom management over time leads to greater student growth in areas that are used to judge teacher effectiveness.

McDonald extends Evertson and Weinstein's (2006) definition and suggests "classroom management involves teacher actions and instructional techniques to create a learning environment that facilitates and supports active engagement in both academic and social and emotional learning"(p.20). With the diverse backgrounds, interests and capabilities of students, meeting their needs and engaging them in meaningful learning requires care and skill.

Whilst developing an orderly learning environment enables students to engage in meaningful activities that support their learning, this orderly learning environment, suggests McDonald, is only truly attained when teachers understand their own and their students' needs and work together to meet these needs. His work outlines a Positive Learning Framework (PLF), based on current resilience, self-worth, and neurological research and positive psychology, which highlight the strengths that students have and how, as educators, teachers can draw upon these strengths in assisting all children to grow. The PLF offers a continuum of teacher behaviours from planning, preventative techniques, instructional design and ways to respond to student behaviour. By learning to use their skills effectively, teachers can develop quality learning environments, characterised by positive teacher-student relationships (McDonald, 2013).

Teacher Effectiveness and Classroom Management

Whilst framing teacher effectiveness as a teacher's ability to produce gains in students' learning (as reflected in standardized test scores) has a certain amount of credibility, as most would agree that a teacher's role is to help students learn, this type of definition is also very limiting. Other ways in which teachers can contribute to successful students, communities, and schools are often overlooked (Goe, Bell, & Little, 2008). Formulating a definition of effective teaching, Goe, Bell and Little (2008) evaluated various discussions in the recent literature as well as in policy documents, standards and reports. They concluded that effective teachers have high expectations for all students and help students learn; they contribute to positive academic, attitudinal, and social outcomes for all students; they use resources to plan and structure engaging learning opportunities; they contribute to the development of classrooms and schools that value diversity and civic-mindedness; and, they collaborate with other teachers, administrators, parents, and education professionals to ensure student success.

Reviewing the literature on teacher effectiveness provides a more varied and nuanced view. Campbell, Kyriakides, Muijs, and Robinson (2003) state, "teacher effectiveness is the impact that classroom factors, such as teaching methods, teacher expectations, classroom organisation, and use of classroom resources, have on students' performance" (p. 3). Teaching effectiveness can be

understood by studying the models of instruction that define what it is that effective teachers know and do and the behaviours that effective teachers incorporate into their daily professional practice. Marzano's model of teaching effectiveness, *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction* includes: establishing learning goals, students' interaction with new knowledge, student practice to deepen understanding, engaging students, effective classroom management, effective student teacher relationships, communicating high expectations for students, and effective assessment practices (Marzano, 2007). Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching, first published in 1996, identifies those aspects of a teacher's responsibilities that have been documented through empirical and theoretical research as promoting student learning. Danielson refers to four key domains of teaching; planning and preparation; the classroom environment; instruction and professional responsibilities (Danielson 2009). Hattie (2008) refers to effective teachers as expert teachers who identify various ways to represent information, create a positive classroom climate, monitor learning, believe all children can succeed and influence both surface and deep learning. One thing that many frameworks and much research on effective teaching suggest, is that a distinguishing characteristic that effective teachers seem to have is that, in all their approaches to planning, designing and implementing instruction and assessment, their focus is on creating positive learning environments for all students.

Teacher Standards and Classroom Management

The classroom management practices associated with effective teachers can be seen throughout the standards in both the professional knowledge and the professional practice domains. An effective teachers role is to support student participation by establishing and implementing inclusive and positive interactions (standard 4.1), which cannot be done without establishing and maintaining orderly and workable routines, to create an environment to engage and support all students in classroom activities and learning tasks (standard 4.2). In order to enhance this learning, teachers first of all understand the physical, social, and intellectual needs (standard 1.1) of students and know how they learn (standard 1.2). This enables the development of effective teaching strategies, that address the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse backgrounds (standard 1.3) and differentiate teaching to meet the specific learning needs of all students (standard 1.5). Teachers will then be better equipped to plan, structure and sequence learning programs (standard 3.2) that establish challenging learning goals and develop a culture of high expectations for all students (standard 3.1). Teachers will more readily use effective classroom communication, including verbal and non-verbal strategies, to support student understanding, participation, engagement and achievement (standard 3.5) as well as select and apply effective teaching strategies to develop knowledge, skills, problem solving and critical and creative thinking (standard 3.3). All of this whilst managing challenging behaviour, establishing and negotiating clear expectations with students and addressing discipline issues promptly, fairly and respectfully (standard 4.3).

It would seem apparent from these standards that effective teachers know who their students are. They know their students' needs, their learning styles, their strengths and areas they need to improve as

learners. They are masters of their subject matter, but more importantly, effective teachers are continually focused on their students' learning and development as young people. This particular trait of effective teachers could be categorized as that of classroom management "... teacher actions and instructional techniques to create a learning environment that facilitates and supports active engagement in both academic and social-emotional learning" (McDonald, 2013, p. 20).

Much of the process-product research "has contributed to the development of teaching principles and practices that, when implemented systematically in classrooms can enhance student learning and support positive classroom behaviour" (Gettinger & Kohler 2006, p. 90). Studies in the past have attempted to assist teachers with adopting these more effective classroom management strategies giving them manuals and access to workshops to further explain how these strategies could be used (Emmer, Sanford, Clements & Martin 1983). To begin with, some strategies resulted in improved behavioural patterns exhibited by the students; however, within six months teachers were no longer using the strategies recommended. Whilst this may have resulted from the treatment being mainly informational with no opportunity for feedback, directed practice or continued encouragement and support from colleagues or mentors, Clements and Martin (1983) also found that teachers tended to fall back on old habits based or incorrect and sometimes misconstrued views of young people. As many teachers not only lack skills in classroom management but have attitudes and beliefs that are inconsistent with current research about classroom management and young people it would seem apparent that even practicing teachers need assistance in clarifying and changing misconceptions in their thinking (Brophy, 1988), which will in turn impact their practice.

A need for consistency with current research rather than a reliance on preformed attitudes and beliefs is also true when it comes to the AITSL standards. While the current AITSL standards establish nationally what is required of teachers in Australia and are relatively broad in focus, some states within the federal system are continuing to develop/modify their own set of standards, which focus more on practice than building knowledge. Recently, for example, the New South Wales (NSW) Centre for Education, Statistics and Evaluation (2014) identified only 5 standards as closely aligned to the focus area of classroom management, all situated within the practice domain. These include 3.2 – Plan structure and sequence learning programs; 3.5 – Use effective classroom management communication; 4.1 – Support student participation; 4.2 – Manage classroom activities and 4.3 – Manage challenging behaviour. Whilst this seems to fall into the trap highlighted earlier of focusing only on changing or enhancing practice rather than also building more informed and relevant knowledge and beliefs it does however correlate with the Centre's suggestion, drawn from the US National Council on Teacher Quality (NCTQ), that are five key strategies for effective classroom management:

1. Rules – establish and teach classroom rules to communicate expectations for behaviour.
2. Routines – build structure and establish routines to help guide students in a wide variety of situations.

3.Praise – reinforce positive behaviour, using praise and other means.

4.Misbehaviour – consistently impose consequences for misbehaviour

5.Engagement – foster and maintain student engagement by teaching interesting lessons

that include opportunities for active student participation.

This same trend toward narrowing the focus of classroom management to that of control

has also occurred in England through a Government “White Paper” (1998) which also supported behaviourally-based management programmes and endorsed schemes such as Canter and Canter’s ‘Assertive Discipline ‘package” (Bromfield, 2006, p. 189). The emphasis in all three approaches, those in the US, in NSW and in England, appears to be on control and quick fixes, despite the fact that research has shown that rigid rules, rewards and punitive approaches are more likely to exacerbate, rather than eliminate, behaviour problems in schools (Cooper, 1998).

The NSW Education Department Centre for Education, Statistics and Evaluation does

also mention an additional six strategies that the NCTQ identified as not having the same level of

research consensus but were viewed as valuable topics:

1.Managing the physical environment.

2.Motivating students.

3.Using the least intrusive means.

4.Involving parents and the community.

5.Attending to social / cultural / emotional factors that affect the classroom’s social climate.

6.Building positive relationships with students.

Interestingly these “additional six strategies” are supported by research. The MCEETYA

(The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs) funded Student Behaviour Management Project is just one project that identified these core behaviour management principles as best practice in Australia (De Jong, 2005). These principles are well supported by research from around the world, similar to Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers & Sugai (2008) empirical literature search, which viewed classroom management as integrating teacher actions to create, implement, and maintain positive learning environments. This type of definition incorporates similar tasks as those De Jong alluded to such as connecting and developing caring and supportive relationships with and among students with high and explicit expectations; organising and implementing instruction that facilitates deep and meaningful

learning and encourages student engagement; promoting the development of students’ social skills and self-regulation to assist students to clarify challenges and solve problems; and the use of appropriate interventions to assist student with challenging behaviours (McDonald 2013; Weinstein, 2006). Most of the current research on classroom management tells us that it is a “multifaceted endeavour that is far more complex than establishing rules, rewards and penalties to control students’ behaviour” (Weinstein, 2006, p. 5). It is also very apparent that cultivating effective classroom management in our classrooms and schools is as much about challenging, changing, adapting and enhancing teachers’ beliefs, knowledge and perspectives on young people, as it is about changing teachers’ practice.

Whilst the 5 standards suggested by the NSW Centre for Education, Statistics and Evaluation certainly do partly align with the definition of classroom management, so also do more pertinent standards that refer to teachers’ knowledge, beliefs and understandings of young people and their behaviours. To ignore these would be to ignore possible avenues toward improving teacher effectiveness. For example, using the seven core behaviour management principles from the MCEETYA project we can see many more standards that have a very important relationship with the understanding and application of effective classroom management, and these are also reflected by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) when they endorsed standards and procedures for the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia (2013). During the development of these standards, the Ministerial Council, together with AITSL, specified a number of priority areas for initial teacher programs one of which is classroom management. In more clearly defining this area they were very explicit in linking this to more broader aspects of the AITSL standards noting three particular standards: Standard 1: Know students and how they learn, Standard 3: Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning and Standard 4: Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments.

Conclusion

Behaviour problems in the classroom have been identified as a factor in the retention of teachers to the profession. The Australian Education Union (2006) national survey of 1200 beginning teachers identified behaviour management as the second most significant concern, after workload, for newly qualified teachers. Further, several studies have identified behaviour problems in the classroom as a significant factor in the stress and burnout for both novice and experienced teachers (Blankenship, 1988; Griffith, Steptoe, & Cropley, 1999; Martin, Linfoot, & Stephenson, 1999; Schottle & Peltier, 1991; Ingersoll 2002; Ingersoll & Smith 2003). If we are to truly assist teachers to “teach like the best”(AITSL, 2014, Statement of Intent), we need to ensure that we guide and direct them in terms of effective classroom management.

As consistently demonstrated in the literature, effective classroom management calls upon both a theoretical and a practical understanding of the needs of the young people and the impact that teachers can have in their academic and socio-emotional learning. As Jacob Kounin advised, way back in 1970, the techniques required for effective classroom management

are techniques of creating an effective classroom ecology and learning milieu. The mastery of techniques enables us to do many different things. It makes choice possible and... actually enables the teacher to program for individual differences and to help individual children. One might note that none of them necessitate punitiveness or restrictiveness (however) the mastery of classroom management skills should not be regarded as an end in itself. (p. 144).

In reviewing the research on effective classroom management and placing this within the frameworks on effective teaching, in particular the AITSL standards, a consistent understanding of the knowledge and perspectives has evolved. It is clear that effective classroom management is so much more than just rules, rewards and consequences, and that a mastery of classroom management skills is not an end in itself. It is evident from both the research and the standards that knowing and understanding young people, their needs and underlying motivations for their behaviours will help to inform a teachers instructional and behavioural approach to classroom management and should therefore also inform initial teacher programs in their approaches to effectively teaching classroom management.

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