

Classroom Management: Implications for Teacher Preparation Programmes

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Abstract

Although the importance of effective classroom organization and behavior management is widely acknowledged by educators, many teachers report inadequate training and little assistance from supervisors in establishing positive and productive classroom environment. Teacher candidates should be trained in a coherent classroom management approach focusing on maximizing the potential for learning and strategies to handle disruptive behavior. Novice teachers and children deserve better from our teacher preparation programmes and training that is carefully designed to prepare them competent in the three areas of classroom management viz., content management, conduct management and covenant management to meet the demands of today's classrooms. The purpose of the present paper is to provide certain suggestions related to teacher quality and effectiveness specially addressing the area of classroom management to improve outcomes in general education.

Key words: Classroom Management, conduct management, content management, covenant management, Teacher Preparation Programmes.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Today, teachers are expected to manifest a high degree of professional competence, and should be able to manage their classes in the way that students derive maximum benefit from their schooling. Mastery of classroom management is a critical component of effective teaching and learning, thus, teachers are often evaluated based on their management of the classroom. Teacher is the most important factor in qualitative programming for education. Teachers who possess the ability to manage their classrooms are able to create an environment where learning is the focus. Teaching is a complex profession requiring teachers to be effective in implementing and maintaining order while delivering instruction. This balance not only is a challenge for novice teachers, but also for the experienced teacher. Poor classroom management often leads to misbehaviors which interfere with teaching and learning, and produces tremendous stress [1]. This stress can lead to teachers exiting the profession. One of the primary factors for teachers leaving the profession is difficulties with student discipline. Classroom management is a great concern for teachers, and schools are expected to provide a safe, orderly environment and that teachers are liable for students' academic achievement. Classroom management is perceived to be dynamic and essential for academic success, therefore "creating the best learning environment possible is the primary focus of the classroom teacher's responsibility" [2]. Teacher education programs must ensure that student teachers not only have subject competency, but also possess the skills necessary to create a safe learning environment that promotes academic achievement.

II. WHAT IS CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT?

Classroom management refers to actions taken to create and maintain a learning environment conducive to attainment of the goal of instruction by arranging the physical environment of the classroom, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining attention to lessons and engaging in academic activities. [3] Marzano (2003) defined classroom management as the confluence of teacher actions in four distinct areas: i) establishing and enforcing rules and procedures, (ii) carrying out disciplinary actions, (iii) maintaining effective teacher and student relationships, and (iv) maintaining an appropriate mental set for management. Effective practices in these four areas leads to better classroom management.

Classroom management focuses on three major competencies: competencies in content management, competencies in conduct management and competencies in covenant management [4].

Content management places a special emphasis on instructional management skills, sequencing and integrating additional instructional activities, and dealing with instruction-related discipline problems.

Instruction refers to action taken specifically to assist students in mastering the formal curriculum through presenting or demonstrating information, conducting recitations or discussions, supervising work on assignments, testing, re-teaching etc.

Conduct management is centered on one's beliefs about the nature of people. By integrating knowledge about human diversity and individuality, teachers can manage their classrooms in a better, more effective way. Disciplinary interventions are action taken to elicit or compel changes in the behavior of students who fail to conform to expectations, especially behavior that is salient or sustained enough to disrupt the classroom management system.

Covenant management stresses the classroom group as a social system. Teacher and student roles and expectations shape the classroom into an environment conducive to learning. Student socialization refers to actions taken with intention of influencing students' attitudes, beliefs, expectations, or behavior concerning personal or social issues. Socialization includes articulation of ideals, communication of expectations, and modelling, teaching and reinforcing of desirable personal attributes and behavior, as well as counselling and modification and other remediation work with students who show poor personal or social adjustment.

III. BRIDGING THE GAP

Effective classroom management skills are essential for teachers. Unfortunately, many teachers do not receive adequate training in classroom management prior to beginning their teaching careers and feel unprepared for the demands of managing student behaviors in classrooms. Although effective classroom management practices have been identified, there exists a significant gap between the effective classroom management knowledge base and requirements for teacher training. As a result, many pre-service teachers are not prepared to effectively manage student behavior upon completion of a teacher preparation program due to a lack of exposure to classroom management content. Given the importance of classroom management, it is appropriate for teacher preparation programs to be concerned with the classroom management skills of pre service teachers [5]. In light of the limited number of hours available in most pre service teacher education programs and the relatively short amount of time pre service teachers spend in field placements prior to assuming their first teaching positions, looking outside of university classrooms for ways in which to support and extend pre-service teachers' learning becomes more imperative [6]. Since the internship period remains a pivotal one for the student teacher, it is an opportunity to apply the knowledge and theory learned into the real classroom.

Competent teachers are well versed in classroom management and organization and use multiple teaching methods to accommodate students' learning style preferences; whereas, novice teachers who are not as well versed are not able to endure the complexities and multiple dynamics of teaching [7]. Because novice teachers are often less experienced in handling moments in teaching that require a teacher to make an immediate decision about how to respond to a particular problem in practice [8]. Effective classroom management strategies that address individual needs while protecting the interests of the learning community are the most valuable skill set a teacher can have.

Great danger is done to the spirit of novice teachers and their students when a lack of preparation results in classrooms becoming arenas for daily power struggles [9]. Pre service and novice teachers alike must learn that the ultimate goal in classroom management is to create within the class an atmosphere where individuals are free to learn, where each student knows why learning is important, and learn discipline themselves to stay on task and achieve the short- term objectives leading toward the long term goals.

IV.WHAT CAN BE DONE?

In teacher preparation programmes greater emphasis need to be placed on preparing teachers to be competent and efficient at managing today's classroom with diverse range of learners. It doesn't mean not only giving pre-service teachers the intellectual understanding involved but also ensuring that they have ample opportunity for guided practice and feedback in implementing both preventive and corrective behavior management strategies. In the light of the discussion above, the present paper provides certain recommendations related to teacher quality and effectiveness specifically addressing the area of classroom management to improve outcomes in general education. There must be provision for

- Instructional approaches for classroom management through course work and guided practice with feedback.
- Creating a positive classroom context [10].

IV.1 Instructional approaches for classroom management through course work and guided practice with feedback

Teachers must focus on effective instructional strategies to prevent academic and behavior difficulties and thereby facilitate increased student achievement. Effective instruction reduces disruptive behavior and enhances

academic engagement. Instruction that is effective in encouraging academic engagement and on task behavior can be achieved through

- educationally relevant instructional material
- A planned sequential order related to skill development at student's instructional level
- Frequent opportunities for students to respond to academic tasks
- Guided practice
- Immediate feedback

Attention must be paid to specific concerns when working with special need children. Pre-service teachers need to consider how the instructional environment may be experienced differently by special children and adjust the instruction appropriately in order to increase successful learning opportunities for all students. Use of classroom organization and behavior management innovation configuration can help teacher education programmes in identifying gaps in critical components and level of implementation in their curriculum.

In addition to ensuring the proper content, teacher preparation programmes must provide appropriate field experiences. One of the biggest influence within the pre-service teacher education course is the field based experiences training teachers encounter in real classroom context [11]. Field experiences provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to develop their pedagogical skills to prepare them for future classrooms. Field experiences would be structured to ensure that students made the most of the limited time available and focused their learning efforts on key issues and skills. Students would be cued to notice the general classroom management systems such as rules, procedures, routines that were being implemented in the classroom, and they would have at least one and preferably two or three opportunities to do sustained and guided observation during the first week or two of the school year. In general, classroom observations would be structured through checklists, lists of questions to answer or other mechanism for cuing attention to particular details of classroom management, and student teaching would include planning assignments focused on classroom management and opportunities for feedback and reflection on classroom management issues.

IV.2. Creating a positive classroom context

The complexities involved in classroom management effectively can be reduced through good advance planning and preparation. Teachers can ensure the success of planned activities by arranging for an appropriate student seating pattern, having needed materials ready for efficient distribution to the students, and preparing thoroughly enough to be able to instruct effectively without becoming confused or having to stop and consult a lesson plan for teachers guide. Further simplification is achieved by developing rules and procedures for handling commonly occurring situations.

Effective classroom management requires teachers to be expert at employing multiple strategies and to be skilled at recognizing when current practices are ineffective and modifications are necessary. A classroom management plan with preventive, supportive and corrective management techniques will help to establish positive classroom context. These techniques include teacher proximity control [12], establishing classroom rules, use of cues, acknowledging appropriate behavior, employing relationship building strategies and, behavioral contracting techniques [13]. Practice with feedback from supervisor and mentor is useful in developing these skills.

Methods that promote the reflective-practitioner approach to teacher education attempt to situate classroom management within real-world contexts and events. Videotapes of classroom management situations may illustrate varied contexts and provide opportunities for analysis. Microcomputer simulations and video aided programmes can increase the self-efficacy of teachers. The use of cases in teacher education is also helpful in providing varied contexts and opportunities for constructing understanding about teaching and management [14]. Components that make use of classroom experiences such as journal writing, reflective activities, and portfolios can enhance classroom management competence of teachers. Case-based instruction [15] also has the advantage of providing novice teachers with rich, contextualized descriptions of classrooms and behavioral problems, while eliminating some of the complexity and immediacy of the classroom that can create difficulties for novice learning. An increasingly popular design for incorporating early field experiences and coordinating its components with teacher education curriculum is the Professional Development School (PDS) model [16]. Professional development schools (PDS) are innovative institutions formed through partnerships between professional education programs and schools. In PDS prospective teacher and mentor teacher learning becomes i) experimental, ii) grounded in teacher questions, iii) collaborative, iv) connected to and derived from teachers' work with their students, and v) sustained, intensive, and connected to other aspects of school change. Increased exposure to classrooms and students in the PDS model also increases the encounters that novice teachers have with classroom management. PDS also provide a supportive teacher network or community that is organized around learning how to teach and how to manage classrooms. Integrating PDS

model in to our teacher education curriculum can reduce the gap between teacher education institutions and schools, and thus provide teacher candidates with experience in real classroom context.

V. CONCLUSION

How much can be accomplished through good pre-service education in classroom management concepts and strategies remains yet to be seen. The development of an established knowledge base concerning effective classroom management and of a consensus of expert opinion about principles of effective student socialization and disciplinary interventions has made it possible to instruct students systematically in a single coherent approach rather than merely provide them with brief exposure to contrasting point of view. The challenges ahead for the novice teacher are astounding and should not be further complicated due to a lack of preparation in classroom management since it is the crux of the teaching experience. The difficulties in classroom management can be overcome by developing caring, supportive relationships with and among students, organizing and implementing instruction in ways that optimize students' access to learning, using group management methods that encourage student engagement with academic tasks, promoting the development of student social skills and self-regulation, and using appropriate interventions to assist students who have behavior problems. Teacher education programs should seek methods to foster reasonable internal attributions for student success and failures and facilitate development of self-efficacy. Pre-service teachers, their supervisors, and their mentor teachers should examine and discuss the rationale behind pedagogical decisions and differentiate between process and procedure in assessing student teacher efficiency. Above all pre-service and novice teachers alike must learn that the ultimate goal in classroom management is to create within the class an atmosphere where individuals are free to learn, where each student knows why learning is important, and learn discipline themselves to stay on task and achieve the short- term objectives leading toward the long term goals.

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