CRAFTING A NEW WORLD IN SCHOOL EDUCATION

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Contents

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

MUMTAZ N S

Abstract: 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. Classroom management refers to any action a teacher takes to create and sustain a learning environment conducive to attain the goal of instruction by organizing the physical environment of the classroom, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining attention to lessons and engaging in academic activities. Classroom management focuses on three major competencies- competencies in content management, competencies in conduct management and competencies in covenant management. Stemler[2006] suggested a set of seven strategies viz., avoid, comply, confer, consult, delegate, legislate and retaliate for dealing with social situations. Teachers are expected to manifest high degree of professional competence and should be able to manage their classes in the way that students derive maximum benefit from their teaching.

Keywords: Classroom Management, Confer, Delegate, Retaliate, Legislate, Comply

Introduction

Teachers are more effective only when they understand the reasons behind why the children misbehave in classrooms. When a teacher fails to understand the reasons for misbehaviour, treating the misbehaviour is much more difficult. Considering the complexities of classroom, it's no surprise that the problem of maintaining discipline in schools is a major concern of students, teachers, parents and school administrators (Rose & Gallup, 1998). Review of literature shows that there are multiple reasons for indiscipline in classrooms. Interest in learning, self-confidence, perception of what is important, attitude toward school, prior achievements, home and social life, cultural background, substance abuse, inadequate study skills, hyperactivity, non-academic interests, antisocial tendencies and exceptionalities are some of them (Cangelosi, 2000). Then how a teacher can manage the diverse group of students in

a classroom in order to bring the optimum level of learning among students.

Classroom Management: Meaning

Obviously, the term classroom management seems basic, but if discussed in detail, it is very complicated because it has significant consequences for educating the students."Classroom management refers to actions taken to create and sustain a learning environment conducive to successful instruction. It includes arranging the physical environment, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining students' attention to lessons and engagement in activities" (Brophy, 2006).

The framework offered by Evertson and Weinstein (2006) represents a current and widely accepted view of classroom management. "Classroom management has been defined as any action a teacher takes to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning". According to them, "classroom management seeks to establish and maintain an orderly environment to engage students in meaningful learning. Moreover, it also aims to enhance students' social and moral growth". They view classroom management as a many-sided activity including five specific tasks, as follows:

i. Develop caring and supportive relationships with and among students

ii. Organize and implement instruction in ways that optimize students' access to learning

iii. Use group management methods that encourage student engagement with academic tasks

iv. Promote the development of students' social skills and self-regulation, and

v. Use appropriate interventions to assist students who have behaviour problems.

Classroom management is the blending of teacher actions in four distinct areas:

(i) Establishing and enforcing rules and procedures, (ii) carrying out disciplinary actions,

(ii) Maintaining effective teacher student relationships, and

(iii) Maintaining an appropriate mental set for management (Marzano, 2003). Only when appropriate strategies are applied in these four areas and operate together does the classroom function effectively. In simple terms, classroom management can be understood as the progression of strategies teachers utilize to promote order and student engagement in learning.

Significance of Classroom management

One of the most important role teachers play in the classroom is that of the classroom manager. A poorly run classroom cannot ensure effective teaching and learning. If students are disorderly and arrogant and the behaviour is not directed by clear rules and procedures, chaos becomes the norm. In these situations, both teachers and students suffer. Teachers struggle to teach and most likely students learn far less than they should. But in a well-managed classroom teaching and learning takes place simultaneously in an effective manner.

Teachers' capacity to organize classrooms and monitor the behaviour of their students is key to positive educational outcomes. New teachers typically express concerns about lacking effective means to handle the significant disruptive behaviour of students (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000). Teachers who have problems with behaviour management and classroom discipline are frequently ineffective in the classroom, and they often report high levels of stress and symptoms of burnout (Berliner, 1986; Broilers & Tomic, 2000; Espin & Yell, 1994). Although, sound behaviour management does not guarantee effective instruction, it provides the structure of the environment that allows for good instruction. Reciprocally, highly effective instruction reduces, but does not eliminate classroom behaviour problems (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

Hardin (2008) took a common view of classroom management based on its primary emphasis. He viewed classroom management in three ways-as a 'discipline', 'system', and 'instruction'. The principle 'classroom management as a discipline' views "the teacher is responsible for maintaining classroom control, discipline comes before instruction, and consequences must exist for inappropriate behaviour". Classroom management is identified as a system because teachers are expected to "plan and organize engaging activities for their students keeping in mind to minimize any kinds of disruptions and defiance during these activities". It is considered as an instruction because it focuses on "to teach

appropriate behaviour and social skills, with the focus being on helping students to develop positive interactions throughout their lifetime rather than on behaviour at a particular moment".

Dimensions of Classroom Management

Classroom management has three dimensions viz., content management, conduct management, and covenant management (Froyen and Iverson ,1999).

Content management places 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. Content management occurs when teachers manage space, materials, equipment, the movement of people, and lessons that are part of a curriculum or programme of studies.

"Conduct management refers to the set of procedural skills that teachers employ in their attempt to address and resolve discipline problems in the classroom" (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). Conduct management is based on one's beliefs about the nature of people. By incorporating information on human diversity and individuality, teachers can better, more efficiently control their classrooms. Disciplinary interventions are actions taken to bring about or force changes in the behaviour of students who fail to meet expectations, particularly behaviours that are significant to disrupt the management system in the classroom.

"Covenant management focuses on the classroom group as a social system that has its own features that teachers have to take into account when managing interpersonal relationships in the classroom" (Froyen & Iverson, 1999). Covenant management stresses the classroom group as a social system. Teacher and students' roles and expectations shape the classroom into an environment conducive to learning. The teacher-student relationship has been found to have profound effects on the student's learning and schooling experience.

Classroom management competencies

Teachers who have content management competency understand students' level of knowledge and design lessons accordingly, clearly

set the learning objectives for each lesson, design learning activities that are relevant and suitable to students and instructional goals, structure lessons so students can engage in variety of instructional methods, incorporate students' interest into lessons, use variety of learning aids to facilitate student understanding, teach through different learning modalities –auditory, visual, and kinesthetic to ensure multisensory learning and deal effectively with instruction related off-task behaviour.

Teachers who have conduct management competency use a variety of discipline techniques, consistent in their approach towards discipline, use a continuum of strategies to acknowledge appropriate behaviour, use a continuum of strategies to deal with misbehaviour, focus on preventive rather than punitive measures and establish rules and procedures.

Teachers who possess covenant management competency have the ability to develop a caring and supportive attitude towards students, value students' opinion, respect the individuality of students, promote healthy classroom interaction, maintain appropriate level of dominance, correct students in a constructive way and communicate an expectation that the student will do better in the future.

Principles of classroom management

Some principles of classroom management are given below.

- Improving students' inner self-control is better than exercising external control.

- Define clear rules when rules are required.

- Students are more likely to follow classroom rules when they understand and accept them.

- Allow students to assume independent responsibility.

- Students have less discipline problems if they are engaged in the work in accordance with their interests and aptitudes.

- Management should fix its sights towards maximizing the time students spent in productive work.

- Minimize disruptions and delays

- Plan independent activities as well as organized lessons

- Encourage effort of the learners and reinforce appropriate behaviour.

Issues in classroom management

Mastery of classroom management is a critical component of effective teaching and learning, and hence teachers are often evaluated based on their management of the classroom. Classroom management refers to any action a teacher takes to create and sustain a learning environment conducive to attain the goal of instruction by organizing the physical environment of the classroom, establishing rules and procedures, maintaining attention to lessons and engaging in academic activities. According to Froyen &Iverson (1999), classroom management focuses on three major competencies: competencies in content management, competencies in conduct management and competencies in covenant management.

Behaviorism and constructivism are the two predominant educational theories that form the basis of learning among the learners. Subjectivity and inter-subjectivity that takes place in the classroom interactional process do not find any place in behaviorism. The active involvement of the learner in the learning process is of little or no concern in behaviourism. Here the students are supposed to be attentive, disciplined and passive receivers of knowledge through their teachers. Behaviouristic method of teaching is criticized for its rote learning, forced memorization of textbook material and monotonous learning patterns among learners .As a result a paradigm shift was emerged in the society in which children are the constructors of knowledge and teachers are only as facilitators in the process of child's construction of knowledge. The National Curriculum Framework (2005) highlighted the importance of a constructive learning perspective, which considers learning as a process of knowledge building. In contrast to behaviourism, the constructivist paradigm is based on the assumption that knowledge is subjective and learners construct knowledge in the social and cultural milieu in which they are entrenched. That is, in constructivist classrooms students construct their own knowledge by testing ideas and approaches based on their prior knowledge and experience, applying them to new situation and integrating new knowledge gained with pre-existing intellectual constructs.

The shift from behaviourism to constructivism poses great challenges to the teachers especially the novice teachers in managing the classroom. Constructivist classroom demands certain teacher skills,

especially in the planning and execution of teaching, collaborative learning, student diversity and discipline in the classroom. Present day teachers face high levels of disruptive activity in the classroom that interferes with the time of instruction. Discipline problems are frequently cited as one of the most troubling concerns for teachers (Ingersoll &Smith, 2003).Also, the inclusive nature of the classroom today has made the situation much more difficult for teachers. Even the most experienced teacher find difficulty in handling such a situation effectively. As a result, many teachers resort to ineffective and sometimes detrimental strategies to manage misbehaviour. It is unsurprising that teachers who are consistently faced with such challenges report high levels of teacher stress, burnout, job dissatisfaction and quit their jobs (Clunies-Ross, Little, & Kienhuis, 2008; Kokkinos, 2007).

"Classroom organization and behaviour management competencies significantly influence the persistence of new teachers in teaching careers" (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). New teachers typically express concerns about lacking effective means to handle the significant disruptive behaviour of students (Brouwers &Tomic, 2000).Though teachers have to deal with a number of social interactions on a daily basis, they typically receive little formal preparation to choose the right strategies to deal with the variety of social situations.

Becoming effective classroom managers

According to Froyen and Iverson (1999), a teacher who is competent in managing classrooms must have competency in the three dimensions of Classroom management- content management competency, conduct management competency and covenant management competency. Within the context of teaching, practical skills are important for teachers to communicate their ideas effectively during instruction and to adapt to a variety of situations that call upon their social perspectives. According to Sternberg and his colleagues (2000), practical skills can be decomposed into three sub components viz., dealing with self, dealing with others and dealing with tasks. Using Sternberg's theory of successful intelligence as a guide, Stemler et al. (2006) presented a set of seven strategies for dealing with social situations empirically derived from their research with teachers, such as avoid, comply, confer, consult, delegate, legislate and retaliate.

a) Strategies for dealing situations

Confer

The strategy 'confer', means to discuss the issue within the context of a closer and more personal sphere. The assumption underlying this approach is that some problems are best solved at the private face to face level, without the social pressures and potential humiliation associated with discussing an issue within the public domain. The approach requires the person to be verbally expressive and confronting the source of any problem. The confer strategy is based on the principle that rational thought dominates human interaction. A key feature of the strategy 'confer' is that the participant may or may not be open to change his or her viewpoint.

Delegate

In some situations, teacher may delegate a problematic situation to others because the teacher does not have the energy to deal with the problem or the teacher may not believe him or herself capable of solving the problem.

Consult

A third strategy for dealing with interpersonal interactions is to appeal to a third party for advice. It could take the form of asking someone else for advice about how to deal with a given situation or it may take the form of asking all the parties impacted by the decision to come together and work on the problems to find an apt solution. In this approach the decision-maker reaches out to an outside third party and asks them to work together to solve the issue, rather than asking the third party to solve the problem by themselves only.

Retaliate

Retaliation could take the form of passive- aggressive action, such as physical, verbal or psychological abuse. Rather than attempting to communicate directly with a person, a teacher may choose to retaliate in order to teach the person a lesson. The idea behind this strategy is that some people are not likely to change on the basis of discussion, but rather will be more likely to change their behaviours only as the result of a direct attack on their egos.

Avoid

The strategy 'avoid' can take the form of simply closing the eyes to the problem as it is presented or not attending to the situation. Avoidance can take different forms depending on the situation like simple denial or procrastination. Use of the strategy 'avoid' are sometimes desirable; when one thinks a problem should solve itself, or there is no hurry to find a solution, because there is not yet enough knowledge available for a solution, although it may later become available.

Legislate

Teachers create a new policy in an effort to device a system and thereby the teacher will handle all situation of this particular kind in a consistent manner. In many situations, there may not be explicit rules on how to handle the situations. But the teacher tries to solve the problems according to some acceptable law and order.

Comply

'Comply' strategy indicates to act in accordance with whatever is asked of them regardless of the situation. This strategy may reflect a desire to avoid an altercation or an uncomfortable situation. A person can pursue a course of action simply because he or she does not wish to deal with the situation or the individual may do so because of a belief in the idea.

It is important to note that for any type of social interaction to manage the classroom, each of these seven techniques has both advantages and disadvantages. No single strategy is consistently the best in all situations. So, all teachers are expected to find themselves in situations where they are confronted with issues, and therefore the way in which they deal with them will have an important impact on their professional effectiveness in managing classrooms.

b) Organizing the classroom

Planning of the instruction becomes better if the teacher has a good understanding about how the school's physical environments should be organized. The following are some guidelines for organizing the classroom.

- Make the work areas, bookshelves, student desk, teachers' desk etc be easily accessible by both teachers and students.
- Make sure that the teacher can clearly see the students.

- Give special attention to the specially- abled students while making seating arrangement.
- Easy access to teaching materials and other supporting aids.
- Make sure that students can interact with their peers easily, if needed.
- Position the groups to see the classroom presentations clearly- can be arranged either in traditional rows or columns, or U-shape, or clusters.

c) Establishing classroom rules and procedures

It is much easier for students to fulfill the expectations of a teacher when they know what these expectations are. Teachers can make their expectations known to students by directly establishing the rules and procedures of the classroom and by giving students the opportunity to practice them. Following points will help the teachers to establish classroom rules and procedures.

- Establish rules in terms of students' academic responsibility and accountability
- Let students to establish rules
- Rules should not be too strict or too lenient
- Document the rules
- State rules positively as far as possible

d) Managing interpersonal relationship in the classroom

The rapport between teachers and students influences the learning both directly and indirectly. Teachers who foster positive relationships with their students create classroom environments more conducive to learning and meet students' academic and personal needs. In order to maintain a healthy interpersonal relationship,

- Greet students by their names
- Equal sharing of responsibility
- Trust and listen the students
- Use appreciation words whenever needed
- Leaving the ego at the door
- Build empathy
- Apply positive psychology- admire negative attitudes

e) Managing instruction

Effective management of classroom instruction paves the way for the teacher to engage the students in active learning. The present-day classrooms are equipped with technological devices. In such a classroom, teachers are also equipped with technology related classroom management skills. The following points help a teacher to impart the instruction very effectively to the learners.

- Effective preparation and organization of lessons- prepare on a consistent basis, tuned into the class, and had effective strategies for dealing with lessons
- Effective organization of physical environment in technology integrated classroom
- Being aware of what is going on in the class
- Maintain students' attention
- Use cues to alert the students to give necessary information
- Foster accountability throughout the class
- Create effective transitions and procedures
- Promote the level of student engagement
- Helping students connect with the material using anticipatory activities, and use appropriate instructional strategies for meeting various cognitive needs
- Use interaction patterns to keep the learners focused on the lesson
- Make clear the learning target to the students

f) Managing student behaviour

An experienced teacher knows that good discipline doesn't happen all at once. Managing student behaviour is not an easy task. Since the students are a heterogeneous group, naturally there may be a lot of problems to be handled by the teacher. The techniques like principle of extinction, alternative behaviour patterns, reinforcement schedules, shaping, cuing and modelling etc can be used for changing the habits of learners. Certain behaviours on the part of the teacher are necessary for good discipline.

- Always tell students 'what to do' rather than 'what not to do'
- Allow students many opportunities for choice-making

- Set up a behaviour contract
- Teach the students to respect others
- Free talk with students-hear what the students have to say-always treat students with dignity
- Train the students to be self-reliant
- Make a rapport with the parents
- Create suitable situations highlighting the importance of academic engagement.

Conclusion

Although many classroom management issues are identified as a major issue in our schools, researches point out some guidelines for the teachers to manage the class effectively. Teachers are more effective when they understand the underlying reasons for student's unrest in classrooms. Appropriate selection and use of problem dealing strategies like confer, delegate, consult, retaliate, avoid, legislate and comply, developing effective rules in teaching -learning process, teach to diverse learning styles and multiple intelligences, greet students by calling their name, developing and sustaining positive relationship, notice and build on student's strength, know the students thoroughly, tell personal stories, teach empathy, say 'no' respectfully, ensure by giving recognition , encourage meaningful student involvement etc are some of the key points to be kept in mind by the teachers while managing classroom interactions and teaching learning process.

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