Research Paper EDUCATION

Dimensions in Classroom Management:- Special Emphasis on Indian Education System

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ABSTRACT

Classroom management is one of the most essential skills to becoming an effective classroom teacher. This paper will deal with how behaviour theories influence the classroom management and provide teachers with prevention classroom strategies that can be used in the classroom. As we are aware that in India, there has been a shift from behaviourist approach to a constructivist approach so this paper will also explore how the classroom management strategies are effectively used at Digantar(An Alternative school in Jaipur, India), which we can use at formal education system. The study concludes that establishment of the classroom rules, attitude of the teacher, participation in learning and cooperation among peers are the pillars of the classroom management.

KEYWORDS

Alternative School, Attitude, Classroom Management, Cooperation, Behaviourism, Constructivism

INTRODUCTION

Teaching is our passion and we always believe that teaching practitioners should always work out to find out the solutions of the problems. Hence, in this paper I will reflect on the dimensions in the classroom management strategies, which is one of the vital components of the teaching.

The term classroom management has been defined differently by various educators throughout the history. In most general terms, classroom management refers to the actions and strategies that teachers use to maintain order (Doyle, 1986). Martin, Yin and Baldwin (1998) define classroom management as a broader and comprehensive construct that describes all teacher efforts to oversee a multitude of activities in the classroom including learning, social interaction and students behaviours. Classroom management constitutes three broad dimensions; person, instruction and discipline. (Martin & Baldwin, 1992).

Classroom management is one of the most important aspects of a teacher's daily responsibilities. It is also one of the areas in which teachers are given the most freedom. Teachers can choose from a variety of classroom management strategies based on their personalities and values as well as the personality of the class. A well-managed classroom can provide an exciting and dynamic learning experience for everyone involved.

Traditional approaches were mostly based on the behavioural principles and laws of learning. The child was often viewed as the recipient of knowledge and teacher had the control over the students and subject matter. As a result of behavioural approach to instruction, teachers preferred behavioural classroom management techniques that consistent with their way of instruction. The behavioural model requires strong intrusion and management techniques on the part of the teacher. Teacher is the leading person and therefore, has the responsibility of all on-going issues in the classroom; from students' motivation to misbehaviours.

OBJECTIVES

1. To describe how behaviour theorists influenced classroom management.
2. To find preventive measures to combat stressful situations during classroom management taking into account the position of classroom management at Digantar.
3. To generalize on the basis of review of literature on classroom management of the last 10 years.

HOW THEORIST INFLUENCE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Burrhus Frederick Skinner

Burrhus Frederick Skinner's philosophies can be related to the issue of classroom management. As a renowned learning theorist in the 1930's and 1940's, Skinner (Sprinthall, 1981) emphasized his research on how the organism learns, regardless of its inherited potential, regardless of its stage of physical or psychological development, and often regardless of its species. Otherwise stated, he saw learning as a result of associations formed between stimuli and actions, or impulses to act. Simple associations would accumulate to larger groups of learned associations. Skinner felt learning resulted due to conditioning, similar to Pavlov's dogs' being conditioned to salivate at the sound of a specific tone. In regards to the classroom, Skinner (Conte, 1994) stated that by rewarding students for good behaviour and ignoring or punishing wrong behaviour, students would come to understand how to behave in a classroom environment. Behaviours that were rewarded would be repeated; those that were not would be avoided, and thus, a well-behaved class would result. This step-by-step conditioning process helped Skinner (Sprinthall, 1981) develops and test his first "teaching machine" in the 1950s. The teaching machine was a form of programmed instruction. At first, it was seen as a threat to teachers and their jobs. Reassuring the educators, Skinner announced that his programmed instruction was a learning aid, not a substitute for a human teacher. He also reassured educators that the children trained with the device would not become mechanized little robots, but would more likely be able to reach their intellectual potential. Later, Skinner was credited with creating a revolution in the technology of education.

Skinner's research of reinforcing stimuli also led him to the development of behaviour-modification techniques in the classroom. Behaviour modification involved training teachers to wait for their students to emit appropriate responses and then to reinforce those responses quickly and consistently. This idea of behaviour modification would again, revolutionize technology in education.

Abraham H. Maslow

Maslow's research on hierarchy of needs has also influenced effective classroom management. Helping students meet their own needs is of the utmost importance to enhance student learning opportunities and to maintain teacher longevity in the classroom. Maslow (as cited in Sprinthall, 1981, p. 327) an important psychologist in the area of motivation theory, has suggested that there is a definite order in which individuals attempt to satisfy their needs. Maslow had declared

there is an "order-of-importance" that is universal among all humans. Until these needs are met, the individual will not be concerned with the needs of the next level of importance. In other words, basic survival needs override other needs in this hierarchy. Herbert Grossman (Gordon, 2001) recaps students' basic needs and the order which those needs must be met to produce well balanced members of society. The following is a summary of Grossman's basis for student need using Maslow's Need Hierarchy:

*** Physiological satisfaction:** taking care of hunger, thirst, and rest

*** Safety:** avoiding injury, physical attack, pain, extreme temperatures, disease, and psychological abuse

*** Nurture:** receiving love and acceptance from others and having a feeling of belonging to a group

*** A sense of personal value:** experiencing self-esteem, self-confidence, and a sense of purpose and empowerment

*** Self-actualization:** realizing one's full potential

The theory of hierarchy of need can be related to the school setting. According to Gordon (2001) school staff members may attend to basic physiological needs on a daily basis by providing breakfasts and lunches for needy students and, in some cases, making home visits to teach parents how to provide for their children's needs. Until these physiological needs like food are met, basic functioning in the learning environment is very difficult, maybe even impossible. Although meeting the second category of needs-those regarding safety issues may lie outside of the teacher's direct influence when students are at home or away from school, some of these needs can be addressed in the classroom. Good classroom management can help to ensure protection of students from physical attacks by other students, dangerous environmental conditions such as playing around electrical equipment, and from psychological abuse from peers or adults.

Gordon (2001) believes the teacher has the opportunity to create a learning environment that is kind and respectful in order to meet the nurturing need. Students will be better able to reciprocate genuine loving, caring behaviours toward other people if the demonstration of affection is modeled for them in the classroom. The fourth category of needs that Gordon (2001) states surrounds self-esteem, self-confidence, a sense of purpose, and empowerment that will directly relate to love and acceptance. If a student feels cared for and can express those emotions and behaviours, the student will continue to build self-esteem and confidence. The need of self-actualization can be fulfilled when the more basic needs have been met.

William Glasser

In the 1950's, Glasser's Reality Therapy (Emmer and Stough, 2001) stressed the use of choice as the cause of behaviour, good or bad, and thus instructed teachers to direct students towards making value judgments about their behaviour. By making value judgements, students would come to realize the importance of "good" choices in behaviour and continued to make them again in the future. Therefore, students were taught the difference between a "good judgement", and a "bad judgement". Students are taught "right" from "wrong" at a very young age. Parents model this behavior for their children on a daily basis. They make value judgements by making "good choices" and "bad choices". In today's classrooms, rewards are given for "good choices" and consequences are given for "bad choices". This process too, is to promote good behaviour and diminish bad behaviour in the classroom.

Jacob Kounin

Jacob Kounin and his colleagues engaged in substantial classroom management research during the 1970s. His work focused on determining whether specific behaviour settings and environmental conditions influenced behaviour. He also identified a set of teacher behaviours and lesson characteristics, including, withitness, smoothness, momentum, overlapping and group alerting. These characteristics would describe a teacher who knew what was going on at all times in the classroom and was able to deal with more than one issue or problem at a time. Good classroom management would then facilitate student learning, by allowing teachers to accomplish other important instructional duties. Kounin (Conte, 1994) thought teachers who could be that "aware" would be better managers of children in the classroom.

According to Emmer and Stough (2001), Kounin also became interested in a rather contemporary issue of the time. He questioned whether managerial behaviors that work for regular education students have the same effects on students identified as emotionally disturbed in the same classrooms. His answer was "yes," at least in whole class behaviour settings in regular education classrooms. This research was an early indication that inclusion of children with disabilities within the classroom was the right approach.

Kounin's work then focused on management research shifting from reactive strategies to preventive strategies and from teacher personality to environmental and strategic components of management. His work highlighted the influence of classroom activities as a source of important variations in student and teacher behaviour. With this wide range of theories, Kounin's research of classroom management helped to identify many of the issues teachers are still facing in today's classrooms.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO COMBAT STRESSFUL SITUATIONS DURING CLASSROOM MANGEMENT

The first preventive measure is **cooperation.** Cooperation is key in preventing stressful situations in the classroom. Educators can build authentic relationships with their students through meaningful conversations; talking to your students allows them to connect with you, get to know you, and share their needs with you. "Dialogue provides the foundation for caring relationships. It is the language of cooperation, not control" (Epanchin, Townsend, & Stoddard, 1994, p.290). Simply having conversations with your students is not enough to build a relationship with them, especially when you and your students have dissimilar cultural backgrounds (common in urban school settings.) As the teacher, it is your responsibility to work towards understanding the cultural dimensions that these students bring to their relationships. Building relationships with a student from a culturally diverse background takes a great deal of time and effort in order for you both to "genuinely understand each other and then work towards establishing mutual understandings and agreements" (Epanchin, Townsend, & Stoddard, 1994, p.292).

The second preventative measure you can take is **preparing the classroom environment for learning.** Stressful situations are less likely to occur as a result of student disruptive behavior if the students feel it is a safe place to learn and are stimulated by their environment (Epanchin, Townsend, & Stoddard, 1994, p.26). "Student learning and achievement are heightened in classrooms where students feel that they belong, can trust others, and feel safe" (Akiba & Alkins, 2010, p. 65-66).

The third preventative aspect of classroom management is **participation in learning.** Teachers need to ensure that all students are engaged in the learning. Research results show that learning and behavior problems go hand in hand and that sound teaching strategies can decrease disruptive behavior (Tyler-wood, Tandra, Cereijo, & Pemberton, 2004, p.32). "Classroom management is problem prevention rather than problem solving, thus reducing the need for intervention. (Brophy, Jere; et al.,1999, p. 82). Studies reveal that when students are engaged in academic achievement, they are less likely to engage in inappropriate and/or disruptive personal or social behavior. (Tyler-wood, Tandra, Cereijo, & Pemberton,

2004, p.32).

The forth preventative measure is setting parameters for co-operation. This is where teachers and students come together to form classroom agreements and agree on procedures. It is crucial for elementary classrooms to have rules and procedures in place, because it helps the children to make sense of their classroom environment. Classroom rules are often a teacher's first step in classroom management. Teachers must decide who will make the rules and how they will be taught to the students while also considering how the rules will be perceived by students. These rules should set high standards for the students, which creates a better learning environment. Once rules have been established, teachers need to monitor student behaviour to ensure rules are being followed. Many teachers struggle to find a way to monitor student behaviour while still having time to devote to instruction of content. Strategies such as self-monitoring (Rafferty, 2010; Vanderbilt, 2005) and daily behaviour report cards (Chafouleas, Riley-Tillman, & McDougal, 2002) are often utilized to reach this balance. Many teachers also use a token economy reward system to help manage the class. With this strategy, students earn tokens for good behaviour and accumulated tokens can be exchanged for a reward (Anderson & Spaulding, 2007). Good classroom management is essential to a productive classroom and it is up to each teacher to discover which strategies work best for the current students in the class.

Classroom management strategies at DIGANTAR – The classroom practices were symbolic of the philosophy of Digantar. Some of the observations are shared by the researcher here -

- Self-discipline, wherein rules are made by students and teachers involvement like with the saying of 1,2,3 all are supposed to sit in a circle, a rule which they have formed for themselves.

- Sitting arrangement wherein first all sit in a semi-circle including the teacher and conduct a 'Sabha' wherein students are given opportunities to take decisions with respect to games, and activities to be conducted inside or outside the class. Also they reflect on the previous day activities and other issues of the classroom. Additionally responsibilities / duties are also assigned.

- Dignity of labour wherein the students as well as the teachers do the cleaning, sweeping together. The important thing to observe was the students are never forced to do anything but they themselves realize it as their duty and take joy in whatever they do.

- Discussion/ 'Baatcheet' is used as an effective classroom management strategy wherein the students have the freedom to express their problems, concerns and suggestions or can even pin point when the teacher himself breaks the rules of the class.

- Equal respect to both student and teacher wherein they don't follow a hierarchical system; the teacher is not seen as an authoritarian figure but as a facilitator, friend and guide. There is a lot of trust and faith for each other.

- Bal Panchayat wherein students themselves vote for the selection of their representatives as in a democratic system avoiding to any favouritism amongst teachers towards students.

I met a teacher during my visit at Digantar (October, 2012) and he shared 'that at Digantar they share a very special relationship with the children. Children love to share their happiness and sorrows with their respective teachers. The children have a lot of trust on us and have no fear to express what they wish and desire. We make it a point to pay individual attention to each and every child since in our class different age group and ability students study at the same time. We distribute work according to the ability and potential of the child. Since the majority of the children mostly come from Muslim community, we also encourage them to seek education from Maulvi and this is highly appreciated by their parents since we give then freedom to gain knowledge with respect to their religious scripture 'QURAN'. We play with them every Friday and the game is suggested by the students only. We never beat any child as we believe love , attention and care is the need of the hour for the holistic development of the child'.

CONCLUSION

Students must be able to play an active role in their education as well as in the way the classroom is managed. To make classroom management effective, teachers must allow students to assist in creating the classroom rules. By allowing students to play a part in the rule-making process, students know what is expected of them by both the teacher and their peers. This also gives the students a feeling of ownership, fulfilling Glasser's theory of human needs. With the establishment of classroom rules, students have set their own boundaries, therefore they are less likely to cross those boundaries. The establishment of rules in the classrooms is very important factor.

Another important factor is the attitude of the teacher. Teaching with enthusiasm and motivation can create a positive learning experience. Eventually, this will transfer to the students. Teachers should make show respect to all students, which can be done bylearning students names and keeping an open ear for students.

The basic organization of the room and layout of the desks can have a major impact on student motivation. Teachers can further create a positive learning experience by developing a pleasant and appealing classroom.

Classroom management goes beyond discipline. Problems in the classroom can be nipped before they start with some planning. Teachers have the power to shape the environment of the classroom, ultimately shaping student's motivation and attitudes.

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