

Effective Classroom Management in Relation to Classroom Routines and Rules

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Abstract: Much research has looked at the effect of classroom management on the quality of teaching and learning activity, and set up principles of effective classroom management. However, how to put these principles into practice in a typical classroom is still a question to be answered in the minds of new teachers in profession and most of those already in the field of education. This paper which reinforces the findings and suggestions from many previous works, not only presents findings from these studies, but also includes some recommendations about how to put them into practice. Using a simple table, it organizes the mostly-known principles into usable, concise formats. Four topics are considered: (1) the need for forming rules and establishing routines in a classroom; (2) the relationship between routines and classroom management; (3) the basic principles of establishing routines in relation to classroom participation and discipline; (4) the practical ways of putting well-known rules into practice.

Introduction

Classroom Management which is said to be a primary concern of teachers ever since there have been teachers in classrooms, and known to be of great importance to both new teachers in profession and those already in the field of education, is described as “the orchestration of classroom life” including planning, organizing, arranging the environment for optimum efficiency, monitoring student problems, and anticipating potential problems (Heimlich, 1988); or, as the actions teachers take to create an environment that supports and facilitates both academic and social emotional learning (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006).

However, few problems associated with teaching receive more attention than classroom management and discipline (Doyle). Classroom Management is a topic of enduring concern for teachers, administrators and the public. It consistently ranks as the first or second most serious educational problem in the eyes of general public, and beginning teachers consistently rank it as their most pressing concern during their early teaching years (Handbook of Classroom Management).

The first reason why classroom management receives so much attention and ranks as a problem is considered to be the preservice programs which do not adequately stress the requisite concepts and skills needed for helping prospective teachers prevent and deal with the discipline problems. Some trainers still feel that their training leaves them underprepared for the daily realities of managing and maintaining a good standard of pupil behavior in the classroom (Jones, 2006). Secondly, classroom management is needed for the efficiency that teachers must have. If the teacher is ineffective, students under that teacher’s tutelage will achieve inadequate progress academically, regardless of how similar or different they are regarding their academic achievement (Wright, S. Paul et al., 1997). However, Good and Brophy (1984), in their investigation of teachers basic skills and efficiency, found that many teachers felt their worth as a teacher was directly related to their success of implementation of management skills. Thirdly, and, most importantly, effective classroom management should be a priority simply because effective

teaching and learning can take place in a well- managed classroom. Brophy and Evertson (1976) concluded that almost all surveys of teacher effectiveness report that classroom management skills are of primary importance in determining teaching success. Because, if teachers cannot control their own classroom situation, they cannot effectively teach (Watson, Scott, et al., 2007).

How to Accomplish Effective Classroom Management

Despite the generally recognized importance of classroom management, it has remained a murky area of conflicting ideas and vague rules. Teachers regularly complain that they receive little practical help in facing the realities of teaching (Doyle). The reason lies in the fact that each class and each teacher is unique. Teachers have different personalities and philosophies; different objectives and strategies of teaching, as well as their students who also have different goals and personalities. Therefore, it is possible to talk about different methods for achieving effective classroom management. However, the answer to the question “Which method is the most effective one?” is, also, not clear. Teachers who are unique need to realize that they are the ones who are responsible for, choosing and applying, or, even, creating the best method for their unique class in order to achieve classroom management.

Though there is not a certain way that leads teachers to effective classroom management, studies suggest the following principle to get it: create a positive working atmosphere, which is far from misbehaviors partly because students actively engage in learning activity, which make them feel special and give them a sense of achievement; and partly because a set of classroom rules, the consequences of which are also compiled by students themselves. Thus, there are two priorities to achieve classroom management: (1) minimized discipline problems and misbehaviors; (2) maximized students’ participation.

Teachers can handle most misbehavior with the use of eye-contact, voice, facial expressions, and other body language, but it is recognized that the key to success is not how you deal with misbehavior but rather how you prevent misbehavior occurring to start with. A crucial aspect of pre-empting misbehavior is establishing clear rules and expectations in regard to classroom behavior. The work of forming rules may sound inappropriate and authoritarian, especially to those who always prefer to put “tolerance” at the top of their principles, but setting some rules clearly and consistently is almost “a must” to be able to function effectively in the classroom. Because, if there are no apparent rules and procedures that guide behavior, chaos becomes the norm. In these situations, both teachers and students suffer (Maranon, Robert J., et al., 2003). In order to ensure that classroom activities do not lead chaos and conflict, a number of rules and procedures need to be adopted. However, effective teaching is greatly facilitated if classroom rules are laid down and enforced.

As Woolfolk-Hoy and Weinstein (2006) summarized in the Handbook of Classroom Management, the majority of teachers who tends to a “traditional” or “custodial” orientation to classroom management believe in strict adherence to rules, and the ones who tend to a “liberal progressive” or “humanistic” orientation to classroom management believe in democratic principles and the importance of self-discipline. What one can conclude from this study is that whatever the teachers with different kinds of orientations believe in, there is something mostly accepted: the need for using some principles to achieve discipline in classrooms. Generally, teachers seem to prefer neutral or positive/supportive interventions over negative / punitive actions, but control oriented strategies, such as reminders of rules of behavior, threats to punish, and actual punishment, are seen as appropriate for hostile, aggressive, disruptive, and defiant students(Brophy& McCaslin, 1992).

However, almost all discussions of misbehavior make reference to the qualities of effective teaching which sustain pupils’ engagement in the learning activities in hand and it is the teacher’s ability to keep pupils engaged in the learning experience which is of fundamental importance for maintaining discipline (Chris Kyriacou). To a large extent, ‘participation’ which is, also, considered by both female and male students to be one of the factors related to effective learning and to result in more positive views of learning experience (Sadker&Sadker, 1994), can be maximized by the effective use of participation and evaluation sheets which can be as simple or as complex as teachers desire. Doyle noted that if students have the impression that work will not be graded or that any answer is acceptable, then involvement is low unless the activity is exceptionally interesting.

Essentials of Establishing Classroom Rules

Establishing the rules as early as possible is crucial. Studies have shown that experienced teachers are very clear about the classroom rules they expect to be followed when they first meet their new classes at the start of the academic year (Wragg, 1993; Wragg&Wood, 1984). Also, in an interview-based research (Jan van Tartwijk, et al., 2008) involving authoritative, tolerant-authoritative and directive teachers, it was concluded that almost all teachers

emphasized the importance setting rules, especially at the start of the lesson; sticking to their own rules; being clear about rules and procedures in the classroom; making students follow these rules, as a condition for creating an orderly working climate. This research not only shows how teachers of different styles are agreed on the importance of classroom rules, but also, partly, answers the question asked above, because it emphasizes some essentials such as clarity, continuity, and consistency. The following highlights the basic characteristics of best classroom rules and how to put them into practice.

A Model Putting Principles Into Practice

In attempting to answer the question above, this study presents a model based on the principles confirmed by researches and suggested by experienced teachers. At the top of the model which was developed with support from an English teacher with 25-year experience, H.Ozkan, there is a classroom contract which is rearranged at the every beginning of every school year, which is called to be a critical time for achieving order in classrooms. As it was concluded in the studies of Evertson & Emmer (1982), and Sanford & Evertson (1981), early attention to classroom management at the beginning of the school year is a critical ingredient of a well-run classroom. “It is time when basic rules and procedures are established. Moreover, the teacher’s ability to manage activities is on display for the first time. Successes or failures at this stage have consequences for the rest of the year.” says Doyle .

Such a contract works, especially, for building a mutual respect between teacher and pupils, the importance of which cannot be overestimated. Because, generally speaking, the most effective classroom appear to be there in which atmosphere is task oriented, but at the same time the social and emotional needs of the pupils are met by establishing mutual respect and rapport. (The Book of Essentials of Teaching)

<p>CLASSROOM CONTRACT Date:..... Class:.....</p> <p>This contract has been arranged by the teachers and students ofSchool in order to provide an effective learning and teaching environment with mutual respect. The contract is rearranged at the every beginning of every school year, and it is signed by the teachers and students after reading the rules one by one. Then, it becomes valid throught the school year.</p> <p>..... </p> <p>The students, teachers and parents signed the contract accept, also, to pay the consequences agreed in case the rules are disobeyed.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> Student Teacher </p>	
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Table 1. Sample Classroom Contract

A classroom contract is, also, expected by students who know that it is arranged to maximize their success and minimize confusion in which they cannot learn well. In Marsh et al.’s study (1978), pupils put the teachers whose discipline is weak among the factors that ‘provoke’ them misbehave. Doyle noted that students expect their teachers to be able to keep order and admire those who manage classrooms well. According to Chris Kyriacou, pupils are very sensitive to the teacher’s ability to establish such rules, and will often test out how a teacher will cope with an infringement in order to clarify the rules and how they will be operated.

In the model mentioned above, the set of rules which forms the contract is compiled following the general principles suggested by the studies of effective classroom management. First of all, considering his/her educational philosophy and how can it be expressed through the rules, or, gathering sample rules that have worked for other teachers, the teacher compiles a list of classroom rules which should be routinized in time. “To establish an atmosphere of mutual respect, it is a good idea to provide your students with a description of the kind of the

classroom environment you'd like to have", suggests Dr.Cynthia Anderson. This description (or set of guidelines) should use a positive tone to inform your students about not only what you expect from them, but what you promise to do yourself. In addition, to increase the effectiveness, it should be firm, build mutual respect, emphasize the positive, be consistent, and avoid idle threats.

On the first day of the school year, students are informed about the necessity of a classroom contract to make the classroom safe and to create a positive atmosphere that facilitates their learning. Then, as a beginning-of-year activity, the copied rules the teacher listed are discussed and rearranged. Students are involved in making up the rules with the teacher's guidance. As a mostly-known fact, the more the class are involved in making up the rules, the more these rules and their consequences are obeyed, because of the feeling of responsibility for the actions. Throughout the process, using negatives and dictating rules without explanations are avoided, the rationales behind the rules are certainly explained. After making up the rules, the contract is signed by both the class and the teacher. Two copies of it are handed to each student. The first must be kept in their files and the other must be signed by parents and returned to the teacher to be kept. If the parents are informed of the rules their child must obey, then the teacher won't experience much difficulty when he/she is confronted with the misbehavior of the student. The signed contract, also, puts the teacher in a good place in the eyes of parents, because a teacher with effective management skills is always desired and admired by parents.

However, forming a classroom contract is just the beginning to accomplish effective classroom management. The efficiency and functionality of a classroom contract depend mostly on the teacher's ability to apply it and two essentials to be kept in mind: 'consistency' and 'continuity'.

The first one, 'consistency', requires the teacher to deal with a misbehaving student in a very similar manner as he/she did another student. Its effect can be explained as follows: if teachers are consistent with the way they handle uncivil or inappropriate behavior in their classrooms, and if they set good examples themselves, they will find that their students will begin to follow the guidelines they have set, and may even help them to enforce the rules.

The second, 'continuity' helps the classroom activities and rules become routines. Teachers who establish routines in their classes feel at ease, and have extra time for constructive teaching. Since events happen fast in classrooms, and, during a limited class period immediate and unpredictable events or interruptions can frequently take place, teachers are always in need of establishing routines to be able to act fast and avoid wasting time. Renee Rosenblum, calls children as 'creatures of habit' and stresses the need for routines, "School children work beautifully when they know what is expected of them... Homework, classroom chores, and certain structured lessons can easily be routinized. You will find that routines will provide you extra time for constructive teaching instead of spending time giving unnecessary explanations." In addition to their positive effect on reducing confusion in classrooms, routines have also such an effect on students' participation that the more the routines are established in a classroom, the higher the involvement is, because students are aware of procedures and their sequence, in other words, they are familiar with the classroom activities.

In the system mentioned above, many activities are routinized through the rules provided in classroom contract, and their consequences are recorded on a table. Table 2, is a sample including main classroom activities to be routinized in a typical classroom. However, it should be kept in mind that the use of the table is very practical, but will need to be adopted for the age groups that teachers are teaching and/or the classroom environment in which teaching takes place. In other words, the success of the table depends on the teacher's ability to use it effectively.

MONTHLY GRADING FORM

MONTH..... LEVEL.....

No	Name & Surname	A 1			A2	A3	A4	A5	Average	General Exams			FINAL GRADE
		1	2	3						1	2	3	
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													

A: Activity A1: Quizzes and Projects A2: Notebook
 A3: File A4: Participation A5: Discipline

Table 2. Monthly Grading Form

According to table 2, there are five main activities that can be routinized in a classroom: quizzes and projects, notebook, file, participation, discipline. Of course, teachers can change its content as they desire. However, general exams are out of “routinized” activities although they are included in the table. The reason is that they are added directly to the general average, not to the average of other activities.

To function, the table also requires some sub-tables for each activity on it - different sheets for participation, homework, quizzes, etc. During each 4-week period, each student’s activities are graded by the teacher as it is agreed in the classroom contract, and they are recorded on those sub-tables or sheets. At the end of the period, the average of each activity is calculated one by one for each student and is recorded on the monthly grading form above.

Though the content of the sub-tables can differ from teacher to teacher, they mainly work for achieving the same goal: keeping good records of pupils’ progress in order to provide a useful basis for (1) feedback to pupils about their progress, which is of immense importance in contributing to motivation and further progress, and (2) report on pupils’ progress on a regular basis to parents, both in the form of written reports and during meetings with them.

File Grading Sheet

	No	Name& Surname	Date	C 1	C2	C3	C4	C5	Final Grade
1									
2									
3									
4									

C: criterion C1: Cover and Design C2: Handouts
 C3: Quiz Sheets C4: Correction Pages C5: Signatures

Table 3. Sample Sub-table: File Grading Sheet

The following are some of the rules for each routinized activity, which are required by the mentioned management system. However, what is crucial here is that the rules should be modified by teachers who know the best for their students.

Exams & Quizzes

Students whose parents call the teacher and tell the excuse, has a right to take the exam or quiz which wasn’t taken on scheduled time.

Students failed in a quiz have the same right that the students mentioned above have. But the mark they got for the first quiz is also recorded and valid.

Quiz sheets are signed by parents and kept by students in their files, just after the handouts to which they are related.

All students who couldn’t get full point in a given quiz prepare a “Correction Page” on which they write the right answers of the wrongly answered or not answered questions on their sheets. Correction pages are also kept in the files.

At the end of the month, while grading the files, the teacher records -2 points for each correction page which is not prepared and kept in the file, or not prepared according to the rules of the agreement.

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Homework

Homework is mostly given daily and involves about 30 minutes of work at home.
 The teacher checks the homework everyday regularly and records if it is done or not.
 The parents whose child hasn't done his/ her homework 3 times are informed by the teacher.
 Homework must be free of errors as much as possible and should be written clearly to be accepted as a full one.
 Each homework that isn't done, makes the student lose 2 points out of his/her monthly grade of homework.
 The student who didn't do the homework given the day before is responsible for the same homework for the next day.
 The student who gets -2 points for not doing the homework on scheduled time, gets another -2 points if it is not done the next day. However, if it is done, the -2 points recorded the day before remains.

Files

Handouts are kept in files clearly and orderly.
 Students write their names and surnames on each handout to make the teacher sure that no student uses the other one's handouts at the time of grading.
 Students are free to make some extra covers for the topics in their files.
 While grading files, the following are taken into consideration:
 Does it have a sticker on it?
 Is the student's name written on each handout?
 Are there any missing handouts, quiz sheets, or correction pages?
 What about the design of the sheets inside? (Their orders etc.)
 Does each quiz sheet have the signature of the parent?

Discipline and Participation

At the beginning of every lesson, "Classroom Discipline" is written on the right side of the board.
 During the class period, the student whose name is written under the title of " Classroom Discipline" gets -2 points because of misbehaving (misbehaviors are provided in the classroom contract), missing materials such as notebook and files, not being able to answer the question that has been answered 3 times before , and so on.
 During each 4-week period, each student has a right to get ten "pluses", each of which is 10 points, and the total of which is 100 points, to be recorded as the grade of participation on the monthly grading form.
 Each answer to each question is graded out of 10 points by the teacher according to the degree of correctness (The more the students participate and give correct answers, the higher marks of participation they get)

At the end of each month, the teacher prepares the monthly grading form according to the sub-tables. One or two class period is spent by evaluating the grades on this form. However, how the process of evaluation is also crucial. If the teacher wants to use it as an effective tool for achieving effective classroom management, it must be done in such an atmosphere that all members of the class must consider it as a breathtaking moment. The process is as follows: The student whose name is announced comes to the board and the teacher reads his/her monthly grades for each activity- except that of discipline. The student writes his/her grades one by one on the board. At the same time, another student sitting at his/her table calculates the average with the help of a calculator. It is better if the teacher calculates them before coming to the classroom to be sure the correctness of it and not to waste time. Then, the result is written on the board and after that the critical time comes. Because, it is time to announce the mark under the title of "Classroom Discipline" that shows to what extent the student obeyed the classroom discipline rules

throughout the month. It is important because it makes the student lose or gain some points out of his/her monthly average. It is possible that a student with high marks of homework, participation, and even quizzes can have a low mark as monthly average because of his/her misbehaviors called as “discipline”, and vice versa. By this way, the teacher emphasizes the importance of obeying classroom discipline rules and gets stronger on the way of achieving effective classroom management for the next month.

Next day, a list prepared by the teacher according to the final grades calculated the day before is put on the noticeboard. This list also shows the student who will become the chief of the classroom for the next month- as a rule, the student with the highest final grade is listed at the top and becomes the new chief.

Monthly Report
ENGLISH

Date:.....

Name and Surname:.....

Quizzes and Projects							
Common Exams							
Homework							
Discipline							
Notebook and File							
Participation							
Average							
Frequency							

Dear,

Above are all the grades the student received in the last 4-week period. For better grades and further progress in the next period, your contributions, supports and comments are always requested.

Yours faithfully

Teacher of English

Head of English Department

.....

.....

Your Comments:

.....
.....
.....
.....

Table 4. Monthly Report to Inform Parents

The next step: to form a monthly report on student's progress to be sent to the parents (Table-3). The report including all the marks the student got during the month and the teacher's comments has also a part separated for parents' comments and recommendations. Although many teachers complain that producing such reports is very time-consuming, in order to contribute to motivation, further progress and even the effectiveness of classroom management, writing reports that are fair, valid and meaningful to the reader works well. The key point here is that teachers need to make helpful and constructive comments. Where they need to be critical, their comments should usefully point to what needs to be done in future to improve matters (Kyriacou, 1998). Thus, teachers may have a chance to keep the parents informed of the progress or lack of progress of their child, and to arrange parent conferences to discuss what is better to do in the next month.

Conclusion

This study which has described a foundation for effective classroom management, has supported the following notion: "At all public school grade levels, effective classroom management has been recognized as a crucial element in effective teaching. In addition, poor management wastes class time, reduces student's time on task and detracts from the quality of the learning environment."(Emmer, Edmund, et al. 1982)

Throughout the study, an attempt has been made to explain the relationship between classroom rules and effective classroom management. It has been emphasized that establishing 'routinized' classroom rules is an essential aspect of the effective classroom management. In addition, essentials of setting classroom rules and putting them into practice are highlighted. In the light of principles confirmed by researches and suggested by experienced teachers, a practical way of achieving classroom management is described with a model-based approach. The model which was presented wanted to answer the question: How can classroom rules be established and routinized in order to achieve effective classroom management?

It has been concluded that a well-prepared classroom contract with the rules which are firm, consistent, emphasizing positive and established at the start of the academic year with the involvement of students, can be used as a tool to create a positive working atmosphere in classrooms, and build a mutual respect between the teachers and students, both of which are considered to be priorities to accomplish a well management in classrooms.

However, the importance of creating routines- standard procedures for putting names on papers, seeking teacher assistance, and handling in papers, for example-was explained, and it was noted that such a kind of work provides more involvement of students, and reduces confusion in classrooms, because of the familiarity of the activities. As the basic tools for establishing routines, evaluation sheets were considered and how to use them effectively were exemplified with tables of rules, which can freely be modified by teachers according to the environment of their classes.

The comprehensiveness and orderly presentation of this work which can be considered as a guide to effective classroom management achieved by establishing routines in relation to participation, discipline and even homework will be helpful to educators, and its easy-to-practice principles will help, especially, new teachers to develop their own classroom management skills.

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