



Nigeria Journal of Education, Health and Technology Research **NJEHETR**

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 1 JANUARY, 2012



PUBLISHED BY

Association for the Promotion
of Education, Health, Environment
and Technology Research

ISSN: 2251-0087

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT AND CONTROL: A BOOSTER FOR QUALITATIVE EDUCATION

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Abstract

The management and control of classrooms in the school system in terms of maintaining order and achieving effective learning is one of the most difficult tasks facing beginning and inexperienced teachers in recent times. Owing to this singular aspect, some teachers wish to leave the teaching profession. Students' characteristics and incidences of disruptive behaviour among students have become very complex and challenging due to the changing nature of the society. The tasks of the teachers have therefore increased enormously creating greater demands on them in an attempt to create positive classroom environments for effective teaching and learning. This paper provides techniques that teachers can adopt to achieve effective classroom management despite disruptive behaviour by students and provides tips on the prevention and management of indiscipline for the smooth running of the classrooms and effective teaching and learning. Suggestions are made for practical solutions to classroom problems to enable teachers teach without stress and achieve the goals of teaching and learning one of which is qualitative education.

Introduction

Education has been universally acknowledged as the bedrock and instrument for national development and economic growth of nations. The formal school system besides the informal and non-formal means of educating citizens provides the major deliberate channel through which individuals obtain education in order to be adequately equipped and empowered for meaningful contribution to self and societal development. What happens in the classrooms has a direct bearing with the quality of products from our schools. Today we bemoan the poor graduate turn-out on our universities and other institutions of learning. We have also witnessed the inability of the school leavers to provide services that justify their training. Uko-Aviomoh and Olamigoke (2011), attributed this woeful performance to the poor, decay and inadequate infrastructures, facilities and equipment that trail our educational institutions because the input determines the output. It is also mind bugging that funding of education is still subject to political debates in civilized countries who are expected to know the value of education. The poor quality of products from the educational system has become a great concern to all stake holders especially the employers of labour in recent times. This concern arises from the fact that the quality of products is a reflection of the quality of instructions and invariably the quality of the level of classroom management by teachers besides other variables. Teacher quality has been identified by several studies such as that of (Douglas 1997, Tarn 1994, Bear 2008 and Salman 2009) as a major factor that contributes to the quality of products from the school system. How pupils learn therefore becomes a major area of interest in educational management.

Classroom management appears to be a very difficult task to young and in experienced teachers who tend to become frustrated and discouraged from the teaching profession. The youth today have negative attitude to authority and learning, many parents have lost control of their children leaving the

whole job to the teachers, some changes in the society such as exposure to electronic media, acceptance of violence, militancy, immorality, rebellion confrontation, thuggery and attitude to substance abuse as well as the increasing lack of respect to authorities among adolescents have made classroom management and life in schools generally more difficult and demanding on teachers who are charged with the responsibility of maintaining a positive learning environment.

The Meaning and Concept of Classroom Management and Control

Classroom management is a term used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behaviour common among students. Management refers to issues of supervision, refereeing, facilitating and even ensuring academic discipline. Classroom management also implies the prevention of disruptive behaviour by students to ensure that classroom lessons run smoothly. It is the act of running the classroom and controlling the activities and pupils. This implies taking charge of the classroom and controlling what happens at any point in time. While there are current studies in higher education, literature that suggests a growing trend of students' rudeness and even overt animosity towards authority by students, the rest majority of classroom experiences are not dramatic, but are available. Not all students' behaviour requires intervention or confrontation while some are serious enough in nature to warrant formal disciplinary action in the classroom for learning processes to run smoothly.

According to Adesina (1985), classroom management is the process of understanding, maintaining, motivating and controlling the human resources in the classroom for maximum success in the teaching-learning situation, while Onwuegbu (1999), saw classroom management as the integration and effective application of the instructors qualities, efforts and techniques which he uses to ensure that every learner in the classroom learns and develops fully with a minimum of interference when it occurs. In the view of Edwin (2000), classroom management is concerned with how children learn, what subject matter is suited to their achievement level, the best way of relating the child to the subject matter and the growth of the child in its many forms.

For many teachers, classroom management is the most difficult aspect of teaching. It is one singular aspect of teaching that cause many teachers to leave teaching altogether. In 1981, the United States National Education Association reported that 36% of teachers said they would probably not go into teaching if they had to decide again. Their major reason being the negative students' attitude towards discipline and the challenges teachers face as a result.

Classroom management is also closely linked to issues of motivation, discipline and respect. A large part of classroom management involves behaviour modification, but a newer perspective on classroom management in "affirmative teaching" which attempts to guide students towards success by helping them to see how their efforts pay off in the classroom. This relies on the creation of an environment where students are successful as a result of their own efforts.

Guidelines and Techniques for Effective Classroom Management and Control

Classroom management involves minimizing disruptive behaviour by students. Much disruptive behaviour in classrooms can be alleviated before they become serious discipline problems. Such behaviour can be reduced by the teachers' ability to employ effective organizational practices. Such practices are in the heart of the teaching process and are essential to establishing and maintaining classroom control. The following are among several misconducts in the classroom that the teacher has to cope with through proper management:

- *sleeping in class*
- *lateness to class*
- *repeated tardiness*
- *refusal to participate or speak*
- *sharing or copying work*
- *monopolizing discussion*
- *guim, food, pagers and cell phone disruption*
- *noisemaking*

- verbal or physical threat
- refusal to do homework/assignment
- inattentiveness
- poor hygiene etc

Some organizational practices and techniques that can help to establish effective classroom management and control by the teacher are discussed below:

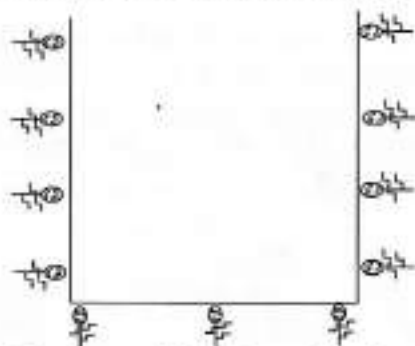
Classroom Setup and Room Arrangement

In a typical classroom, good behaviour is essential for learning to take place. The pupils are expected to be taught by the teachers, and they are expected to maintain some prescribed level of behaviour to enable them learn effectively. The arrangement of the classroom affects behaviour and several inexperienced teachers are unaware of this.

While a good classroom arrangement is not a guarantee of good behaviour, poor planning in this area can create conditions that lead to problems. In a typical classroom in which effective teaching and learning must be achieved, the teacher must be able to observe all students at all times and to monitor work and behaviour. The teacher should also be able to see the door from his/her desk. Frequently used areas of the room and traffic lanes should be unobstructed and easily accessible. Pupils should be able to see the teacher and presentation area without undue turning or movements. Commonly used classroom materials such as books, pen, pencils, chalk, duster, markers, rulers, teaching aids etc should be readily available. Teachers should not go out to look for chalk or marker during a lesson. Some degree of decoration will add to the attractiveness of the classroom. However over decoration of the classroom will distract students.

It is typical for classrooms to be set up in rows or lately (in some advanced countries), in groups of 3-4 tables which allow for easier cooperative learning. However each of the above has some fundamental problems e.g. **In rows**- studies and experience have shown that the further back you go, the more discipline problems there are. The visual and physical simulation from the teacher is increasingly diminished as you move further back. This allows boredom to set in, and as a result, potential disruption.

In-Groups- The opposite is the case. Students are over stimulated by the peers that are now not only next to him or her, but across the table. There is now more to distract the student, leaving the situation harder for the teacher to keep the students focused on and attentive to any frontal instruction. An alternative arrangement (if the class population permits) is to arrange the pupils chairs/tables into a three-sided box shape as shown below with an occasional second row if the space permits and if the students are many.



Recommended 3 sided box sitting

In this fashion, **every student is in the first row!** The teachers can freely move around the classroom while teaching and therefore creating room for personal contact with each student.

The result is greater attention and fewer discipline problems hence better learning. Desks/tables can be moved into cooperate learning groups when the need arises, usually this can be achieved within 2 – 3 minutes. It is good to give it a try in modern classrooms. This informs the need for controllable class sizes and maintenance of convenient teacher: pupils ratio in schools. The present Nigerian classrooms do not comply with stipulated ratio of one teacher to 30 students.

Learning School Policies

Prior to meeting the class for the first time, a good teacher should become conversant with the school policies concerning acceptable student behaviour and disciplinary procedures. These are usually

passed to new teachers during orientation organized for them by the school head after employment and redeployment. This emphasizes the need for orientation of new staff in schools.

Get Off To a Good Start

The first encounter between the teacher and the students in the classroom is when they formulate their first impressions of the teacher. Students usually sit quietly, raise their hands to respond and are generally well behaved. The teacher is easily misled into thinking that this is an ideal class and may relax their vigilance. Students within a week will begin to test the waters to see what they can "get away with". It is during this period that the effective teacher will establish the expected ground-rules for classroom behaviour (Marshall 2001).

Impressing the students from the Onset

The teacher should show evidence that he/she is organized and confident of his/her ability to go through the syllabus. This has to do with having a good mastery of the subject matter and methodology of presentation as well as adequate teaching skills. There is nothing like over preparation of lessons especially at the beginning of teaching a new class. First impression is indelible. The teacher's knowledge of his subject content is rightly judged by his/her ability to start a lesson with an attention grabber and finishing with something about how the students will use the mental/knowledge in the future. Adesina (1985), advised that the teacher must create a good impression of himself, he must develop interest in the students inside and outside the classroom. He must be a role model for his students and must be willing to give them hope of praise and recognition; must have good rapport with students. Again, the teacher's ability to answer student's questions from all angles is essential. *How the teacher handles questions in class is what distinguishes her from the text books or talking heads of video tapes.* All questions asked should be welcomed. Thank them for asking. If one student asks, others will be wondering. If you do not know the answer, suggest the students find out and report back the next class while you go to find out against the next class too. Being able to explain your lesson content clearly to the students' understanding and usage is a mark of mastering your subject content. The teacher should read widely and prepare every lesson effectively before teaching. Use more time to prepare, consult many sources of materials. Students have a way of knowing which teacher is a marker of his subject matter.

Time Management

Kauchak and Eggen (2008) explained classroom management in terms of time management. The goal of classroom management is not only to maintain order but to optimize student learning. We can divide class time into four overlapping categories namely: Allocated time, Instructional time, Engaged time and Academic Learning time.

Allocated Time: This is the total time allocated for teaching, learning and routine classroom procedures like marking of attendance register, announcements and arrangement of seating. Allocated time is also what appears on the class time table, which must be used effectively.

Instructional Time: This is what remains after routine classroom procedures are completed. This is to say, instructional time is the time where teaching and learning actually takes place. Teachers may spend two or three minutes or more taking attendance before their instruction begins. The time consumed for this has its own consequences or implications.

Engaged Time: This is also referred to as time on task. During engaged time, students are participating actively in learning activities – asking and responding to questions, completing workbooks and exercises, preparing kits and presentations etc.

Academic Learning Time: This occurs when students participate actively and are successful in learning activities. Teacher's evaluation of students to determine lesson objective attainment occurs here. Effective classroom management maximizes academic learning time.

Firmness, Fairness and Consistency

These are essential for good class management and control. A teacher can be firm yet still supportive and friendly with pupils. A firm teacher can provide an environment where pupils feel safe and

secure. It is better to begin a year in a firm manner and relax later than to begin in a lax manner and then later become firm. Fairness implies treating every pupil equally without favoritism or discrimination. A fair teacher earns a lot of respect from students.

Establishing Rules

The teacher should establish a set of classroom rules to guide the behaviour of students from the first contact. The rationale of the rules should be discussed with the pupils to ensure they understand and see the need for each rule. The rules should be kept short and precise. Classroom rules most often revolves around paying attention, respect for others, use of cell phones, excessive noisemaking, securing materials and completion of homework as well as punctuality.

Setting Expectations for Behaviour

The teacher should identify expectations for students' behaviours and communicate those expectations to students periodically. A small number of general rules that emphasize appropriate behaviour is very helpful in good class control. Compliance with the rules should be constantly monitored. School wide expectations particularly safety procedures especially in urban schools where some sophisticated and electronic gadgets are in use for learning should be explained carefully. Examples of common school rules include:

- 1) How students should react in case of fire outbreak rules
- 2) How pupils are to answer questions in class; for an example, "no student answer will be recognized unless he/she raises hand and is recognized by the teacher to answer the question".
- 3) Students should not operate electrical appliance without supervision. Do not develop or make classroom rules you are unwilling or incapable of enforcing hence you will lose control. Once a teacher loses control of the classroom, it becomes increasingly more difficult for him/her to regain. Research also shows that the time that the teacher has to take to correct misbehavior caused by poor classroom management skills results in a lower rate of academic engagement in the classroom.

Managing Inappropriate Behaviour

Effective classroom managers practice skills that minimize misbehavior as prevention is always better than cure. Most inappropriate behaviours in classrooms that are not seriously disruptive can be managed by relatively simple procedures that prevent escalation. According to Bear (2008) this can be achieved by:

- monitoring pupils carefully and frequently so that misbehavior is detected early before it involves many pupils or become serious disruption difficult to control.
- acting to stop inappropriate behaviour so as not to interrupt the instructional activity or to call excessive attention to the student by practicing the following unobstructive strategies:
 - moving close to the offending student or students
 - making eye contact and giving non-verbal signal to stop the offensive behaviour.
 - calling a student by name or giving a short verbal instruction to stop behaviour.
 - redirecting the student to appropriate behaviour by stating what the student should be doing e.g. "please look at the pictures on the board and identify the differences" etc or "I need to see every ones eyes looking here." More serious disruptive behaviours such as fighting, stealing continuous interruption of lessons, possession of drugs require direct action according to the school authority.

The teacher should promote appropriate use of consequences for effective classroom management. The most prevalent positive consequences are intrinsic student satisfaction resulting from success, accomplishment, good grades, social approval and recognition. Students must be made to know the connection between tasks and grades. Frequent use of punishment is associated with poor classroom management and should generally be avoided as much as possible. If punishment (otherwise known as negative consequence) must be used, it should be related logically to the misbehavior. Milder punishments are often as effective as the more intense forms and do not arouse as much negative emotion. Consistency in the application consequences is the key factors in classroom management. It was earlier

said that besides consistency, fairness is important in dealing with students behaviour in the classroom. Fairness includes recognizing good behaviour and their effort. Students need to be called by their names for good behaviour and sarcasm and shouting which indicate that you have lost control and should be avoided by the teacher.

Learning Names of Pupils

When a teacher devises a way of learning and knowing students by their names early in the course of teaching, the students' sense of well being is increased. This also gives the teacher a greater control of situations. For example, when a teacher says "David, stop talking and complete your work," it is more effective than "let us stop talking and complete our work." Learning pupil's names also makes students alert and attentive when the teacher asks questions, in class in the course of learning.

Managing Students' Academic Work

The success of students through good academic performance is central to effective schooling, therefore the focus on academic tasks and learning as the central purpose of students effort rather than a good behaviour is for its own sake. Students must be lead to study hard and held accountable for their work. For students to learn effectively, the teacher must be vast in educational psychology and child learning practices. Keeping students focused and wanting to learn is essential. This implies keeping students attentive at all times through the teachers managerial skills, good methodology and control making the lesson interesting. Teachers are encouraged to adopt "student centred approach" and the discovery method" where students are motivated to discover things for themselves, be independent, chose their own behaviour inquire and be actively engaged in the learning process, use problem solving approach and collaboration with others. In the view of Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Imogie (2005). The "students centred approach" and discovery methods are methods that deemphasize the traditional teaching method which depended heavily on abstract verbalism. They recommend a shift from verbal exercises to educational reform movement which emphasizes learning by concrete experience, direct observation and by education of the senses.

A teacher whose learning activities are characterized by active participation, inquiry, problem-solving and interaction with others will reduce indiscipline in the class and encourage effective learning and class control. In this case Abdal-Hagg (1998), opined that rather than being a dispenser of knowledge, the teacher serves as a guide, a manager, a facilitator and a co-explorer who encourages learners to questions, challenges and formulating their own ideas, opinions and conclusions. In the same vein, Mcinerney and Mcinerney (1998) are of the opinion that a student-centred approach is a democratic approach, where the teacher shares control and decision making with the class and encourages group initiatives. When class control becomes a collective responsibility through the teachers' good managerial skills, disruptive behaviour is minimized and learning is effective.

Good student participation in class activities will boost students' morale, satisfy their need for self esteem, ignite and inspire their zeal for better performance. Getting students to be attentive is very essential in learning. When a teacher notices loss of attentiveness or concentration during a lesson, anything he can do to bring two or more students to the front of the class will keep the rest of the class focused. When students are made to pay attention, good classroom environment will be created and class control is made easy. A Well managed and controlled class will bring about good academic performance.

Implication and Conclusion

For effective teaching and learning to take place the teacher must have a firm control of the class through good classroom management. To control does not imply dictatorship, it implies being in charge and maintaining order. If you try to teach without having control then the quality of teaching and learning will suffer. In order to have a good classroom control, the teacher must have and earn respect. In order to have true respect he/she must give it. That does not mean you can run a classroom without consequences.

In order to have discipline, according to Douglass (1997), the teacher must put in place consequences for bad behaviour and these consequences should match the offenses. Often the natural

consequences are best. Effective classroom managers are those who practice skills that minimize misbehavior. In order to be in charge of your class, there must be an imaginary line that should not be crossed. This does not mean you cannot be a friend to your pupils but it means that if friendship gets on the way of education, it has crossed the imaginary line and should be checked. However a teacher decides to manage his/her class, keeping a positive atmosphere in the classroom is very beneficial.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have become essential for the purpose of helping teachers' manage and control their classrooms for effective learning and qualitative education.

Orientation programme for new teachers is very essential to acquaint them with school rules and operation

1. Supervision of teachers at work at regular intervals will help in maintaining good classroom management techniques by teachers.
2. Government, private sector, parents and other stake holders should unrest more in education to provide adequate motivation for teachers to put in their best in teaching.
3. Staff development programmes in form of retraining, seminars, workshops and conferences for teachers should be made part and parcel of teachers on the job programmes at regular intervals, to update their knowledge to meet with the challenges of our changing society.

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