Literature Review: Classroom Management

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According to Harry K. Wong and Rosemary T. Wong in their best selling *How To Be An Effective Teacher: The First Days of School* (Wong & Wong, 2005), an effective classroom management style consists of creating an environment and attitude towards the students that is task oriented, predictable, and consistent. In a world that is constantly shifting away from a one size fits all approach to education in favor of individualized standards of conduct and performance, we as educators find ourselves faced with the duty of providing consistency in an environment that requires us to teach people with different needs and problems in a multitude of ways.

Duck (2007) attempted to find a solution to the high drop out rate of beginning educators. His study concluded that teachers who left the profession did so because they did not have a practical understanding of what effective classroom management practices were, nor did they have a basis upon which to formulate a preference in teaching style. The suggested solution was that educational institutions “begin teacher preparation with an introductory foundations course that has a strong experience base embedded in case studies”(Duck, 2007, p.30). While “classroom management does not equate with good teaching…it is the open door that good teaching must walk through to establish itself in a classroom” (Palumbo & Sanacore, 2007, p.67).

As incoming teachers we must understand what classroom management means in relationship to several areas. What is classroom management compared with classroom discipline? In what way does the inclusion of behaviorally disordered students influence classroom management and disciplinary procedure? What do schools and educational laws do to aid or hinder an educator’s success as classroom managers.
What is classroom management compared with classroom discipline?

With the shift away from many of the past forms of discipline, the concept of proper managerial procedure has gained prominence. Megableh, Atef Yusuf, Hawamdeh and Basim Ali, define classroom management and classroom discipline in dissimilar manners. “Classroom management refers to the procedures and routine actions used by the teacher to maintain the classroom quiet and smooth, while classroom discipline refers to the procedure and strategies used by the teacher to deal with incorrect actions or behaviors conducted by the student (Baron, 1999)” (Megableh et al., 2007, p.1). Palumbo and Sanacore (2007), agree that principals of good management focus on maximizing the efficiency of the teaching process. The prescribed routines can be as simple as writing opening instructions on a chalkboard before the arrival of your students. This practice allows the students to immediately get to work while you take care of administrative duties. Lesson plans are not a passive “thing to do. ” They are an active way of teaching to meet the students’ need to know and the social need to succeed in school” (Palumbo & Sanacore 2007, p.69). On average good organizational practices save thirty minutes of teaching time a day are. Consistent daily procedures can prevent loosing valuable time in repetitive and non-educational administrative actions.

Within the construct of a proper managerial system, the role of discipline focuses on being a proactive and preventative measure taken by the teacher to ensure order (Megableh et al., 2007). Another form of discipline focuses on punitive forms of behavioral deterrents. This form of discipline is used more or less to “clean up” after an infraction has already occurred. O’Reilly, Evans & Roberta (2007) state that the aim of punitive discipline in this case should be to prevent further misbehavior, and improve character. Their study was in response to the overwhelming of traditional practices of discipline on private campuses. The forms of discipline used in the past
consisted of administrative and or peer judicial review. The aim of the study was to find which of
the three models led to the least degree of recidivism. Rather than abolish their “complex and
time-consuming” system of discipline, the institutions believed that their current system was
extremely important because “calling a student to accountability is affirming his or her
dignity…if discipline is successful, then the student regains self control”(O’Reilly, et al., 2007,
p.2).

*In what way does the inclusion of behaviorally disordered students influence classroom*
*management and disciplinary procedure?*

According to Yell & Rozalski (2008), classroom management and discipline, by law,
must yield to the needs of individuals with disabilities. The set of rules and consequences for the
majority may not apply to the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) of some individuals. For
example, a rule may exist for the entire student body stating that no students should be out of
their seats without permission once the bell rings. Some students with IEPs may not be held to
that standard, if that IEP states that part of their disability prevents them from being able to
comply with such a rule. Yell & Rozalski (2008) also state however, that schools are responsible
by law for preserving a “safe, orderly and well-disciplined environment”(p.1).

This poses a problem for many who attempt to maintain order and consistency in their
classrooms. When the rules are not the same for everyone, what must educators do to provide
consistency? According to Yell & Rozalski, while students with disabilities are allowed many
protections under the People with Disabilities Act, the discipline of such individuals may not be
that different from that of other students. The main difference between the way that discipline is
handled for students with an IEP and students from the regular population regards the amount of
due process given to students with IEPs. A school must provide due process for all students,
however the amount of latitude given students is much greater when the student has an IEP’s. The rules therefore may be the same, while the consequences of breaking the rules may be different. In this way as long as those supervising the IEP in collaboration with the teacher take punitive action in a private manner, the students will still perceive fairness (2008).

Reese (2007) maintains that top among her four C’s of successful classroom management, Commendation plays a central role in positively reinforcing appropriate behavior. In classrooms where making negative examples is frowned upon, more affirmative approaches can lead to positive results. Make examples of people, but make examples of the best qualities instead of the worst. Whenever trying to regain control of a classroom, Reese offers, the solution of focusing in on those who are behaving in positive ways, and individually and publicly reward their good behavior. Positive reinforcement and looking for the good in students can change the attitude of a student from rebellious forms of attention seeking behavior to more productive forms of attention seeking behavior (2007).

Worrell states that one of the biggest barriers to positive school inclusion has been the negative attitude of the teachers involved. “When administrators, teachers, guidance counselors, parents, and related service personnel have negative perspectives about inclusive education at a particular school those who teach in inclusive classrooms at that school find it very difficult to achieve a high level of success”(Worrell, 2008, p.44). Wong & Wong agree that positive expectations more so than high standards are vital to successful classroom management (2005).

*How, as an entry-level teacher, will schools support me in learning how to effectively manage a classroom and what rights do we as teachers have under the law?*

Francis & Carter (2001) describe the struggle of the beginning teacher as “a rite of passage that is often described as a “reality shock.” ...The support provided to beginning teachers at this time is critical to the quality of their immediate professional experiences as well as to their longer-term professional learning”(p.249). Duck (2007) also assigns a great deal of importance
to the support system in place for beginning teachers, suggesting that individuals entering teaching programs be subjected to more real life experience and training in regard to classroom management. Carter and Francis (2007) describe the importance of the mentoring process to beginning teachers. They describe mentoring as “a workplace learning strategy…” that is, “an interactive dynamic process of professional learning in contrast to the uni-dimensional process implied by the transmission approach” (p.250) The transmission approach refers to teachers learning through the transference of practitioner knowledge through indirect observation while in the act of teaching. It is a one sided practice while mentoring allows the experienced “veteran” to learn as much perhaps from the “rookie” as the “rookie” might learn from the “veteran.” The process is dynamic and exposes “the potential of both influences” (Carter & Francis, 2001, p.250).

Duck’s approach focuses mainly on the exposure of the incoming teacher candidate to real life situations. This practice attempts to reach the candidate early on in their training, and expose the candidate to experiences that transcend various aspects, styles and approaches to teaching, with the hope that candidates might grow in awareness of their own personal preferences while they have choices to make in regard to their direction of study (2007).

As teachers, we have the legal obligation to provide our students with a safe, orderly and well-disciplined school (Yell & Rozalski, 2008). Yell & Rozalski also speak widely about the rights as teachers we have in regard to securing such an environment for our students. “In loco parentis”, a Latin term translated literally as “In place of the parents” was introduced in American courts and is derived from the English Common Law. “According to this principle, parents give school personnel a certain measure of control over their children when they place their children in school” (Yell & Rozalski, 2008, p.8).

While this may not mean that schools have absolute authority to do with students as they please without due process, it gives the teacher the right to “impose minor forms of classroom discipline, such as admonishing students, requiring special assignments, restricting activities, and denying certain privileges, without being subjected to strictures of due process” (Yell, Rozalski, 2008).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the subject of classroom management carries with it many diverse issues. However, as teachers we have the right and the duty to produce an environment that is conducive
to learning. We must proactively reflect on our methods, with the aid of our more experienced peers to learn the best practices. We must maintain positive attitudes towards situations that might otherwise be obstacles. Palumbo & Sanacore (2007) state that “No prescription or cure-all exists that will guarantee success in the classroom” (p. 70). However, through mentoring, early training, knowledge of both your rights as a teacher and the rights of your students, and a positive reflective outlook, a beginning teacher may be able to subtract some of the initial frustration and difficulty out of their early years.

Limitations

Limitations found on the subject of classroom management flow from the fact that many of the studies overlook the role of parents in the lives of your students. I would also have liked to know more about classroom management than how to prevent poor behavior and lost time. While I feel that the approaches described will prevent many bad situations, most writing glosses over areas that I believe are important, such as “What to do when all else fails?” As beginning teachers, we will have to confront the fact that we will make mistakes. We must be taught how to fix situations and not just how to hopefully prevent them from happening. As a youth I learned to fly airplanes. I learned to recover from stalls and spins, not just to avoid stalling and spinning. My instructors taught me how to recover because they thought that it might save me one day. Why should teacher education be any different?

Summary

In summary, I found that classroom management practices are far more about maximizing efficiency than about the use of disciplinary procedures. While we have the duty to maintain order in a classroom, we must use our best judgment to prevent misbehavior, through planning, and reflection. Furthermore, if we must discipline a student we should do so in a manner that improves the student’s character, and brings about order rather than further disruption. We must do so, based upon the individualized needs and legal requirements of our students.
Bibliography


