

Influences of Teacher Professional Development on Student Outcomes & Efficacy

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ABSTRACT

Teacher professional development has taken place in isolation and has been dependent upon input from outside “experts” (Sandholtz, A companion of direct and indirect professional development activities. Professional development for teachers is the range of formal and informal processes and activities that teachers engage in both inside and outside of the school, in order to improve their teaching knowledge and skills. As an alternative, collaborative action research actively involves teachers in professional reflection, validates educators as producers of knowledge, and recognizes their role in professional development and decision making. The value of teacher research is well documented (Cochran–Smith & Lytle, Inside outside: teacher research and knowledge, Teachers College Press, New York, 1993) but unless deliberate attempts to share findings are established, the products of teacher research often remain within individual classrooms. Strategies to develop collaborative research capabilities are needed. The ultimate goal of teacher professional development is improving student learning outcomes. Research indicates that teachers have control over many factors that influence motivation, achievement and behavior of their students. Therefore, professional development focusing on effective classroom management will enhance a teacher’s skills and performance in the classroom. Skills such as effective classroom management are vital to teaching and require common sense, consistency, a sense of fairness and courage. The skills also require that teachers understand the psychological and developmental levels of each student. The ability of teachers to organize classrooms and manage the behavior of their students is critical for achieving positive educational outcomes. Although sound behavior management does not guarantee effective instruction, it establishes the environmental context that makes good instruction possible. Reciprocally highly effective instruction reduces, but does not eliminate, classroom behavior problems. Effective classroom management competencies also significantly influence the persistence of new teachers in the classroom. Effective classroom management requires a comprehensive approach that should include structuring the school and classroom environment, actively supervising student engagement, implementing classroom rules, enacting procedures that encourage appropriate behavior, using behavior reduction strategies and collecting and using data to monitor student behavior and modifying classroom management procedures. Therefore in teacher preparation programs greater emphasis needs to be placed on preparing teachers to be competent and efficient at managing today’s classrooms with their diverse range of learners. This approach means not only giving pre-service teachers the intellectual understanding of the issues involved but also providing them supervised experience related to components of classroom management. The purpose of this paper is to provide research and recommendations related to professional development of teachers, specifically addressing the area of classroom management to improve learning outcomes

Keywords: Teacher research, action research, teacher collaboration

Though the organisation and content of education and training systems are entirely their responsibility.

Member States of the European Union increasingly acknowledge the benefits of policy co-operation

with their European Union partners to address common challenges in these fields.

For example, in the Education and Training Work Programme, Member States set themselves common

objectives to improve education and training systems. One is to improve the quality of teacher education. The programme is implemented through an open method of co-ordination, which promotes peer learning and makes use of indicators and benchmarks to support evidence-based policy making and to monitor progress.

As examples of the fruits of this work, the Council and Parliament have adopted various recommendations: “Improving Quality Evaluation in School Education” (2001/166/EC; OJ L 60 of 1.3.2001); and “Promoting Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” (2006/962/EC; OJ L 394/10 of 30.12.2006).

The Education Council has adopted conclusions: “Improving the Efficiency and Equity of Education and Training Systems” (OJ 2006/C 298/03 of 8.12.2006); “Improving the Quality of Teacher Education” (2007/C 300/07 of 15.11.07); and “Preparing Young People for the 21st Century: An Agenda for

Changing a child’s life through education is by far the greatest gift an educator can give to a student. Every child deserves the opportunity to receive education. Yet, some children are denied this privilege every day. Teachers play many roles in a child’s life. Today’s classroom is a very different place than it was fifteen or even five years ago. Teachers are faced with larger, more diverse classrooms during a time when teacher accountability is mandated as a result of the *No Child Left Behind* legislation. The ability to understand and respond appropriately to students’ cultural, racial, economic, social and learning differences will become increasingly important to effective teaching practices. Many educators find themselves frustrated and wonder how they can measurably increase student motivation and academic performance, while at the same time manage their classrooms effectively and cultivate the students’ desire to embrace a lifetime of learning. The 21st century teacher needs the skill and ability to manage students who never set foot in a school building (Brown, 2005). To this end, professional development for teachers is a vital tool in our quest to educate today’s children. In our effort to fully understand the importance and significance of professional development and effective classroom management for teachers in the 21st century, several points must be answered:

1. What exactly is professional development?
2. What exactly is classroom management?
3. Importance of effective classroom management for the teachers.
4. Various measures of classroom management.
5. Common mistakes in classroom behavior management.
6. Recommendations for the effective classroom management which leads to professional development of the teachers.

Professional development has been defined as a process that increases the life-long learning capacity of community members. This process promotes both high standards of academic achievement and responsible citizenship for all students (Michigan State Board of Education, 2000).

According to the thesaurus of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) database, *professional development* refers to “activities to enhance professional career growth.” Such activities may include individual development, continuing education, and inservice education, as well as curriculum writing, peer collaboration, study groups, and peer coaching or mentoring.

Fullan (1991) expands the definition to include “the sum total of formal and informal learning experiences throughout one’s career from preservice teacher education to retirement”

Classroom management is a term used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lessons run smoothly despite disruptive behavior by students. The term also implies the prevention of disruptive behavior. It is possibly the most difficult aspect of teaching for many teachers; indeed experiencing problems in this area causes some to leave teaching altogether. In 1981 the US National Educational Association reported that 36% of teachers said they would probably not go into teaching if they had to decide again. A major reason was “negative student attitudes and discipline”. (Wolfgang and Glickman)

The changing world of teaching

The environments in which teachers work, and the demands placed upon them by society are increasingly complex. As ministers have noted (2007/C300/07 of 15.11.07), teachers strive to

equip learners with a wide range of skills that they will require to take their place in a world that is in constant evolution; this hastens the need for the development of more competence centred approaches to teaching, together with greater emphasis on learning outcomes. Pupils are increasingly expected to become more autonomous learners and to take responsibility for their own learning. The learners in any class may come from an increasingly wide range of backgrounds and may have a very broad range of abilities.

In this context, even initial teacher education of the highest quality cannot provide teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary for a life time of teaching. Teachers are called upon not only to acquire new knowledge and skills but also to the need for indicators on teachers' professional development was part of a wider framework of 16 core indicators for monitoring progress towards the Lisbon objectives identified by the Council attainment of young people [COM(2007) 392 final of 3.8.2007].

Classroom Management as Time Management

In their introductory text on teaching, Kauchak and Eggen (2008) explain classroom management in terms of time management. The goal of classroom management, to Kauchak and Eggen, is to not only maintain order but to optimize student learning. They divide class time into four overlapping categories, namely allocated time, instructional time, engaged time, and academic learning time.

Allocated time

Allocated time is the total time allotted for teaching, learning, and routine classroom procedures like attendance and announcements. Allocated time is also what appears on a student's schedule, for example "Introductory Algebra: 9:50-10:30 a.m." or "Fine Arts 1:15-2:00 p.m."

Instructional time

Instructional time is what remains after routine classroom procedures are completed. That is to say, instructional time is the time wherein teaching and learning actually takes place. Teachers may spend two or three minutes taking attendance, for example, before their instruction begins.

Engaged time

Engaged time is also called time on task. During engaged time, students participating actively in learning activities—asking and responding to questions, completing worksheets and exercises, preparing skits and presentations, etc.

Academic learning time

Academic learning time occurs when students 1) participate actively and 2) are successful in learning activities. Effective classroom management maximizes academic learning time.

Importance of effective classroom management for teachers

The ability of teachers to organize classrooms and manage the behavior of their students is critical to achieving positive educational outcomes. Although sound behavior management does not guarantee effective instruction, it establishes the environmental context that makes good instruction possible. Reciprocally, highly effective instruction reduced, but does not eliminate, classroom behavior problems (Emmer & Stough, 2001).

A significant body of research also attests to the fact that classroom organization and behavior management competencies significantly influence the persistence of new teachers in teaching career (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). New teachers typically express concern about lacking effective means to handle the significant disruptive behavior of students (Browers & Tomic, 2000). Teachers who have problems with behavior management and classroom discipline are frequently ineffective in the classroom, and they often report high levels of stress and symptoms of burnout (Berliner, 1986; Browers & Tomic, 2000; Espin & Yell, 1994). Disruptive classroom behavior is a significant reason why teachers leave the profession (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Disruptive behavior is a particular problem in classrooms of economically disadvantaged students (Kellam, Ling, Merisca, & I alongo, 1998).

The inability of teachers to effectively manage classroom behavior often contributes to the low achievement of at risk students and to their excessive referrals for special education (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

In addition to in appropriate assignment, inadequate preparation and inadequate professional development are other major contribution factors to the classroom management problem faced by new teachers. Although the importance of acknowledged by educators, many new teachers reports in adequate training and little assistance from colleagues and supervisors in establishing positive and productive classroom environments (Baket,2005; Sibert 2005).

Various measures of classroom management

Classroom management is the organized implementation of room design, teaching techniques and discipline styles. Analyzing how your behavior affects students is key to becoming an effective and memorable teacher. Although it is difficult to score your performance as a teacher numerically, keeping regular notations regarding your technique and resulting student achievement can be helpful in guiding your professional development.

Academic Measures

The goal of classroom management is to increase student achievement. You are already measuring student achievement through class work, tests, projects and homework assignments. Make notes concerning student scores both before and after making changes to your teaching style. Comparison of these records is the most direct way to measure the effect of your modifications.

Peer learning in teacher education

The agenda for improving the quality of teacher education that ministers have set out is built upon detailed discussion and analysis. In particular, a group of teacher education experts nominated by education ministries met from 2002 to 2005 and agreed upon a series of Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications³to guide policymakers. These present a vision of the European teaching profession and were validated by a conference of ministerial and stake-holder representatives in 2005.

Member states are responsible for the organization and content of education and training systems. The role of the European Union is to support them. It does this in two main ways: by assisting individual

teachers to undertake professional development activities and by bringing together policy makers from the different Member States to exchange and promote good practice.

Emotional Measures

Consider the attitude of your students when they enter and leave your classroom. Are they engaged and positive? Bored and withdrawn? What is your stress level at the end of the lesson? Negative attitudes held by you or your students are a sure sign that your classroom management needs to change. Take the time to confer with your fellow teachers. If you have common students, discuss how they behave in each of your classrooms. Widespread behavioral problems may necessitate changes at the departmental level or the need for individual intervention.

Direct Feedback

Direct feedback from students, parents, colleagues and supervisors is a great way to ensure your management techniques are effective. Make use of parent-teacher meetings, pep rallies, extracurricular activities and after school study groups to talk to others about your class. A positive review from a student may be the most effective means of measuring your classroom management techniques.

Common mistakes in classroom behavior management

In an effort to maintain order in the classroom, sometimes teachers can actually make the problems worse. Therefore, it is important to consider some of the basic mistakes commonly made when implementing classroom behavior management strategies.

1. Elaborate systems of rewards and punishment. For example, writing students names on the board with check marks added next to the name for each inappropriate behavior. Not only is this degrading, but the effectiveness of this classroom management plan is short-lived at best. In fact, often times this classroom management plan can have the exact opposite effect on student behavior. Likewise, rewarding students for behavior that is expected of them sends the absolutely

wrong message. Teachers should not reward a student for acting appropriately in class. Rewarding appropriate behavior is not effective classroom management, it is bribery and the students will come to expect it. The type of rewards that are bad are the ones in which the teacher promises upfront that if “you behave today; I will give you a piece of candy.” No, the student should behave in class because that is what’s expected. Little Johnny will not throw his pencil across the room, because it disrupts the learning of the other students and can be dangerous, not because he will get candy!

2. A common mistake made by teachers is to define the problem behavior by how it looks without considering its function. Interventions are more likely to be effective when they are individualized to address the specific function of the problem behavior. Two students with similar looking misbehavior may require entirely different intervention strategies if the behaviors are serving different functions.
3. Teacher to become increasingly frustrated and negative when an approach is not working. The teacher may raise his or her voice or increase adverse consequences in an effort to make the approach work. This type of interaction may impair the teacher-student relationship. Instead of allowing this to happen, it is often better to simply try a new approach.
4. Inconsistency in expectations and consequences is an additional mistake that can lead to dysfunction in the classroom. Teachers must be consistent in their expectations and consequences to help ensure that students understand that rules will be enforced. To avoid this, teachers should communicate expectations to students clearly and be sufficiently committed to the classroom management procedures to enforce them consistently.

Recommendations for the effective classroom management for the professional development of the teachers

Improvements to professional development practice

should focus on these recommendations of this paper:

Recommendation 1: Actively involve the student in entire lesson

The key to classroom management is keeping students actively involved in the entire lesson. This is done with just a handful of simple teaching strategies. Here are five effective classroom management tips you can use in any classroom regardless of subject or content area. These classroom management tips will keep all students actively involved in all classroom lessons. (Waxler 2006)

1. **All-Write:** Instead of having students raise their hand to respond to a question aloud, have all the students write down an answer to the teacher’s question. Not only will the teacher get much more class participation, but the quality of student responses will also improve.
2. **Pair/Share:** Have students pair up with a partner and share their answers before discussing it as a class. This gives the students a chance to respond without the anxiety of speaking in front of the entire class and also allows the teacher to “monitor” the room and talk to various students about their responses. The “pair/share” is great teaching strategy to use right after the “all-write” strategy.
3. **On-the-Clock:** Give students specific time limits to complete tasks and make sure you stick to those time limits. By putting students “on-the-clock” the teacher helps the students stay focused. I even use an egg timer to make this teaching strategy even more effective.
4. **Check-for-Understanding:** Not understanding the teacher’s directions is a major cause of classroom management issues and student behavior problems. Therefore, no matter what set of directions a teacher gives, the teacher should always “check-for-understanding” by simply asking a couple of students (at random) to repeat the directions back to the class.
5. **Do Now:** Effective classroom management starts from the second students walk into the classroom. Therefore, the “do now” is

a short assignment that the students are to complete as soon as they enter the classroom. Personally, I put up 1-4 review questions on the board every day as the “do now” assignment. The “do now” gives the students something to do right away and is a great opportunity for review.

Recommendation 2: Classroom Rules and Routines

The use of rules is a powerful, preventive component of classroom organization and management plans. Rules establish the behavioral context of the classroom by specifying what behavior is expected of students, what behavior will reinforce, and the consequence for inappropriate behavior. If rules are stated or worded positively to describe the expected behavior, rather than what not to do, problem behavior is more easily prevented (Colivin, Kameeuni, & Sugai, 1993; Kerr & Nelson, 2002).

Rules should be:

1. Few in number; 4 or 5 is best
2. Positively stated, telling the student what to do. For example, “Use indoor voices” is preferred to “No yelling”
3. Communally developed with the students to encourage ownership
4. Posted prominently for all to see
5. Taught through modeling, role-play and daily examples over the first few weeks or so
6. Firmly and fairly enforced

Recommendation 3: Consult, Don’t Sulk

Teaching is hard work, a fact made clear by the high percentage of teachers who leave for other professions after less than five years. The effective classroom manager takes advantage of school support resources and attends to his or own level of personal stress.

What if you went to the doctor with a health concern, and she said to you, “I don’t really know how to treat your illness, but I’ll give it a try anyway?” Chances are, you’d find yourself another doctor fast! Our fellow professionals in medicine are different from educators in an important manner: They don’t feel bad about not knowing everything and eagerly seek the advice of others.

Yet there is something about the culture of schools that makes teachers uncomfortable about seeking assistance. *Am I admitting ignorance? Will my supervisor think less of me?*

To change this culture, leadership needs to come both from within and from the top. Principals must send the message that peer consultation is not just approved, *but it is expected as a criterion of positive professional evaluation.* This should especially apply to beginning teachers.

- ♦ Pass along the expertise. Arrange weekly “Round Table” discussions in which master teachers can field concerns from beginning teachers.
- ♦ Form a Behavior Consultation Team consisting of the school psychologist, behavior specialist, and others with expertise in problem-solving and classroom management to receive teacher referrals and provide evidence-based recommendations, progress monitoring, and follow-through

CONCLUSION

Skills such as effective classroom management are vital to teaching and require common sense, consistency, a sense of fairness and courage. The skills also require that teachers understand the psychological and developmental levels of each student, because as educators, we are obligated to educate the “whole” child.

While there is no one best solution for every problem associated with classroom management, the twelve steps listed below serve as a great start in implementing effective classroom management and also lead in developing professional development in the teachers because effective classroom management leads to effective learning which is the ultimate aim of the professional development in teachers.

1. Develop a set of written expectations you can live with and enforce.
2. Be consistent. Be consistent. Be consistent.
3. Be patient with yourself and with your students.
4. Make parents your allies. Call early and often. Use the word “concerned”. When communicating concern, be specific and descriptive.

5. Don't talk too much. Use the first 15 minutes of class for lectures or presentations, then get the kids working.
6. Break the class period into two or three different activities. Be sure each activity flows smoothly into the next.
7. Begin at the very beginning of each class period and end at the very end.
8. Don't roll call. Take the roll with your seating chart while students are working.
9. Keep all students actively involved. For example, while a student does a presentation, involve the other students in evaluating it.
10. Discipline individual students quietly and privately. Never engage in a disciplinary conversation across the room.
11. Keep your sense of perspective and your sense of humor.
12. Know when to ask for help (Star, 2004).

However, in spite of all of this preparation, this researcher believes that there is no greater reward than helping a child unlock his or her greatest potential. LET'S GIVE TEACHERS THE KEYS THEY NEED!

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