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Challenges of Self-Management Techniques in Providing Better Classroom Settings

Sadullah Yilmaz

European University of Tirana (UET), Tirana/ Albania

yilmazsadullah@gmail.com

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Abstract

One of the key elements in having an effective teaching and learning atmosphere goes through classroom management that has gone through series of innovations, from animal leathers used to store data, cave walls used for talents and other purposes; to the alleged digital age, with digital tablets, touchpads, smart boards, special schools with utmost utilities serving both teachers and students spreading all over the world. Moreover, internet oriented education is widening the concept of school to anywhere, anytime. Nevertheless, different needs brought different approaches and strategies to solve the problems of classroom management. The 21st century self-management techniques require quite complex approaches. In today's world technological devices are part of everyday life as our needs brought us to overcome difficulties as well as making life easier. We started education on clay tablets, and had blackboards, then white boards, and now we are getting back to tablets, but this time multitasking digital ones. Smart boards, labs, and multimedia rooms are now serving educational purposes. Thus, in this article, together with aforementioned innovations, it is aimed to present some better ways that may help overcome today's challenges of classroom management in terms of self-management techniques. The set of 10 principles suggested by Thomas J. Zirpoli is dredged up to shed light on the issue or help instructors to develop their own techniques within the process of classroom management. The vitality of students' study skills and secure attachment are perceived in regard with redemption of overwhelming challenges of self-management techniques.

Keywords: self-management techniques, effective teaching, challenges, classroom management

Introduction

Students facing the teacher in a class, waiting for instructions, and being taught new subjects is quite a burden on teacher's shoulders as each individual requires different approaches to their inner worlds of comprehension. There are no two people in the world that have exactly same values of interest, or sharing same characteristic traits. Thus, motivating different people around the same purposes or set goals is quite a difficult task for instructors, educators, especially the ones that are willing to educate students for a better future in terms of a better university, and a better or satisfying job which requires a long term plan of diligent hard work. The followings are some of the headings that can be applied in order to reach a healthier classroom management suggested by Thomas J. Zirpoli:

"(1) Provide Appropriate Supervision, (2) Provide Appropriate Structure and Routines, (3) Model Appropriate Behavior, (4) Reinforce Appropriate Behavior, (5) Provide Predictable and Consistent Discipline, (6) Avoid Looking for Biological Causes of Behavior, (7) Be A Teacher, Not A Friend, (8) Let Students Know You Like Them & Are Interested In Their Interests, (9) Have Fun! (10) Be Consistent." (Zirpoli, T. J. 2008).

Based on the above mentioned techniques details on management techniques are presented throughout the study with an emphasis on consistency management technique, the tenth approach, as consistency would also cover the other techniques by playing the most crucial role in classroom management.

Sating importance of consistency, one should also mention the key roles of enhancing study skills and providing secure settings for students in order to reach the best fruitful atmosphere of classroom management as to reduce maladaptive behavior on both student and instructor side. One of the key elements in having students obtain correct study skills in this regard is critical thinking, suggested by Aslan, M. (2014) as students from a mediocre high school in Albania mostly responded positively when asked about the importance of hardworking as to preserve self-esteem while being asked questions by the instructors in terms of readiness which would help in a positive way for classroom management (Aslan, M. 2014). Having individuals equipped with necessary skills to conduct research, enhance and transform information, think critically and reflectively, and make higher order decisions in this competitive world is vital for the survival of the societies as well (Duran, et. al, 2012).

Secure settings, considering reduction of management problems, could buffer interactions between students, peers and instructors; *"The surroundings and facilities of a school shouldn't be separate from the idea of safety as academic achievement is correlated with students' sense of safety in regard with feeling comfortable to receive information, otherwise his or her receptions will be closed to outer inputs"* (Aslan, M. 2014). Findings by other researchers also indicate the correlation between sense of safety and academic achievement (Bryan et. al, 2012).

Literature Review

Literature on the issue mostly, suggests that greater measures are needed to be taken by effective classroom managers in order to prevent misbehavior from happening (Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980) and maintenance of such measures should be emphasized before and during the first days of the school year (Wong & Wong, 2009), and (Broome, 2013). Thus; if a measure is to be taken for classroom management it should be from the beginning and consistent in its application. Consistency plays a key role in self-management techniques as its significance is emphatically accepted by almost all researchers in the field. The principles should be set by the instructors at the very beginning of educational year and they should be well explained to students in order to avoid confusion. The principles should not be complex, rather simple both in language and practice. Garrett (2013) suggests that we set four to six simple rules by helping Students' comprehension which should be one of our top priorities, more importantly rules should be internalized by students as well. If possible, some rules can be defined or even set by students themselves. Wong H., Wong R., Rogers & Brooks (2012) mention about such procedures.

Teacher-student relationship can be enhanced by using two independent characteristics of teacher behavior which are named by Wubbels, Brekelmans, Brok and Tartwijk (2006a) & Wubbles (2011) as "*control and affiliation*". Positive reinforcement both in enhancing expected behavior and in providing secure heavens for students is also majorly handled by majority of the literature on self-management techniques. Positive Behavior Support model suggested by Ihlo & Nantais (2010) as an intervention to promote prevention oriented positive environment indicated by Roskos, et. al (2012) are proposing valuable data on the 4th principle of Zirpoli, T. J. (2008) suggesting to "*Reinforce Appropriate Behavior*".

As stated earlier most of the literature mostly explicitly and sometimes implicitly refer to the significance of consistency in applying previously set principles. Among many, Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, (2002) & Roskos, et. al, (2012) refer to importance of establishing stabilize procedures and routines through small, yet well-defined set of expectations.

Scanted literature on self-management techniques for classroom management is perceived to provide and support data on principles suggested by Zirpoli, T. J. (2008), on the other hand consistency as the last principle is given the key role. Study skills providing critical thinking and secure attachment are other elements having impact on management skills.

The article aims to provide valuable contribution to hitherto mentioned principles by other researchers, however it's different from others by emphasizing the principles through consistency, study skills (especially critical thinking) and secure attachment of students in regard with school, peers and teachers as to help instructors to build their own principles or utilize the principles set by other researchers in the most

possible efficient way. However, it's important to mention that the article is mostly based on theoretical framework of Zirpoli, T. J. (2008) as the key model for self-management techniques in overcoming challenges of classroom settings in terms of self-efficacy as an instructor who holds the key role in education and its all components.

Methodology

The study is mostly based on analysis of 10 principles presented by Thomas J. Zirpoli as the primary source from his work called "*Behavior Management: Applications for Teachers*" to determine best possible solutions for instructors as well as to help them find their own way of classroom management technique. Secondary data analysis is also conducted through other articles written on the same issue. A partial data analysis obtained from a questionnaire (Aslan, M. 2014) on school bonding implemented to a high school in Albania is also reflected in regard with challenges and self-management techniques.

Followings are main suggested principles for self-management techniques in classroom management;

Provide Appropriate Supervision

Students being observed throughout the lesson may indicate better performance, however the ones that are supervised even in their daily lives would perform much better performances in terms of being planned as in what to do, when to do, and how to do. Wong H., Wong R., Rogers & Brooks (2012) also mention that students feel more secure when they know what will happen on daily basis as to make sure students have their days planned and sure of being supervised; On the other hand procedures are required to execute such measures; "*There are procedures that help students organize their day*" (Wong, et. al, 2012) suggesting supportive viewpoints on the first principle given by Zirpoli, T. J. (2008).

Provide Appropriate Structure and Routines

On daily basis, students need to know the things they have to do in completing their daily learning or knowledge gaining process. Teacher should provide some principles and routines that will help students avoid distraction. For example daily assignment checks should be done via check lists in an orderly fashion which will also help the teacher to have a reliable collected data on student's improvement. At this point it's worth to mention Garret's (2013) suggestions on creating four to six classroom rules as to emphasize simplicity, yet firmed patterns; "*• Create four to six classroom rules that clearly specify appropriate behavior • Consider Involving the students in the generation of the rules. • Write the rules using positive language. • Post and refer to classroom rules as necessary. • Develop routines to provide direction about how different classroom tasks are accomplished. • Teach and demonstrate classroom rules and routines as specifically as you do academic content*" (Garrett, 2013). As observed

providing such patterns also requires learner-teacher interaction as to have the rules accepted and comprehended by students.

Model Appropriate Behavior

Role modeling is also essential in having students reflect the expected behavior as their personality and characters get shaped by what they observe from their parents and teachers. As instructors, we don't only teach, we also help children find their identities, their true selves both materially and spiritually as stated by Aslan, Mehmet (2014) in his article on spirituality and identity. Children turn into what we put in front of them; if they have good role models in front of them, only then they can manage to build strong characteristic traits. As described by Wubbels, Brekelmans, Brok and Tartwijk (2006a) & Wubbels, (2011) mapping teacher-student relationship can be achieved by two independent characteristics of teacher behavior; "*control and affiliation*".

Reinforce Appropriate Behavior

Reinforcing positive behavior is also an essential element in canalizing students' behavior into the positive learning. Students should see that their positive behavior is valued by the teacher so that he/she can reflect the same behavior when needed; otherwise the behavior would diminish throughout time. This principle gained momentum Ihlo & Nantais (2010) as a new direction of Positive Behavior Support model in a multitier system of intervention, thus promoting positive environment through prevention which involves universal support that have been successful in the past (Roskos, et. al, 2012).

Provide Predictable and Consistent Discipline

Teachers should provide predictable and consistent discipline. In order to gain trust and fairness among students, the rules and guidelines should be clear and perceivable. Once the rules are explained through rational reasons their consequences should also be given as to avoid misunderstandings on both student and teacher side.

Avoid Looking for Biological Causes of Behavior

When encountered with unwanted behavior, biological reasons such as tantrums behind the behavior shouldn't veil the real reason behind it. A good teacher should be able to see beyond the matters when needed. Sometimes normally well-mannered students may reflect negative behavior which could be given a logical explanation by the student when given the chance of expressing himself/herself.

Be a Teacher, not a Friend

The relation between teacher and students shouldn't trespass the red lines which is quite vital in keeping the balance as it may cause loss of control and make the whole process of hard work going astray. On the other hand, it is important that a teacher keeps a good relation with his/her students.

Let students know you like them & are interested in their interests

While being able to keep the distance between the teacher and student, teacher should also be able to show his\her interest in students' hobbies or areas of fun. They might be able to make some little jokes to each other, and talk about things out of lesson. On the other hand, students' being in the same class with different backgrounds is itself a mixture as no two students are alike. Each individual has his/her own traits, especially when it comes to teaching where differences are to be lessened or at least blurred in order to put emphasis on unity and reach every person in the class. Thus, differences are to be reflected as variants of values.

Have Fun!

While trying on heavy burdens of teaching and learning processes both teachers and students may spare some time for fun, more importantly the lesson shouldn't be given in a very serious, mundane way as it would cause boredom. There can be little breaks of entertainment and lesson process should be provided together with fun, in other words, students should learn through fun activities.

Be Consistent

Among above mentioned techniques the most inclusive one that also covers the other techniques in a way is being consistent in whatever discipline, rules, or guidelines are being followed. If students are well aware of the fact that their teachers are following some principles persistently, they will eventually start to indicate positive behavior no matter what obstacles they face during the process of educational activities. Deliberate establishment of the procedures and routines Lewis, Powers, Kelk, & Newcomer, (2002) (like quizzes and exams) within the first few weeks of school would stabilize expectations as well when teachers adhere to a small set of well-defined expectations (e.g., "Be respectful; be responsible; be a problem solver") which would also provide reinforcement protocols when expectations are met as well as rapid application of stated consequences when expectations are not met (Roskos, et. al, 2012).

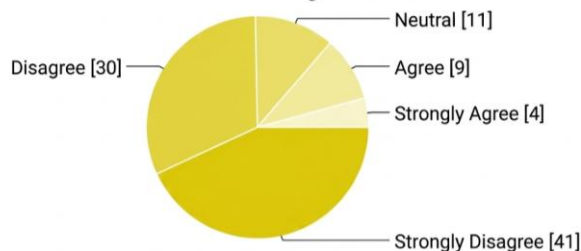
Significance Of Study Skills And Secure Attachment

Study conducted through a questionnaire by Aslan, Mehmet (2014) indicates that students from different regions of Albania that have to live in an educational institution, not only for school time but also for after school times to perform extracurricular activities as some students in Albania have to live in dormitories, experience different problems and face many factors that shape their identities and help them develop different characteristic traits. The study is vital in understanding the correlation between study skills, secure attachment and self-management techniques within class settings as the factors that increase school attachment, like modern facilities, friendly atmosphere; teacher friendly orientations, family support etc. are investigated. The study is quite vital in its field as educational success is

correlated with school bonding, thus students' achievements are also investigated and findings are reflected through case studies as well. This pilot study also provide samples for future studies on students' dormitory lives, their interactions with peers and teachers when provided more data from other schools in Albania as to obtain more generalized and comparable data on the issue.

Following two tables indicate the interrelation between study skills, secure attachment and self-management techniques that are obtained from the survey analysis in an Albanian high school which is important in having an idea on the Albanian students' characteristic traits;

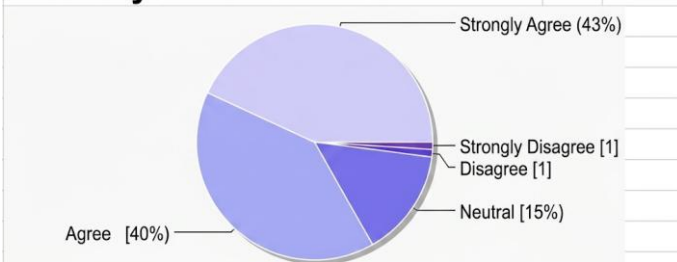
4. I don't feel safe in my school.



Response Category	Count	Percentage
Strongly Disagree	41	43%
Disagree	30	32%
Neutral	11	12%
Agree	9	9%
Strongly Agree	4	4%

School safety is one of the essential components in relation with students' feelings of bonding with school as in having a secure setting of being sure of any sort of threat that may affect their performances. This vital survey question reflects high scale of safety among students as the question is negatively asked the results indicate negative responses with positive meaning. $43+32=75\%$ of students don't feel insecure at school. 12% being neutral leaves only 13% of positive responses with negative meaning. However, 13% is also worth to mention as even lower scales of insecurity should be considered seriously.

7. I care if my homework is done correctly.



[Response Category]	[Count]	[Percentage]
Strongly Disagree	1	1%
Disagree	1	1%
Neutral	14	15%
Agree	38	40%
Strongly Agree	41	43%

The word 'correctly' plays an essential role in understanding students responses as doing homework is considered to be an essential element in learning, but having it done correctly is more vital in measuring students interest in giving importance to do the homework with its requirements as well as having an idea on students critical thinking in terms of study skills. 43+40% of the students agree that doing the homework correctly is important, on the other hand 17% being out of positive responses raises a warning in reconsidering students' perception.

Conclusion

The search for unknown throughout history brought us to the interrelation between school, teacher, and students; as it has always been a need for human beings to quench their thirst for learning more and more. However, environmental issues, different talents, variety of the goals, methodologies used in teaching or learning, and most importantly technology are some of the factors that determine the level of teaching and learning on each individual. Thus providing sustainable, maintainable principles and following them in order to achieve success is quite vital on both teacher and student side.

The study also suggests that there is a correlation between study skills, secure attachment as to obtain efficient self-management techniques. Principles may vary from instructor to instructor, but consistency and simplicity of the principles have great impact in realizing expected behavior by students as to reach satisfactory results in terms of learning and character development.

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