



CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES ADOPTED BY THE SCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract

The major objective of this study was to identify the classroom management strategies applied by the school teachers to create an effective and conducive teaching-learning environment. Based on a survey research design framework, sample of 36 teachers were randomly selected from the Post Graduate Diploma in Education Programme batch of 2010/2011 of the Open University of Sri Lanka. Apart from direct observation of their classroom teaching based on a piloted observation schedule, a focus group discussion were also executed to collect relevant data which were later analysed using simple descriptive data analysis methods. The study revealed that (a) the teachers were aware of and used different strategies to manage their classrooms; (b) they adopted contingency approach to address their classroom managerial issues and problems; (c) primary teachers showed better competencies than their secondary level counterparts in managing their classroom; and (d) most of them maintained the physical environment of the classroom satisfactorily. It also transpired from this study that quite a number of teachers tend to ignore students' behavioural problems in their classroom management.

Keywords: Classroom Management; Managerial Problems; Management Strategies

1. Introduction

The teacher performs various roles within the classroom. The ultimate goals of their performances are focused on success in the teaching learning process with in the classroom. Effective teaching learning process cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. Classroom management begins at the point of lesson planning. “Effective classroom management, which begins with efficient lesson planning preparation, helps teacher to teach and students to learn.” (Ahmad, 2010:177).

The term classroom management has been defined by many researchers. In general, “Classroom management”, are methods and strategies adopted by teachers in creating an effective teaching-learning environment. Bosch (2006:02) defines classroom management as “how the teachers works, how the class works, how the teacher and student work together, and how teaching and learning happen.” Further he tries to explain the concept of classroom management from the student’s point of view as “for students classroom management means having some control in how the class operates and understanding clearly the way the teacher and student are to interact with each other.”, moreover Bosch explains, for both teachers and students, classroom management is not a condition but a process”.

The history of education and discipline of students was one of extreme harshness. In the 1700's, teachers were given the parental right to act as they would when dealing with discipline problems. Teachers who felt the need would administer corporal punishment to students under their supervision. (Kaliska, 2002:01) In the ancient past, teachers were given the power to control their students orally as well as physically while they engaged in the teaching learning process. Controlling student behaviour by imposing physical punishments is considered classroom management. But, in modern society the concept of classroom management has changed drastically.

The concept of classroom management has been influenced and developed with the behavioural theories in early 20th century. The explanations of behaviour theorist, Burrhus Frederic Skinner, William Glasser, Jacob Kounin and Abraham H. Maslow have greatly influenced in the development of a positive learning environment which helped in classroom management (Kaliska, 2002). The research studies conducted by them have explained how the classroom could be managed accordingly while catering to the behavioural problems in each student. Managing a classroom is a complex task, which should be done in a systematic manner. Modern constructivist theories have also explained how constructivism could be of help in positive classroom management (Oyer, Prokos & Reichel; 1999).

Within a classroom, students come from different socio, economic backgrounds. Their capabilities, interests, ideas are vary accordingly. Teachers face the challenge in constructing a smooth running class, conducting the teaching learning process while catering to students individual differences. Within the modern teaching learning process, classroom management is a primary concern. Teachers should organize the teaching learning process and it should be managed accordingly. The problems in the classroom and schools in general are considered one of the most serious factors facing the component of the educational process, such as parents, teachers, educational administrators, and supervisors, also vandalism, theft, destruction of property, failure in the school, poor study accomplishment, lack of educational facilities such as equipment and technology, the physical environment, and the violence against teachers and students (Salem Al-Amarat, 2011:47).

2. Problem Statement

Numerous researches have shown that student misbehaviour during the teaching learning process is a common problem faced by most of the school teachers (Zithulele, 1997; Ahmad, 2010; Salem Al-Amarat, 2011) Moreover, classroom management, particularly the handling of student behaviour problems, is an integral part of every teacher's responsibilities. As such, it should be an integral part of every teacher's training (Duke & Meckel, 1984:04). In Sri Lanka teacher training programmes are offered by National Universities, Teacher training collages and the National Institute of Education. In order to overcome classroom management problems teachers should be trained accordingly.

The Post Graduate Diploma in Education Programme (PGDE) is a teacher training programme offered by the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL). The principal goal of this programme is to provide professional training to graduate teachers and other graduates in the field of Education. The theoretical aspects of classroom management have been taught to the teachers under the School Based Management component. The teaching practice is done in two stages as Stage-I and Stage - II. During the teaching practice Stage - I, students get the opportunity of practicing the theory of what they had been educated. The teachers who

complete Stage- I satisfactorily are eligible to complete teaching practice stage - II, where they get the chance of exhibiting what they had learnt and experienced by following the course.

The current study focuses on the classroom management strategies adopted by the teachers during teaching practice Stage - II. The study will provide insights to determine the effectiveness of the methods applied by the teachers in order to create an effective teaching learning process in the classroom environment.

The purpose of this study is to gain awareness about the classroom management strategies adopted by the school teachers. The study will help teachers to identify their mistakes made by them while engaged in the teaching learning process. Further, the study will facilitate the teachers to enhance the insight among teachers on the classroom management strategies adopted by them.

3. Objectives of the Study

- Examine the classroom management strategies currently employed by the teachers
- Identify the classroom management problems faced by the teachers
- Explain effective management strategies that could be adopted to enhance classroom management.

4. Study Design and Methods

4.1 The Population and Sample

The population of the study consisted of 400 teachers who have been enrolled on the teaching practice component in the Sinhala medium at the Colombo regional centre of the PGDE programme for the academic year 2010/2011. Based on a survey research design framework the sample was selected from the teachers, who followed the PGDE Programme and who continued in their Teaching Practice stage II. The sample consisted of 36 randomly selected teachers who are teaching in primary and secondary classes.

4.2 Research tools for data collection

Observation schedule and focus group discussions were the instruments of data collection. All the teachers were observed through two periods. Secondary student teachers were observed through two periods of forty minutes each. Primary teachers were observed through two periods of thirty minutes each. Observing the same teacher through consecutive periods was avoided. Focus group discussions were held to gather more descriptive data.

4.3 Analysis of Data

Data collected through observation schedules and group discussions were analyzed qualitatively. Simple quantitative methods were used where necessary.

5. Findings

The study revealed that all the teachers were aware of the implementation of classroom management strategies in order to make the teaching learning process a success. They made a concerned attempt to implement positive classroom management while engaged in the teaching learning process. This finding is in line with a research conducted by Djigic & Stojilkovic (2011).

Teachers needed to be well prepared before they started the teaching learning process. The lesson plan of a teacher explains how he/she had prepared for the lesson which is expected to be taught by them. It was revealed that all teachers had prepared their lesson plan prior to the actual teaching of the lesson. A majority (83%) of the teachers in the secondary classes had followed the 5E method when writing their lesson plans. They had followed the 5 steps in the given format of engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration and evaluation. Among them 17% of them had followed normal format practiced by teachers previously. On the other hand all teachers who taught in primary classes had followed the normal lesson plan format. It was observed that the planning of activities in teaching learning process were capable of making powerful impact on creating and maintaining positive classroom management. In the secondary classes all the teachers had shown interest in planning group activities at the exploration stage and group presentation for the explanation stage. Due to this, students seemed bored and were not happy to engage in group activities meant for each period. This had a negative impact on classroom management. As the students were not interested in the planned group activity they asked clever students to complete the work according to the instructions provided by the teacher. Some students attempted to quit the group activity and engage in some other work of their own. Engagement in group activities was not powerful enough to motivate students to engage in the teaching learning process satisfactorily. But, all primary teachers were able to plan their lessons in an interesting manner. The organized group activities were differ and the activities organized by the teachers helped the student to engage in the teaching learning process with enthusiasm. They had applied different teaching methods in conducting the teaching learning process. The organized group activities helped in maintaining positive classroom management within the teaching learning process. This finding is similar with a research conducted by Konti (2011). It was observed that teachers who taught in primary school were more effective in classroom management than teachers who taught in secondary classes.

The classrooms consisted with students of different socio economic backgrounds. The disruptive behaviour exhibited by the students during the teaching learning process varied in different instances. In order to overcome such situations the teachers needed to have an effective classroom management plan to engage such students in the teaching learning process continuously. This was observed in primary as well as secondary classes. This finding is in line with a research conducted by Kaliska in 2002. Further it was observed that primary class teachers were clever enough in identifying the behavioural problems exhibited by the student than the secondary teachers. It was observed that there was a distance in student - teacher relationship in secondary classes, and teachers were not able to monitor the student closely as primary classes.

The physical arrangement of the classroom is very important to affect a positive classroom management. In a classroom, the seating arrangement is important because it has a positive impact on each and every student. It was observed that all teachers had arranged their classroom so as to facilitate learning. In primary classes seating arrangements have been done so as to facilitate group activities. In each group students were shuffled when they engaged in group activities which helped in forming positive classroom environment to continue the teaching learning process. In secondary classes, teachers instructed students to change the seating arrangements according to the activities planned by the teachers. This finding is in line with a research conducted by Ahmad in Parkistan, 2010. Further, it was observed that managing other physical resources, such as the blackboard, teaching aids were kept in order and teachers used them in an effective manner when needed.

On many occasions teachers used different teaching aids in order to create a positive teaching and learning environment. Managing and using the teaching aid in an appropriate manner does help maintain a better classroom management. 94% of the teacher sample adhered to the concepts in using teaching aids. But 6% of the teacher sample was not able to use their teaching aids appropriately. The inappropriate use of teaching aids made the lesson complicated and students lost interest in the lesson.

Another important aspect of classroom management is time management. All teachers in primary and secondary classes have allocated time for each activity in their lesson plan. From the sample 92% of them were able to complete their work on time. Further it was observed; when they had to spend additional time unexpectedly they were able to cover it by limiting the time allocated for the next activity. In order to overcome such situations teachers have implemented different strategies according to the context and situation. If they had to spend more time on group activities, they instructed students to prioritize the findings and explain the most important three to the class. In the same way, they instructed students to not to repeat the findings explained by the previous groups. These strategies helped them to manage their time accordingly. Though teachers had allocated time for different activities, it was observed that 8% of the sample was not able to complete the task within the allocated time. It was noticed that, they failed to complete the planned activities during the time allocated on their own. Due to this they had to rush the students to complete their work on time. Moreover, primary teachers were methodical and were able complete their task within the allocated time, compared to the secondary school teachers.

Imposition of classroom rules and procedures are another strategy adopted by school teachers. A rule identifies general expectations or standards for student behaviour. Procedures usually are applied to a specific activity, and usually are directed at accomplishing something rather than prohibiting some behaviour or defining a general stand (Evertson, Emmer & Worsham, 2003:20). Teachers try to enforce school rules by recalling them and practicing them while mangling the class. For example, greeting teachers at the beginning and end of the lesson, cleaning own desks and surrounding area after the interval were rules practiced by school children under the supervision of teachers. Practicing school rules and obeying these gives an opportunity to students to adopt the school management practices. Further it was observed that teacher's adopted different classroom procedures of their own, which made the class more organized and methodical. This finding is similar with a research conducted by Nasey (2012) in New Zeland.

In order to maintain a positive classroom management situation, disciplinary interventions need to be implemented. The focus group discussions revealed that all teachers were aware of maintaining discipline in classroom management. In order to maintain positive classroom management, teachers implemented different disciplinary strategies while engage in the teaching process. All teachers exhibited a firm stand in this regard. It was noticed that the teachers voice and the way they addressed the students were capable of making an impact on student behaviour. When the teacher addressed the students in a firm voice, students tend to work and act according to the instructions provided by the teachers. This finding is in line with a research conducted by Brown (2004). Further, it was observed that the students' reactions were different with regard to soft spoken teachers. Students act as soft spoken teachers are lenient and, it was observed that discipline was violated in some instances. Especially in secondary classes, when the teacher was involved in a group activity or correcting their work books, some students tended to behave badly among peers. Teachers failed to identify such incidents as they had turned their back or were not be alert in this regard. The primary students too displayed some bad behaviour while engage in the teaching learning process. Some students tried to move about in the class or engage in some other activity which caught their

interest. In such instances teachers raised their voice and were able to minimize the distractions and bad behaviour of the student. Another strategy adopted by the teachers were, reinforcement to appreciation or reward positive behaviour of the students. It was observed that the teachers attempt to minimize physical punishment of students with consequence for inappropriate behaviour. In order to minimize such behaviour teachers tended to show their alertness with regard to the misbehaviour of the students. While the teacher is engage in some activity, he/she would say, "Next I'm coming to your group, hope you have finished" etc., and these warnings were an indication to students about the teachers' alertness with regard to their misbehaviour. Such warnings were effective enough to maintain positive classroom management. This strategy was very effective and was adopted by the primary as well as secondary class teachers on many occasions. This finding is in line with a research conducted by Demir(2009).

Further it was observed that primary teachers tended to use child centred classroom management strategies. Teachers used to instruct students at the beginning of the lesson and the responsibility of the learning process was given to students. The group leaders and members acted accordingly. This helped to create a constructive learning environment among students. This finding was in line with a research conducted by Yasar in 2008. Compared to the primary classes, there were more teacher centred instances to be seen in the secondary class rooms.

It was revealed that teachers in primary and secondary classes had already acquired the skills in managing their classroom accordingly. Further it was revealed that the teacher's personality did make a strong impact on adopting and maintaining better classroom management among teachers.

All teachers expressed that they made mistakes while engage in classroom management. Almost all teachers believed that most classroom management problems had occurred due to lack of facilities in their classrooms. As their classroom consisted of 45 to 55 students, the teachers faced difficulties of classroom management. Further, teachers wanted to have more training enhancing their skills in classroom management. They further preferred to follow short term training programme or receive in -service training on classroom management. According to teachers, they believed that such mistakes were done by them due to lack of experiences in teaching. Because of this they felt they should get advice and help from the school administration or from senior teachers in their schools in order to solve some problems faced by them in classroom management.

When teachers failed in managing their classroom they were excited and depressed. Students' behavioural problems made this problem more critical. The focus group discussion revealed that they felt they had failed in acquiring the necessary skills needed for the profession. Due to their failure in teaching they wished to change from their current profession to some other profession if possible. This finding is supported by a research conducted by Ozdemir in 2007.

Though the selected sample has received theoretical knowledge and practical experiences in classroom management while following the PGDE programme. They believed as the time passes they may forget things and some new knowledge will add to the field. Due to that they wished to update their knowledge on classroom management annually.

6. Suggestions for Improvement of Classroom Management

- Teachers should pay attention to implementing simple classroom management techniques which could be implemented in a child centred manner.
- The teacher should be encouraged to read material on classroom management and enhance their skills accordingly.
- The school administration should be able to facilitate teachers by providing necessary resources which could help teachers to enhance their knowledge of classroom management.
- Authorities engaged in teacher training programmes should organize training workshops in this regard.
- Teachers should enhance their self-motivation in acquiring new knowledge on classroom management and update themselves.

7. Conclusion

Classroom management is a primary concern within the teaching learning process. It develops positive means of preventing problems from occurring in the first place while creating a conducive learning environment. Creating a conducive learning environment is one of the most challenging tasks in teaching. Teachers should acquire skills in classroom management as it directly influences the teaching learning process. From the teacher's point of view enhancing classroom management skills among themselves, is one of the most difficult things to master. All teachers have implemented different managerial plans of their own. The classroom management strategies differ according to the socio economic background of the students and the school culture. The current study explains how teachers have implemented the different classroom management strategies in order to manage their classroom. Further, the study focused on the problems faced by them while engaged in classroom management and the strategies adopted by them to overcome the problems accordingly. Moreover the study demonstrated that the teachers want to enhance their capacity and skills on classroom management. Some suggestions also were given in order to improve the existing situation.

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