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CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING SKILLS AMONG NEW TEACHERS AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AMONG ELEMENTARY STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Classroom management has been a primary concern for teachers since there have been teachers in the classroom. A lack of classroom management affects both the teacher and the students. This study explores classroom management tactics to help improve the academic achievement of elementary school students. Studies show that some form of intervention makes a positive impact on teachers, students, and the whole school climate. Teachers need to personally connect with each student in the classroom in order to make students feel comfortable and welcome.

INTRODUCTION

Classroom management and discipline consistently rank near the top of the list of the most difficult problems first year teachers experience. Because this is true, many seasoned teachers do not sponsor student teachers for a fear of their student's test scores dropping due to the lack of classroom management. A failure to implement effective classroom management can lead to a level of continued frustration that pushes beginning teachers to their breaking point; some of these extremely frustrated teachers end up leaving the profession all together (Durmuscelebi, 2004). In order to stunt the growth in percentage of teachers who end up leaving the profession, this paper is being written to inform teachers of different classroom management strategies as well as the research that explores classroom management and the frustrations behind being a beginning or first year teacher. Research about classroom management has found that teachers who have a lack of classroom management skills tend to react

to disruptions in the classroom, rather than preparing and planning for them. This lack of classroom management affects both students and the teacher. Studies have shown that if teachers can get a grasp of classroom management early on in their teaching, they tend to leave the profession because of large amounts of stress (Arends, 1997). Emmer, Evertson, and Anderson (as cited in Marzano, 2003), indicated that if classroom management training is set up for teachers at the beginning of the year resulted in improved teacher and student behavior during the school year. Controversies in classroom management strategies stem from the duel between behaviorist and social constructivist points of view. Behaviorists tend to focus attention on the individual student, whereas social constructivists tend to focus their attention on the whole group and what is the best fit for the entire group (Arends, 1997). Previously, classroom management was described as "the arrangement of students/groupings, materials, and furniture, and the movement of these over time, moving from one large group lecture to small cooperative groups or lab tables

(Wolfgang, 2009). Discipline, on the other hand, was described by Arends (1997) as the correction procedures of misbehavior in the classroom. The following chapter discusses research studies that have been done that center around classroom management. The studies are divided into three sections based on their findings: preservice and first year teachers, challenging student behavior, and urban environments. Research in the first section, preservice and first year teachers, found that there are many diverse factors that cause new teachers stress and frustration. All of this stress and frustration stemmed from a lack of classroom management practices and even led some teachers to leave the teaching profession all together. The next section, challenging student behavior, found that some form of intervention is necessary to implement with students who express disruptive behavior and in these studies there is a lack of classroom management strategies to combat the disruptive behavior of students. The third section, urban environments, looks at the effects of classroom management in urban environments around the United States. The studies found that there are multiple strategies to use with students in an urban environment and it is important for teachers to take the time to get to know their students on a personal level in these urban areas. This review of literature focuses on elementary aged children and references very few middle or high school aged children. Further, the studies reviewed here focus on the effect of classroom management on academic achievement. As classroom management and discipline consistently rank near the top of the list of the most difficult problems first year teachers experience, it is important for new teachers to find strategies that have been proven to work. Finding strategies that have been proven to work through previous research and studies will aid the new teacher in setting up classroom management for their own classroom. A lack of classroom management strategies for a first year teacher can affect student's test scores. Along with affecting students, a lack of classroom management skills can push a teacher to a frustration level that causes the teacher to ultimately leave the profession all together.

Objective

To examine the effects of different classroom management strategies on the academic achievement of elementary students.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Secondary data was collected from various journals and literatures for this study. The researcher reviewed 30 studies about classroom management and is divided into three sections. The first section, pre service and beginning teachers, surveys the challenges that all new teachers face and makes suggestions about how to be proactive in taking care of these issues. The second section, challenging student behavior, examines the influence of intervention strategies for students who are displaying disruptive behavior, and found that some form of intervention had a positive impact on disruptive students. The third section, urban environments, discusses the implications of teaching in an urban environment and the importance of getting to know all students on a personal level.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first section in reviewed studies i.e. pre service and beginning teachers, analyzed the influence and impact of first

year teachers in their first couple years had on students, and the impact of students and the stress of classroom management have on these new teachers. Overall, these studies found that there were many diverse factors that caused extreme stress for new teachers; and some of these stress factors caused new teachers to leave the teaching profession altogether. The main factors that drove new teachers away from the profession were related to a lack in classroom management skills. The findings showed that teachers were more concerned about their instruction when first coming into the profession. Because of this, most teachers were overwhelmed due to their lack of focus on classroom management. Those teachers who participated in classroom management workshops and had specific training in classroom management were less stressed and had better control over their classroom atmosphere as well.

The other aspect that helped teachers who were struggling with classroom management was self reflection. Examining how they were running the classroom, the effects of running it in that way, and how things could be changed for the better, was influential for beginning teachers. Desiderio (2005) found that students were able to adjust to two different teacher's management styles at the same time. Kalis (2007) found that extending the use of self reflection to increase classroom management was effective. Sempowicz (2011) found that a constructive, reflective, supportive mentor teacher helped to prepare the preservice teacher with confidence. Martin (1996) found that beginning teachers have unrealistic expectations regarding how to effectively manage their classrooms. Stewart (1997) found that a sense of humor and confidence increased first year teacher's positive responses to students and parents. Sandholtz (2011) found that the majority of preservice teachers focused on instruction rather than classroom management during their student teaching. Tal (2010) found that a classroom management course proved to be helpful as a learning tool for teachers. The second section of reviewed studies i.e. challenging student behavior, looked at challenging student behavior in the classroom, intervention methods to deal with these disruptive behaviors, and classroom management strategies to lessen these behaviors. Overall, these studies found that some form of intervention is necessary to implement with students who express disruptive behavior; and in these studies there is a lack of classroom management strategies to combat the disruptive behavior of students. The studies that portrayed a behaviorist world view found that teachers who implemented praise into the intervention process noticed a decrease in student disruptive behavior in the classroom. The studies that portrayed a social constructivist world view found that when students received scolding from the teacher, it sometimes acted as a positive reinforcement of the behavior, and students continued the behavior.

Fowler (2011) found that through zero tolerance schools, youth who had previously been disciplined by the court were at higher risk of dropping out of school. Wilkinson (2003) found that using a school based behavioral consultation was an effective intervention tool for teachers and students. Reinke (2008) found that classrooms had higher rates of disruptions than praise, which caused teachers to feel that intervention was effective. Ornelles (2007) found that an increased engagement and increased initiations due to a structured intervention. Nowacek (2007) found that middle school teachers knew key characteristics associated with ADHD and were able to implement classroom management strategies. Tidwell (2003)

found that teachers were more willing to deal with problem behaviors from students when they were younger. As students got older, the teachers assumed that students should know right from wrong and sent them straight to the principal's office. Erdogan (2010) found that classroom management issues were a lack of motivation, rule breaking, and a lack of classroom intervention. Scott (2000) found that all students react differently to intervention strategies. Evertson (1989) found that when a classroom management program is implemented, those teachers who participated had better results in the classroom. Sutherland (2005) found that emergency-licensed teachers perceived limitations in their own abilities to deal with students who have behavioral problems in the classroom. Baker (2002) found that inquiry based classrooms present teachers with added challenges and more work in order to modify activities to meet all student needs. Durmuscebi (2010) found that there is no significant relationship between the amount of discipline problems between private and state schools. Arbuckle (2004) found a significant negative correlation between teacher's confidence in the classroom and their use of referral strategies for male students.

The third section in reviewed studies i.e. urban environments, examined the influence urban environments have on students and teachers as far as classroom management is concerned. Overall, these studies found that there are multiple strategies to use with students in an urban environment and it is important for teachers to take the time to get to know their students on a personal level in these urban areas. Teachers who used an authoritative style of teaching, who also used intimidation, were not well accepted by students in the classroom. Another major factor in the research was the design of the classroom. Teachers who arranged their classrooms to be comfortable, warm, and inviting, were able to get through to their students and the students felt more comfortable at school. Jeanpierre (2004) found that quality of instruction is central to the interplay between students and teachers. Kuo (2010) found that early education teachers considered teaching aids effective and helpful to reach their teaching goals. Garraty (2005) found that most teachers used multiple rewards and consequences in the classroom. McKinney (2005) found that urban teachers must respond to the needs of students by creating culturally responsive classrooms. Miller (2005) found that in a southeastern urban area, intervention decreased inappropriate classroom behavior. Burke (2004) found that students should not be expected to change their environmental preferences or learn regardless of them. Little (2008) found that teachers reported use of evidence-based classroom management procedures in high frequencies. Hoffman (2009) found that the training of teachers in classroom management approaches should be advocated.

Trends and patterns in the body of research include the design on the studies, and the demographics of the teachers involved in the studies. The majority of the studies used some form of survey or questionnaire to get answers from teachers. This seemed like the most reasonable way to get a large amount of information from teachers who were not close together in location. The demographics of the teachers were far from diverse. The majority of teachers that completed surveys and questionnaires were Caucasian females in rural and suburban areas/schools. The weakness in some of the findings came from the lack of diversity in observations. Many of the studies focused on a single classroom teacher. The findings were said

to be transferable to other classrooms but did not prove transferability. It is hard to believe that students from a rural, predominantly white area, will react in the same way as students who live in an urban, predominantly lower class area, to the strategies teachers are implementing for classroom management. Another overall weakness of the studies was a lack of third party observation and reviewing. Many of the studies only included the immediate researchers involved. The strength of some of the studies was the range of teachers who filled out and returned surveys to researchers. Some of the studies had as many as 300 surveys returned, that included teachers from all parts of Florida (rural, suburban, and urban areas). When a study is able to include these kind of demographics it strengthens the transferability of the study to more locations.

Conclusion

If the inexperienced teacher is able to gain a basic classroom management understanding and skills, he/she will be able to reduce much of the anxieties that go along with it (Arends, 1997). The first classroom management structure that should be implemented is the arrangement of the room. The room should be inviting and comfortable for students to be in. The temperature needs to be at a comfortable level, because when a classroom is too cold, students have trouble paying attention to the lesson being taught. Chairs also need to be comfortable for students to sit in, otherwise they will be spending their time in fidgeting and trying to find a relaxed position in the chair. Make an area in the classroom where students can go, that is away from their desk, to read quietly (a bean bag chair or rug area work well for these quiet reading areas) (Jalilevand, 1997). Teachers need to set aside personal time for themselves that does not involve any school work. Having this time will help to relieve some of the stress and pressure that issues with classroom management can cause. This is especially important for beginning teachers who spend long periods of time coming up with grading scales and rubrics for assessment. The first 3-5 years will be the most stressful before classroom management strategies are set and the teacher is very comfortable implementing them on a regular basis. This can be difficult because beginning teachers often get switched to different grade levels. Having a grade switch can entail a new look at the classroom management strategies that have been implemented in the past that may need to be changed for the new age level or students who the teacher will be teaching in the following year. This personal time is especially important to relieve the stresses of beginning teachers. Self monitoring and self reflection are also key elements of teaching. A teacher has to be able to reflect on classroom management practices to assess whether or not they are effective, and what can be done to improve them. Self monitoring can also be connected with monitoring emotions and reactions to certain situations in the classroom (Kalis, 2007). The use of humor in the classroom has been shown to make students and parents feel at ease in the classroom. When the teacher feels at ease, students tend to sense that, and reflect the teacher's feelings in their action in the classroom (Stewart, 1997).

There are many aspects of classroom management for teachers to consider and think about, especially in their first few years of teaching. The most important thing for teachers to remember is the reason they chose to teach in the first place. Classroom management skills do not develop overnight; a teacher should have routines set up in the classroom and stick

by those routines throughout the year. Again, take a deep breath and remember the reasons for becoming a teacher.

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