Classroom Management as Socializing Students into Clearly Articulated Roles

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Jere Brophy
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Research on classroom management suggests that successful managers approach management as a process of establishing an effective learning environment rather than emphasizing their roles as disciplinarians. They are clear and consistent in articulating expectations, they model or provide direct instruction in desired procedures if necessary, and they provide cues and reminders when these procedures are needed. These principles seem just as applicable to currently-emphasized social constructivist approaches to teaching as they are to earlier-emphasized transmission approaches. However, the particulars of implementation need to be adjusted. For example, students of constructivist teachers will need direction and assistance concerning their participation in active discussion, not just recitation, and also their participation in collaborative learning in pairs and small groups, not just working alone on seatwork assignments. Thoughtful analysis is needed to determine how to apply basic principles of good management to emerging instructional innovations. This can be done by determining what students will need to do in order to engage optimally in an innovative learning format, then working backward from this goal to determine what forms of managerial instruction or assistance may be needed.

The recent popularity of social constructivist models of teaching and learning has prompted many scholars to question the validity of research findings developed from observations conducted in primarily transmission-oriented classrooms, or at least to question the applicability of these findings to social constructivist classrooms. This article addresses this issue as it applies to research on classroom management. It concludes that principles of good classroom management developed primarily during the 1970s and early 1980s appear to be just as applicable to contemporary classrooms, although the particulars of their implementation may need to be adjusted to take into account the student roles emphasized in social constructivist classrooms.

RESEARCH ON CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Classroom management has been one of the success stories of research on teaching since the 1960s. Management studies have yielded a knowledge base that offers a coherent set of principles to guide teachers in making decisions about how to manage their classrooms (Brophy, 1983, 1988; Doyle, 1986; Emmer, 1987; Evertson, 1987; Gettinger, 1988; Good & Brophy, 1995, 1997; Jones, 1996). Findings converge on the conclusion that teachers who approach management as a process of establishing and maintaining effective learning environments tend to be more successful than teachers who emphasize their roles as authority figures or disciplinarians. Of course, teachers are authority figures and must require their students to conform to certain rules and procedures. However, these rules and procedures are not ends in themselves. They are means for organizing the classroom as an environment that supports learning, which is the purpose for which schools were established in the first place.

Research findings have shown that the key to successful management is the teacher's ability to maximize the time that students spend actively engaged in worthwhile academic activities and to minimize the time that they spend waiting for activities to get started, making transitions between activities, sitting with nothing to do, or engaging in misconduct. Good classroom management does not just imply that the teacher elicits the students' cooperation in minimizing misconduct and intervenes effectively when misconduct occurs; it also implies that worthwhile academic activities are occurring more or less continuously and that the management system as a whole is designed to maximize students' engagement in those activities. Thus, the academic activities themselves must be planned and implemented effectively, and the management moves made during and in between these activities must support their continuity and impact. As much as possible, management interventions intended to restore student engagement in academic activities should do so in ways that do not disrupt the flow of the

activities themselves.

The existing knowledge base contains a great deal of information about introducing rules and procedures, managing group lessons and activities, and supervising and establishing accountability for work on assignments. This includes Kounin's work on withitness, overlapping, signal continuity, momentum, group alerting, accountability, and variety and level of challenge in assignments; Evertson and Emmer's work on establishing effective rules, procedures, routines, and accountability systems at the beginning of the year and maintaining them thereafter; and Doyle's work on how teachers establish a work system and protect it through ushering, hovering, refusal to be sidetracked, and related mechanisms. These lines of work are not only compatible but mutually reinforcing. Taken together, they form the core of an empirically based, yet integrated and theoretically grounded approach to classroom management.

Major elements include preparation of the classroom as a physical environment suited to the nature of the planned academic activities, development and implementation of a workable set of housekeeping procedures and conduct rules, maintenance of student attention to and participation in group lessons and activities, and monitoring of the quality of the students' engagement in assignments and of the progress they are making toward intended outcomes. These broad management goals are accomplished through procedures and routines concerning such aspects as storing supplies and equipment, establishing general expectations and rules at the beginning of the school year, getting each class period started and ended smoothly, managing transitions between activities, keeping activities flowing by stimulating involvement and intervening as briefly and nonintrusively as possible, giving directions for and getting the class started on assignments, and meeting the needs of individual students during times when attention can be diverted from instructing or supervising the work of the class as a whole. The more carefully that teachers have thought through their preferred rules and procedures, the more prepared they will be to explain them clearly to students and to be consistent in ensuring their implementation.

As the knowledge base on effective management has developed and become differentiated, it also has become well integrated. Literature reviewers and teacher educators have seen that its parts can be combined into a mutually supportive set of concepts and strategies that can be taught and learned as a single integrated system. In speaking of a "system," I refer to a set of concepts and principles to be applied when they are relevant to particular teaching situations, not to a fixed set of behaviors to be implemented rigidly in all situations. What constitutes optimal management will vary according to grade level, class size, the goals of the activity, and other factors. Some principles apply to all situations but are implemented in somewhat different ways, and other principles apply only to certain situations.

ADAPTING ESTABLISHED MANAGEMENT PRINCIPLES TO SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST TEACHING

Most of the research that established these principles was done in rooms that featured transmission approaches to teaching. Recently, however, views on good teaching and learning have shifted from a transmission view, in which teachers mostly explain and demonstrate and students mostly memorize or replicate, to a social construction or learning community view, in which teachers and students share responsibility for initiating and guiding learning efforts. Instead of drill and recitation designed to elicit correct answers to convergent questions, classroom discourse emphasizes reflective discussion of networks of connected knowledge. Questions are divergent, designed to stimulate and scaffold students' thinking and help them develop understanding of powerful ideas that anchor the knowledge networks. Students are expected to strive to make sense of what they are learning by relating it to their prior knowledge and by collaborating in dialogue with others. Instead of working mostly alone, practicing what has been transmitted to them, they act as a learning community that constructs shared understandings.

In developing plans for socializing their students into a learning community and supporting their active collaboration in the social construction of knowledge, teachers can begin with adaptations of established classroom management principles. These principles seem just as applicable to social constructivist approaches as to transmission approaches, if they are interpreted appropriately. Unfortunately, management principles are often presented as techniques for eliciting students' compliance with teachers' demands. This emphasis on compliance does not fit well with current emphases on learning through the social construction of knowledge and on helping students to become more autonomous and self-regulated learners. It is now more important than ever to emphasize that the research indicates that the most successful managers focus on establishing effective learning environments, not on functioning as disciplinarians.

Thoughtful analysis is needed to determine how to apply basic principles of good management to emerging instructional innovations. To ensure that the management system supports the instructional system within constructivist or other nontraditional approaches to teaching, a teacher can begin by identifying what students will need to do in order to engage optimally in the desired learning format, then

TABLE 1

Student Roles that Might Guide Classroom Management Efforts in Social Constructivist Classrooms

A. Role competencies featured in knowledge transmission classrooms that also apply in social constructivist classrooms.

 1. Be in class/seat on time.

 2. Store personal belongings in their proper place.

 3. Handle classroom supplies and materials carefully and return them to their proper place after use.

 4. Have desk cleared and be ready to learn when lessons begin.

 5. Pay attention during lessons and learning activities.

 6. Participate by volunteering to answer questions.

 7. Work carefully on in-school and homework assignments.

 8. If you get stuck, try to work out the problem on your own before asking for help, but do ask for help if you need it.

 9. Turn in assignments completed and on time.

 10. Confine conversations to approved times and forms.

 11. Treat others with politeness and respect.

B. Additional role competencies that need to be developed in social constructivist classrooms.

 1. In whole-class settings, participate as a member of the group as we develop new understandings.

 2. Recognize that everyone has something to contribute and you are here to learn as well as to help others learn, and act accordingly.

 3. Listen carefully to what others say and relate it to your own knowledge and experience (Do you agree? Why or why not?).

 4. If you are not sure what others mean, ask for clarification.

 5. In putting forth your own ideas, explain your reasoning by citing relevant evidence and arguments.

 6. In challenging others' ideas and responding to challenges to your ideas, focus on the issues and on trying to reach agreement; do not get personal or engage in one-upmanship.

 7. When working in pairs or small groups, see that each person's ideas are included and that everyone accomplishes the goal of the activity.

 8. When helping partners or fellow group members, do not just do the work for them; instead, make sure that they learn what they need to know.

Adapted from:
Brophy, J. & Alleman, L. (1998). Classroom management in a social studies learning community. *Social Education, 62* (1), 56-58.

work backwards from this description of desired student roles to determine what forms of managerial instruction or assistance may be needed. Successful management of social constructivist learning settings requires teaching students to take on a broader range of roles than is required of them in more traditional transmission settings (see Table 1).

Leaders in research on social constructivist approaches to teaching have emphasized the importance of socializing students into learning communities that share values and follow procedures that support the social construction of knowledge. This involves instructing students not only in how to pay attention during lessons and work alone on assignments, but also in how to participate in collaborative activities (Anderson & Roth, 1989; Bennett & Dunne, 1992; Cohen, 1994; Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, & Roy, 1984; Lampert, 1989; Palincsar & Brown, 1989; Rogers & Freiberg, 1994). Collaborative knowledge construction means not only taking turns talking, listening politely, and keeping criticism constructive, but also responding thoughtfully to what others have said, making contributions that will advance the discussion, and citing relevant arguments and evidence to support one's position. When students work in pairs or small groups, collaboration includes making sure that everyone in the group understands the goals of the activity, participates in carrying it out, and gets the intended learning benefits from this participation.

Ensuring that students learn to participate optimally will still require the familiar management strategies of articulating clear expectations, modeling or providing instruction in desired procedures, cueing students when these procedures are needed, and applying sufficient pressure to compel changes in behavior when students have failed to respond to more positive methods. The teacher still retains ultimate control in the classroom and when necessary exerts authority by articulating and enforcing managerial guidance.

CONCLUSION

Certain basic classroom management principles appear to apply across all potential instructional approaches. One of these is that management that emphasizes clarifying what students will be expected to do and helping them learn to do it is likely to be more effective than management that focuses on misbehavior and places more emphasis on after-the-fact discipline than on before-the-fact prevention.

A second basic principle is that management systems need to support instructional systems. A management system that orients students toward passivity and compliance with rigid rules will undercut the potential effects of an instructional system that is designed to emphasize active learning, higher order thinking, and the social construction of knowledge (McCaslin & Good, 1992).

A third basic principle is that managerial planning should begin by identifying the student outcomes that constitute the goals of instruction, then consider what these outcomes imply about desired learning activities and about the knowledge, skills, values, and behavioral dispositions that students will need to acquire in order to engage in these learning activities most profitably. This planning process should yield clear articulation of desired student roles, which then become both the goal and the rationale for the teacher's management system. The management system will function most smoothly and support the instructional system most effectively if it features clear articulation of desired student roles, supported by whatever structuring and scaffolding may be needed to enable students to learn these roles and begin to display them on their own when appropriate.

The student roles implied by the goals of meaningful and self-regulated learning and by social constructivist models of teaching call for students to display sustained metacognitive awareness in regulating their learning efforts. Traditionally-emphasized behavioristic management models, especially those designed to train students to follow unvaried routines and respond "mindlessly" to cues, are not well suited to preparing them to fulfill today's more demanding roles. If they are to flourish in social constructivist classrooms, students will need both management and instructional methods designed to support their functioning as a community of learners engaged in the social construction of knowledge.

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