

## **Introduction**

In this essay I will analyse observations made of lessons given by experienced teachers. The classroom management techniques used by these teachers will be studied and then a synthesis of my own developing classroom management style will be presented.

The school was a Catholic denomination school catering to stages 4 and 5. It had formal sanctions and disciplinary procedures. Each teacher would enter disruptive or disobedient students from each class into a weekly record sheet. Record sheet was then collected by the subject coordinator who then takes appropriate actions which could include interviewing the student and possibly parents, issuing a report or placing the student on some type of punishment. Punishment could include lunchtime or afternoon detention. A teacher could also keep a student in during lunch or recess at their discretion as long as it was documented in log book. Expulsion and suspension were reserved for serious offences and decisions made by the school principle.

### **Year 8 (Bottom) Mathematics - Teacher 1**

The first lesson discussed will be a Year 8 bottom-level Mathematics class. Because of a limited number of behavioural management issues, instructional management issues will also be examined. This lesson was first period on a sunny day, it was 40 minutes long. The class was calm and enthusiastic. The desks were in a U shape, this appeared to facilitate better class discussion and a better view of the class by the teacher. The lesson objective was to continue working though worksheets on graphing started in the previous lesson.

After a quick introduction involving a friendly chat about “giving your best shot in exams”, the bulk of the lesson began. The learning was scaffolded by taking the class through each worksheet, asking quick questions for comprehension testing and then elaborating or re-explaining where required. Each subsequent worksheet or question was attempted by students with less explanation and direction from teacher. Answers were rarely given to questions, instead hints or simpler questions broken down from the original question were given. The students responded positively to these constructivist approaches.

The teacher had a genuine enthusiasm and animation while explaining interesting aspects of content. The tone and volume of voice was changed dramatically to demonstrate enthusiasm, disappointment or other moods to class. This, as well as body language, provided feedback to the students and interestingly they reciprocated the teachers mood. The teacher frequently shared his personal experiences and participated in class discussions. This motivated the students who then worked with much more participation and enthusiasm.

The class was well behaved and quiet talk among the students was tolerated as long as they were on task. The students responded well to this, and the atmosphere of the room was relaxed. When explaining or instructing something to the class, silence was expected and achieved through eye contact and quick targeted desists. A number of interruptions (phone call, visitors) occurred while the teacher was explaining to class. The momentum of the lesson was maintained by handling them quickly, without skipping a beat, and with minimal break in eye contact with class. Subtle management techniques were used such as wandering and pausing for a few seconds behind students who were off task, using glaring eye contact or quick discrete statements such as “Were doing this aren’t we?”. These subtle techniques achieved their purpose quickly and effectively while still maintaining the momentum of the lesson.

The class was made up of 32 students of varying ability, but this didn’t seem to cause much difficulty, although little in the way of assessment appeared to occur. Group focus was maintained and transitions were very smooth and clear. One-on-one attention was given when requested but done quickly. The class was relaxed and genuinely interested in the content. The teacher took advantage of this by using appropriate management techniques and maintaining a friendly approachable relationship with the pupils. It was only when students disrupted the flow of the lesson or stepped outside of the teachers expectations that they were dealt with in a more firm manner.

### **Year 10 (Bottom) Science - Teacher 1**

The second lesson discussed will be a Year 10 bottom-level Science class given by the same teacher as in the previous lesson. The focus of this analysis will be on behavioural management issues. This lesson was directly following lunch on a sunny day, it was 40 minutes long. The class was quite excited and couldn't keep still. Again the desks were in a U shape, this time it had the benefit of keeping disruptive students far from each other. The lesson objective was to complete and review a chemistry topic.

After waiting for the silence and a good-morning ritual the lesson began. First an extended introduction discussing some housekeeping issues and a class discussion about their holidays with the teacher sharing his experiences. The class settled down during this period and were genuinely interested and respectful in what the teacher has been up to. The lesson body then began in an informal type of joking transition which the students responded well to. A chemistry topic was completed and then reviewed with lots of questioning of individual students, and class chorus answers. Approximately halfway through the review another diversion about the teachers experience with bad kids occurred. This diversion wasn't stopped by the teacher but encouraged and a class discussion occurred which lightened the mood and invigorated the pupils. The teacher quickly transitioned back to the review with little objection from the students. The last five minutes of the lesson involved more housekeeping and relaxing talk and jokes among the group and teacher.

During the lesson the teacher was quick to move on from any disruptions and keep the momentum up. The students were treated more like adults and related to them on a more personal level than the previous class. However, when students were disruptive the teacher quickly asserted his authority and issued a clear desist, frequently reminding them of their status in the school community (year 10 was the senior year in this school). The class frequently broke into rowdy talk or lots of ridiculous comments and questions, the teacher would pause waiting for silence, if the class didn't respond after 15 seconds or so he would raise his voice and issue a quick statement such as "settle down" or "calm down guys" and then remind them what they should be doing. In these situations he would sometimes drop a book on the desk or shut the door loudly then wait for silence. These techniques worked every time but it wasn't long before the group was rowdy again. However, the class was on task most of the time. A group of girls continually talked through the lesson, the teacher responded with a number of techniques; making statements such as "ladies!", eye contact, wandering around their desk and monitoring them. When the girls didn't respond from all these techniques he explained how their behaviour is inappropriate and separated them. They subsequently worked well.

The class consisted of 14 students of very diverse ability, this caused significant difficulty keeping everyone on the same task. The pupils who finished quickly became bored and disruptive while other students struggled. Those posed a dilemma for the teacher; if he spent too much one-on-one time with the slower pupils then the students who were finished had more opportunity to be disruptive. The teacher solved this problem by spending just enough time with the slower students, giving hints and cues then moving on to the next student. All while keeping a view of on class as a whole and attending to disruptive students when required. This demonstrated withitness and overlapping management techniques. Relative to the previous class, the teacher was much firmer and tolerated less with this class, afterwards the teacher informed me that if he gives this group too much room then it is hard to get them back on task. This demonstrated an adaptation of the teachers style to the class profile.

### **Year 10 (Middle) Science - Teacher 2**

The third lesson that will be discussed was a Year 10 middle-level Science class given by the different teacher from the previous two lessons. Again, the focus will be on behavioural management issues. This lesson was second period on a sunny day, it was 32 minutes long. The class was quite excited and couldn't keep still. The desks were in rows shape, this resulted in the teacher teaching not seeing a number of disruptive behaviour events (I witnessed them from the back of the room). The class consisted of 24 students with a very wide range of abilities, 3 students received extra help from library staff and a number of students had difficulty reading. The teacher didn't appear to accommodate this in anyway or try to assess the students understanding. The lesson objective was to hand out and review a chemistry test completed a few days previously.

The class entered the room quickly and relatively quietly, they followed a familiar ritual for entering the room and beginning the lesson. The class was very quiet compared to the other teacher's lessons. Once the class was settled the teacher gave a very quick introduction of what will happen in today's lesson. Then handed back the exams in another ritual that appeared familiar to the students. The students were very well behaved following the ritual and talked quietly with the students around them about their results once back at the desk, however, this was hardly audible. Once all the exams were given back the teacher quickly gave an overview of the marks and her disappointment in the results. For the remainder of the lesson the teacher worked through each question explaining how to get the correct answer. The teacher was firm and somewhat unapproachable, she was occasionally enthusiastic but mostly quite dead-pan in her approach. The lesson structure from this point was very mundane and a number of pupils were clearly bored. There was little class involvement or quality learning occurring. This lesson structure, and the boredom of the pupils resulted in a number of disruptive events, mostly pupils throwing things when the teacher wasn't looking or passing notes. Largely the teacher did not see or choose to ignore them. It was only when a student's voice raised above a whisper that the teacher issued a desist, and in my opinion these were overly harsh and not in proportion to the crime. However, her desists were very clear and effective in that they stated what the wrong behaviour was and what an appropriate behaviour would be and targeted the correct pupil by name.

In summary, her management techniques maintained silent classroom but encouraged other more covert disruptions. However, the lessons were very well structured and ritualised. The students appeared to appreciate knowing what they had to do and how to do it. It allowed for very smooth orderly transitions.

#### **Personal approach to classroom management**

Based on my observations of these three lessons, a number of other observed lessons not included in this essay, and my own teaching experience I have built up a personal approach to classroom management.

Creating smooth transitions is vitally important and although the laid-back nature of the first teacher allowed more informal relationship building to the students the second teacher's ritualist approach appeared to result in quicker, more organised transitions. And so my approach would be more ritualised, in that the students know what they have to do and how to do it. Within this ritualised environment more informal discussion could take place since everyone knows what they need to be doing.

Quick, structured, targeted and accurate desists are clearly important. Addressing disruptive behaviour quickly before it becomes an issue maintains the teachers expectations of his classroom. Therefore, this will be part of my repertoire of management techniques. This maintains the lesson momentum which is critically important to a successful lesson.

Subtle management techniques such as wandering around the room and pausing behind students. Using eye contact to encourage or scare students. Being animated, enthusiastic and genuine will be an important part of my classroom management style.

I found the second teacher's classroom too quiet and somewhat boring, I preferred the playful nature of the first teacher's room. Therefore, maintaining an environment of silence when required will be important. Transition rituals would be very useful in such situations, rather than roaring every time I demand silence when transitioning from a playful work task. However, knowing when to let go and have an off-task class discussion will also be important.

#### **References**

Woolfolk, A. (2004). Educational psychology (9th ed.) Sydney: Pearson, Allyn and Bacon.