

STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING CLASSROOM CONTROL IN THE NIGER-DELTA SECONDARY SCHOOLS

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Abstract

Classroom control is an integral part of effective teaching which prevents behaviour problems through good planning, organisation and administration of classroom activities. This study focuses on strategies for maintaining classroom control in the Niger Delta Secondary Schools. The study highlights the concepts of competence, motivation and discipline and how they enhance classroom control. In view of the numerous benefits derived from these strategies, it is hereby recommended that concerted efforts must be made to ensure the provision of quality education through good classroom control by applying motivation, discipline and teachers' competence in the teaching-learning process to achieve the goals and objectives of secondary education.

Secondary education is the form of education children receive after primary education and before the tertiary stage. All over the world, secondary education has been acclaimed as a veritable means for preparing individuals with the requisite knowledge, values, skills, and competencies for meaningful contributions to societal development. The National Policy on Education (FRN 2004) in its broad goals, made it clear that secondary education shall be to prepare the individual for useful living within the society and for higher education. Classroom control is an integral part of effective teaching which prevents behaviour problems through good planning, organising and managing of classroom activities and resources aiming at maximizing students involvement and co-operation in learning.

Teaching is one of the most difficult jobs in the world; however it becomes more difficult when the teacher lacks the ability to control her class. The teacher who is in charge of her class earns the respect of her students whom he respects too, though on a different level. Such a teacher knows that:

t Learners are human beings in addition to being children.

t Children are active, they move, talk and when they are not usefully occupied, they become mischievous. *J* There is time for everything under the sun, and the teacher acts accordingly and accords each

event its rightful time. *!* His students are individuals and should be treated as such, yet he helps them to develop team

spirit by grouping them for certain class activities.

J There should be no right idea of a perfect classroom, where students will sit down, with their two hands on the desk, or where learners will remain mute and will only move or act according to the remote control of the teacher.

Thus, effective teaching is contingent upon good classroom control, which is like the proverbial hand that rocks the cradle. Classroom control is a critical part of the teachers function which involves planning, organisation and management of activities designed to achieve the objectives of the school. Atanda and Lameed (2004) stated that classroom control involves the mobilization and organisation of resources to achieve the expected objectives of the school system. Classroom control can be referred to as the efforts and techniques which teachers use in ensuring that every student in the class learns and develops fully without interference to achieve the expected objectives of the school system. Therefore good classroom organisation and management are the keys to classroom success because there will be positive approach to class activities. Thus, this paper examines some strategies for successful classroom control with minimal corporal punishment at the secondary school level under the following sub-headings:

- > Competence. <* Motivation.
- < Discipline.

Competence

Teacher's competence is the most essential strategy for ensuring that classroom behaviour is well guided and problems sufficiently minimised. A competent teacher- must have sound knowledge of his profession and understand the need for him to perform as a student motivating professional. He is able to meet the challenging demand of teaching-learning process, and to do what he can to control behavioural problems and unwarranted situations. The competent teacher does not see his work as a burden rather he discharges his duties cheerfully, effectively and satisfactorily. A competent teacher manages the classroom environment, exciting and sustaining the interest of the learners in his class. He displays good knowledge of the subject matter, chooses correct lecture and discussion methods and uses correct words and pronunciations without awkward pauses that may generate control problems. It is however pertinent that the teacher exhibits competence in the following basic areas:

- *> Knowledge of subject matter.
- ** Knowledge of the teaching methods
- *** Knowledge of the learners.

Knowledge of Subject Matter: The competent teacher must possess adequate knowledge of subject matter which he may have acquired through proper training and experience. Having acquired adequate conceptual skills, he is always prepared to meet the teaching-learning challenges. The teacher should display natural intelligence and creativity; be resourceful and show interest in learners academic and other problems.

Knowledge of the Teaching Methods: A competent teacher not only should be knowledgeable in the subject matter but should have the ability of transmitting the knowledge to learners. To be able to transfer what a teacher knows to his students effectively remains one of the most taxing demands on a teacher. To meet this demand the teacher must have the mastery of pedagogy, good management of instructional materials and good communication. He must demonstrate flexibility in his method of teaching in order for him to take care of students individual differences, he must have the ability to organise instructions to suit students learning capabilities, the ability to stage demonstrations skillfully, the ability to identify important points that need emphasis and the ability to adapt his teaching method to different subjects.

Knowledge of the Learner: A successful teacher not only must know what to teach and how to teach it, he must also know who to teach what and when. The teaching must be learner-centered and learner-oriented. He must know that learning occurs only when the activity of an organism brings about a relatively permanent change in its behaviour. The competent teacher has to adopt a transactional style wherein he employs authoritative, democratic and a degree of laissez-faire leadership styles depending on the prevailing situation in the classroom. He should show friendliness for purpose of being accepted, he should also be modest, empathic and tactful in dealing with issues. He must display integrity and frankness to avoid double standards laying down dangerous precedence. He should also know the names of the students exercising care and showing concern and interest both in their academic and non-academic problems. This will make the students show interest in learning it will also create a friendly atmosphere. Learning involves the acquisition of manipulative, intellectual as well as social skills and habits, it is a process which involves the learner and what he sets to learn and must learn for a change in his behaviour to occur. Thus, classroom behavioural problems will be successfully controlled when students observe that their teachers are competent in knowledge, methodology, communication and interpersonal relationship.

Discipline

Discipline is a moral instruction which a teacher is expected to pass onto students in a verbal or written form. He could teach with his conduct, a code, or the use of corporal punishment. It is a fundamental element that plays a crucial role in the secondary school system, which insists on upholding the moral values of students. It comprises a wide spectrum of meaning from both the negative or positive perspective.

In schools where punishments are emphasized more than rewards, students' progress tends to be inhibited the more negative were the effects. However where the number of rewards exceeded the number of punishments, progress was greater (Duke and Canaday, 1991), successful schools have high expectations of discipline and promote good relationships between students and staff. Olagboye (2004) defined discipline as the readiness or ability of students and teachers to respect authority, observe and obey school rules and regulations, and to maintain a high standard of behaviour necessary for the teaching-learning process. Ditiimiya (1995) asserts that discipline involves self control, restraint, respect for oneself and for others. This implied that absence of discipline may lead to break down of law and order which unavoidably undermines learning, process and also introduces *an uncondusive environment for both teachers and students. Therefore discipline is needed* in the school for the following reasons (Adesina, 1980).

- ** Facilitate and enhance the achievement of the schools aims and objectives.
- ** Create a conducive environment for the teaching-learning process.
- ** Produce upright, loyal and respectful citizens.
- ** Produce a pedigree of civilized and cultured students who will develop respect for themselves and for their larger society.
- ** Help students to do what is right and good at all times without any compulsion. <* Facilitate the emergence of a society in which members freely learn the norms, principles and ways of that society.

Therefore to enforce and maintain discipline in the school, there must be functional school rules and regulations according to the stated objectives of a given secondary school. The teacher should use rewards and punishment wisely without fear or favour. He should also devote enough time to plan class activities properly, teach effectively to win students' respect, attract their attention and also guide the students towards development of self-discipline, self-direction and acceptance of responsibilities for their actions.

Motivation

Motivation is one of the essential tools for ensuring successful classroom control and it is defined as the total internal processes that impels an individuals to satisfy a need. It can also be referred to as the set of factors that energize, reinforce or direct students behaviour and activities towards the achievement of educational objectives and satisfaction of personal needs. Motivation is necessary in order for learning to be a continuing, improving, interesting and hopefully enjoyable practice. Motivation can be intrinsic when certain tasks are carried out by students without instruction, or anyone compelling them. It can also be extrinsic when certain tasks are carried out by students with the use of external incentive to promote learning.

Motivating Students in the Classroom

In motivating the students, the teacher should know that some students are naturally enthusiastic about learning, while many expect their teachers to inspire, challenge and stimulate them. Effective learning in the classroom depends on the teacher's ability to maintain and arouse the students interest in the course of teaching and learning. Whatever the level of motivation students come to the classroom with will be transformed or deformed by what happens in the classroom, thus there is no single magical formula for motivating students.

There are so many ways by which a teacher can motivate his/her students according to these researchers (Bligh, 1971, Lowrnan, 1990, and Lucas, 1990). These suggested ways include:

- ❖ Encouraging the students to set achievable goals for themselves.
- ❖ Giving frequent and early positive feedback that supports students beliefs that they can perform well.
 - ❖ Creating an atmosphere that is open and positive.
 - ❖ Ensuring opportunities for students success by assigning activities/tasks that are neither too easy nor too difficult.
 - ❖ Helping students to find personal meaning and value in the teaching learning process.
 - ❖ Helping students to feel that they are valued by members of the learning environment.

Furthermore the teacher should use appropriate, concerted, and understandable examples in the process of teaching for motivating students and maximising their comprehension. He should establish rapport with the students, use variety of methods to teach, make students active participants in learning by asking questions, involve them in writing, designing, creating, solving mathematical and scientific problems.

Conclusion

The issue of behaviour problems is a canker worm that has eaten deep into the fabrics of secondary school students making class control a difficult task. That is why this paper examined the importance of using motivation, discipline and teachers competence as strategies for enhancing classroom control in secondary schools. Teachers can effectively control the class by judiciously adhering to these three variables which will positively enhance teaching-learning process in the secondary school system.

Recommendations

1. To achieve the goals and objectives of secondary education, concerted efforts must be made to ensure the provision of quality education through good class room control.
2. There should be functional school rules and regulations that will enforce and maintain discipline in the school.
3. There should be periodic seminars, workshops and conferences organised for secondary

- school teachers on classroom control strategies.
4. The Ministry of Education and State Education Commission should make provisions for in-service training for principals and teachers in order to equip them with classroom control competencies.

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