International Conference on Education and Educational Psychology (ICEEPSY 2011)

Classroom management styles, classroom climate and school achievement

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Abstract

Classroom management is related to all teachers’ actions aimed to establish the stimulative learning environment. As stated by Martin and Baldwin (1993), three teachers’ classroom management styles can be distinguished: interventionist, non-interventionist and interactionist. The purpose of the study is to examine the relations between teachers’ classroom management styles, satisfaction with classroom climate and students’ school achievement. Data analysis shows that both teachers and students are the most satisfied with the classroom climate which is created by teacher-interactionist. Students’ achievements were at its highest when the teachers practiced interactionist style, and at its lowest when the teachers were interventionists.

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Keywords: classroom management styles, Protocol for classroom management styles assessment, classroom climate, school achievement

1. Introduction

Effective teaching is one of the most important topics of educational psychology. There are many studies that have the tendency to define the factors that influence effective teaching, which could be recognized through student’s school achievements. These factors can be found in many fields, but numerous studies suggest that teachers’ actions in the classroom are the most important compared with all what educational and school authorities are doing (Marzano & Marzano, 2003). This is the reason why our study is focused on teachers and what is done in the classroom.

There are different approaches to research factors of effective teaching and learning in relation to teachers. Some authors pay attention to teacher’s personality, the others emphasise teacher’s roles and competences. Recently, many authors have dealt with the concept of classroom management, that encompasses all these aspects and that is based on real teacher’s behaviour in the classroom.

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1.1. Teacher’s personality

Studies conducted during seventies and eighties in different countries indicate a list of personal characteristics of successful teachers (Bjekic, 1999): warmth, kindness, friendliness, democratic attitudes, cooperativeness, consistency, openness of thought, and wide interests. Good teachers are also described as persons full of understanding for students’ problems, willing to help them, allowing different activities in the classroom as well as maintaining order, having sense of humor and good knowledge of school subjects. Serbian students emphasize also (UNICEF, 2001) that it is desirable for teachers to be good and engaging speakers, having good sense of humor, knowing how to make jokes and treating all students equally.

Ryan (1970) describes three key dimensions of teacher’s personality: 1) to be warm-hearted, understanding and friendly as opposed to cold and reserved, self-centered and restrictive, 2) to be responsible, professional and systematic as opposed to unreliable and inconsistent in behavior, and 3) to perform stimulating behavior, imaginativeness and enthusiasm as opposed to routine behavior.

Emotional characteristics, as emotional stability and self-control, are important as well (Handley, 1973). Morgan (1977) emphasizes empathy as a factor of successful teacher’s work. Study of motivational personality characteristics of Serbian teachers (Petrovic-Bjekic, 1997) points out that self-actualization has important role in their success.

However, this approach is not very useful from the point of view of educational practice and its quality improvement. It becomes clear that research should focus on teachers’ actions in classroom. Therefore it is necessary to define different aspects of teacher’s work and some of his/her roles.

1.2. Teacher’s roles and competences

It is quite clear that teacher’s roles are numerous and complex. Generally, two main teacher’s roles can be distinguished: the first is related to general personal growth of students and the second one is connected with the acquisition of knowledge. There are some other classifications of teachers’ roles. According to Lindgren (1976), teachers’ roles can be grouped into three categories: 1) teaching and administration; 2) psychologically oriented roles toward particular students and the whole class; and 3) self-expressing roles. Beltran (2011) distinguishes the social side of teaching (creating learning conditions) and the task-oriented side of teaching (imparting knowledge to the learners). Harden and Crosby (2000) point out twelve teachers’ roles grouped in six areas: 1) the information provider, 2) the model, 3) the facilitator, 4) the assessor, 5) the planner, and 6) the resource material creator.

Similarly, Ivic et al. (2001) differentiate the following roles of teachers:
- Teachers’ role in the narrowest sense (teacher as a lecturer, teacher as an organizer, a partner in pedagogic communication, an expert in the subject field);
- Motivational role (motivating students to work, stimulating and maintaining their interests, teacher as a model for career guidance);
- The role of evaluator (performance assessment and evaluation of students’ behavior and personality);
- Cognitive-diagnostic role;
- Partner in the emotional interaction.

In order to fulfill all these roles, teacher should have appropriate competences, that represent combination of traits, abilities, knowledge and skills. Some authors make the difference between three main kinds of teachers competences: pedagogical competences, competences related to the course content, and communication competences. In short, teaching competences are the combination of pedagogical and social competences.

1.3. Classroom management

Classroom management refers to creating safe and stimulating learning environment. This term combines the teacher’s personality, his/her abilities and professional conduct designed to bring all of his/her professional roles, as well as the processes that take place in a group of students and the results of these processes. A large number of studies, that are concerned with various influences on pupils’ school achievement (Wang et al., 1993), point out that, among 228 variables, classroom management has the most direct impact on students’ achievements.

Classroom management involves many aspects: the management of space, time, activities, materials, labor, social relations, behavior of students. Therefore, this concept is associated with a wide range of activities undertaken
by the teacher in the classroom, such as arranging the physical space, defining and practicing classroom procedures, observation of students’ behavior, dealing with undisciplined behavior, encouraging students’ responsibility for learning, teaching lessons in such a way that encourages students’ task orientation (Watkins & Wagner, 2000).

Doyle (1980) stresses that classroom is not only the static picture of a room filled with twenty or thirty students and the same number of chairs and desks, with shelves, tables, books, chalkboards. Classroom is in motion and its complex structure could be captured by following features: 1) immediacy (events happen fast and there is not enough time to think before acting); 2) publicness (the classroom is public place and the teacher is always on the stage); 3) multidimensionality (classroom is a learning laboratory, a social center, a peer-group, a collection of individuals); 4) unpredictability (immediate circumstances influence events); 5) history (a class meets regularly for a long time and the first few meetings often shape what is likely to happen the rest of a year); 6) simultaneity (many things happen at the same time). This complex environment requires classroom management that includes: extensive knowledge of what is likely to happen in the classroom, an ability to process a large amount of information rapidly, and skill in carrying out effective actions over a long period of time.

In order to determine the content of the concept of classroom management, the authors distinguish different dimensions that make its structure.

Watkins and Wagner (2000) speak of two broad dimensions of teacher’s leadership in classroom: a) integrative behavior – encouraging group members to work towards achieving common goals, and in a way that gives each group member satisfaction; and b) directive behavior – directed to the task, which involves the use of specific means for achieving the set of goals and coordinating learning activities. Teachers should take into account both dimensions of their leadership roles for effective classroom management.

As the basic dimensions of classroom management skills, Bru, Stephens and Torsheim (2002) consider the following: 1) providing academic support, 2) providing emotional support, 3) careful and simultaneous monitoring the entire class, and 4) conflict management.

Nancy Martin and Beatrice Baldwin (1993a; 1993b) offer a simple and comprehensive definition of the concept. According to them, classroom management is a multifaceted construct that includes three broad dimensions: personality, teaching and discipline. Personality dimension includes teacher’s beliefs about student’s personality and teachers’ actions that contribute to individual development of students. This dimension is related to teacher’s perceiving of the general nature of students’ abilities, motivation and overall psychological climate. Teaching dimension includes all teacher does to establish and maintain learning activities in the classroom, the physical arrangement of space and use of time. The third dimension, discipline, refers to actions taken by teacher to establish appropriate standards of behavior in the classroom.

1.4. Classroom management styles, classroom climate and students’ school achievement

Classroom climate is closely associated with learning environment and it is seen as a major factor of classroom behavior and learning. Recent research findings suggest strong relationship between classroom climate and students’ school achievement. Classrooms which are characterized by greater cohesion and goal-direction, lesser extent of disorganization and conflicts, offer better opportunities for learning and consequently students become successful (Adelman & Taylor, 2005). Mutual respect and understanding is also the essential element of classroom climate that represents stimulating learning environment (Miller & Pedro, 2006). This is the way to create open minded classroom climate, where students are ready to exchange ideas and explore new learning content.

It is clear that it is very important to create an appropriate classroom climate. To fulfill this task, teacher has to practice classroom management style based on constructive and productive relationship with pupils. The study carried out by Lewin, Lippitt and White in 1939, shows that democratic leadership style has many benefits in comparison with authoritarian or laissez-faire style. The democratic leadership in classroom means that teacher is considered as one of the members of class community, he/she exchanges views with students, he/she involves them in the activities and give directions, but without attempt to dominate. Such behavior of teacher encourages students to accept common work, to take the responsibility for their school obligations, to set high standards of learning and be motivated for achievement.

Nancy Martin and Beatrice Baldwin (1993b) distinguish three main styles of classroom management. These styles are based on concepts formulated by Walfgang and Glickman (1980), explaining the different teachers’ beliefs about discipline. They speak about continuum that represents three approaches to interacting with students – non-interventionist, interventionist and interactionist. Non-interventionist approach is based on the belief that person has his own needs that tend to express and accomplish them, so the teacher has minimal control. On the other side
there is intervening approach, based on the belief that the external environment (people and facilities) affects human development in a certain way, so that the teacher tends to achieve complete control. Between those two extremes there is interactionist approach that focuses on what an individual does in order to change the environment, as well as how the environment affects the individual. In this case, control over the situation in the classroom is shared between teacher and students. Each teacher performs different approaches in the classroom, but it is possible to talk about different styles depending on the most common and prevailing mode of behavior in the classroom.

Having in mind characteristics of productive classroom climate and the ways to create it, it could be said that interactionist classroom management style is the best way to build stimulating learning environment – classroom climate that will produce the best students’ achievement.

2. Method

2.1. Purpose of the study

Classroom management, as a relatively new concept in educational psychology, refers to whole teacher’s role in the process of teaching and learning. Recent researches pointed out some important preconditions of effective classroom management, as well as relation between different classroom management styles and quality of classroom climate and effective learning. Martin and Baldwin’s understanding of this concept (1993) covers many correlates of effective teaching. Their model is acceptable because it is simple – it involves only three dimensions, wide enough to cover all elements of classroom management. Moreover, the model offers well based classification of three styles, which were in focus of the presented research.

The purpose of this study is to examine what is the relationship between teachers’ classroom management styles (interventionist, non-interventionist and interactionist), satisfaction with classroom climate and student’s school achievement. The study is also aimed to find out which classroom management style is most commonly used among primary school teachers in Serbia.

The research findings will point out which style is the most effective with regard to students’ achievement and desirable classroom climate (from teachers’ and students’ point of view), as well. So, the findings could offer guidelines for teachers’ professional development, focused on those skills that would help teachers to create safe and stimulating learning environment.

2.2. Participants

The sample consisted of 273 primary school teachers. Precisely, the sample included elementary school teachers (21%) and subject teachers, teaching maths and sciences (27%), social sciences (9%), technical sciences (7%), languages (27%), and arts (9%). There were 213 female (78%) and 60 male participants (22%), which is similar to the real gender structure of teachers’ population in Serbian schools. Most of participants completed four-year study (74%), while a quarter of them completed the two-year study and only 1% finished postgraduate studies. Their age ranges from 24 to 64, although half of them aged 34 to 50 years. The research was conducted in 8 schools located in large cities, in small towns and rural areas in Serbia.

2.3. Instruments

The instrument used in conducting the research is the Protocol for classroom management styles assessment (PCMSA), designed for the study purpose (Djigic & Stojiljkovic, 2011). It is based on Martin’s and Baldwin’s understanding of dimensional structure of classroom management and distinction of three styles depending on distribution of the control over the situation in the classroom settings (Martin & Baldwin, 1993). Protocol consists of 20 items, referring to usual classroom situations, grouped into three dimensions of classroom management: personality (5 items), teaching (10 items) and discipline (5 items). Three different descriptions of teacher’s behavior in the same situation are offered, each for one of the three styles respectively (interventionist, non-interventionist and interactionist). On each item observer elects the description that best fits teacher’s behavior during the lessons.
Therefore, the Protocol is not based on introspection and self-assessment of teachers, but trained observers assessed the behavior of the teacher. Commonly chosen type of description is used to find out the dominant style of teacher. Although teachers practice more than one style of classroom management, the starting point being the belief that the most frequent actions can define teacher’s dominant style.

Examples of PCMSA items:

**Item No 1 (dimension: Personality)**
A) When entering the classroom, teacher first greets students, then asks a few informal questions (for example: how are they today, are they rested and ready for work), and reminds them to prepare school supplies while he/she is recording the lesson. (*interactionist*)
B) When entering the classroom, the teacher formally greets students, then he/she is recording the lesson without paying attention to them. (*non-interventionist*)
C) When entering the classroom, the teacher formally greets students, immediately giving orders what they have to do (for example: Clean the blackboard! Prepare your notebooks! Close the window! Set a geographic map!). (*interventionist*)

**Item No 12 (dimension: Teaching)**
A) Teacher mainly uses frontal work, without paying attention to students and their reactions. (*non-interventionist*)
B) Teacher uses various forms of teaching and arrange different activities to ensure active participation of all students during the lessons. (*interactionist*)
C) Teacher uses frontal work, he/she is very demanding and tend to control everything that is going on in the classroom. (*interventionist*)

**Item No 18 (dimension: Discipline)**
A) Faced with a lack of discipline in the classroom, the teacher criticizes undisciplined students, qualifying their behavior as inappropriate, etc. (*interventionist*)
B) Faced with a lack of discipline of students in the classroom, the teacher do not react, he/she continues with lecture, sometimes with comment that students are responsible if they can not learn that lesson. (*non-interventionist*)
C) Faced with indiscipline in the classroom, the teacher reacts by checking what is going on and trying to find a suitable solution together with students, and again drows students’ attention to the lesson. (*interactionist*)

*Scale of satisfaction with classroom climate* (SSCC) was used in two parallel forms: for students, and for teachers. Each student and teacher independently evaluated the overall climate in the classroom on a five-point scale. Items refer to students’ involvement into learning activities during the lessons, to relations and way of communication between teacher and students, and to general atmosphere during the lessons.

Finally, the *school records* was used to obtain data about students’ school achievement.
2.4. Procedure

Two observers independently evaluated teacher’s behavior in the classroom, using the Protocol for classroom management styles assessment. In total 269 teachers were observed during two school classes by two observers, so 1076 Protocols were collected. At the end of each class, teachers and students were also administered the questionnaires to evaluate classroom climate also. In order to measure students’ school achievement, the average grade of the whole class for certain school subject at the end of the first semester of the school year 2009/2010 was taken from school records.

2.5. Reliability of measures

Reliability of the Protocol for classroom management styles assessment (PCMSA) is tested by internal consistency measures, precisely, by Cronbach’s Alpha correlation coefficient (table 1). The best result produces estimation made by two observers on the basis of two school classes (Cronbach’s Alpha= 0.902).

Table 1. Reliability of the Protocol for classroom management styles assessment (PCMSA)

| Method of PCMSA administration | Cronbach α coefficient |
|--------------------------------|------------------------|
| **One observer’s evaluation on the basis of one class** | | |
| First observer First class | 0.627 |
| Second class | 0.704 |
| Second observer First class | 0.692 |
| Second class | 0.689 |
| **Two observers’ evaluation on the basis of one simultaneously observed class** | | |
| Two observers First class | 0.811 |
| Second class | 0.836 |
| **One observer’s evaluation on the basis of two observed classes** | | |
| First observer Two classes | 0.811 |
| Second observer | 0.825 |
| **Two observers’ evaluation on the basis of two simultaneously observed classes** | | |
| Two observers Two classes | 0.902 |

Further analysis was made in order to estimate agreement between observers’ assessments based on the observation of the same school class (table 2) or on the basis of two different school classes (table 3). Pearson correlation coefficients are pretty high, so it can be concluded that the Protocol is useful for the detection of styles practiced by teachers in their teaching practice. As it expected, the results show that there is consistency in teachers’ behavior and their teaching methods. On the basis of obtained results, the instrument designed for research purposes, can be recommended for further researches and for use in educational practice as well.

Table 2. Correlation between observers of teachers' classroom management styles on the basis of one school class

| Agreement of observers | Estimated style | Correlation |
|------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Two observers – first class | Intervening | 0.831 |
| Interactionist | 0.870 |
| Non-intervening | 0.836 |
| Two observers – second class | Intervening | 0.850 |
| Interactionist | 0.876 |
| Non-intervening | 0.846 |
Table 3. Correlations between estimation of teachers' classroom management styles made by the same observer on the basis of two school classes

| Agreement in estimation | Estimated style | Correlation |
|-------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| First observer – evaluation based on two school classes | Intervening | 0.770 |
| | Interactionist | 0.822 |
| | Non-intervening | 0.820 |
| Second observer – evaluation based on two school classes | Intervening | 0.748 |
| | Interactionist | 0.804 |
| | Non-intervening | 0.808 |

Reliability of Scale of satisfaction with classroom climate (SSCC) is tested only by internal consistency measures, for teachers’ and students’ form respectively. Cronbach’s Alpha correlation coefficients show that we can rely on this instrument (teachers’ form: 0.808; students’ form: 0.910).

3. Results

3.1. Classroom management style of Serbian primary school teachers

The first task was to determine which style is more frequently used in a sample of primary school teachers. Precisely, research is aimed to investigate the distribution of different classroom management styles practiced in a sample of teachers. It is found that 59.5% of observed teachers are interactionists, 24.2% are interventionists and 16.4% of them are non-interventionists. Although it is encouraging that most teachers practice interactionist style, the other 40% of them still practice other two styles that are less effective (according to recent findings). So, in relation to the educational system in Serbia, it is obvious that it is necessary to make an effort to improve teachers’ competences for effective classroom management and therefore enhance the quality of education.

3.2. Classroom management styles and satisfaction with the classroom climate

The next step in analysis was to investigate the relation between teachers’ classroom management styles and satisfaction with classroom climate, estimated by teachers and by students. As it is mentioned, at the end of each observed class, teachers and students were asked to express their own level of satisfaction with the classroom climate. Analysis of variance is used to determine the differences in classroom climate’ satisfaction between teachers which practice different classroom management styles (table 4).

Table 4. Analysis of variance – differences in the level of teachers’ satisfaction with the classroom climate depending on their classroom management style (* p < 0.05)

| Dominant style | Dominant style | Mean difference | F statistic | Significance |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| interventionist | interactionist | -0.19752 | 3.482 | 0.013* |
| | non-interventionist | -0.06186 | | 0.560 |
| interactionist | interventionist | 0.19752 | 0.032 | 0.144 |
| | non-interventionist | 0.13567 | | 0.144 |
| non-interventionist | interventionist | 0.06186 | | 0.560 |
| | interactionist | -0.13567 | | 0.144 |
Table 5 shows the differences in students’ satisfaction with the classroom climate (the average estimations of the whole class) depending on teacher’s classroom management style.

Table 5. Analysis of variance – differences in the level of students’ satisfaction with classroom climate depending on teachers’ classroom management style (** p< 0.01)

| Dominant style | Dominant style | Mean difference | F statistic | Significance |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| interventionist| interactionist| -0.24909        | 12.051      | 0.000**     |
|                | non-interventionist| 0.00344        |             | 0.966       |
| interactionist | interventionist | 0.24909         |             | 0.000**     |
|                | non-interventionist| 0.25253        | (Sig. 0.000)| 0.000**     |
| non-interventionist | interventionist| -0.00344       |             | 0.966       |
|                | interactionist  | -0.25253        |             | 0.000**     |

Results show that both teachers and students are the most satisfied with the classroom climate created by the teacher-interactionist (on the scale ranged from 1 to 5, teachers’ average estimation is 4.46, and students’ 4.65). Students are less satisfied with the classroom climate if the teacher is interventionist and non-interventionist (in both cases average students’ satisfaction is 4.40). Teachers-interventionists are the least satisfied with the classroom climate (average estimation: 4.26). In addition, when the teacher is interactionist, there is the greatest agreement in the level of satisfaction with classroom climate both among teachers and students. One remark more: teachers’ and students’ satisfaction with classroom climate correlated significantly - Spearman’s correlation coefficient is 0.38 (p< 0.01).

3.3. Classroom management styles and students’ school achievement

The main research problem is whether students’ school achievement is related to teacher’s classroom management style. Analysis of variance shows that students achieve the best success when teachers practice interactionist style (average grade: 4.12). The difference between students’ school achievement when teacher is interventionist and non-interventionist was not found (average grade: 3.80 and 3.84 respectively). Results are shown in table 6.

Table 6. Analysis of variance - differences in the average school grades depending on teachers’ classroom management style (** p< 0.01)

| Dominant style | Dominant style | Mean difference | F statistic | Significance |
|----------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------|
| interventionist| interactionist| -0.32783        |             | 0.000**     |
|                | non-interventionist| -0.04322       |             | 0.712       |
| interactionist | interventionist | 0.32783         | 8.702       | 0.000**     |
|                | non-interventionist| 0.28461        | (Sig. 0.000)| 0.006**     |
| non-interventionist | interventionist| 0.04322        |             | 0.712       |
|                | interactionist  | -0.28461        |             | 0.006**     |
The research findings show that the interactioning teacher’s classroom management style is the most appropriate for creating good classroom climate, which in turn has stimulating effect on students’ school achievement. Classroom climate plays an important role, especially for school achievement, which can be confirmed by results - the correlation between the level of satisfaction with the classroom climate and class average grade. Students’ and teachers’ satisfaction with the classroom climate correlates significantly with average success in particular school subjects (Spearman’s correlation coefficient is 0.378, p<0.01, and 0.313, p<0.01 respectively).

4. Conclusion

On the basis of the research findings, it could be concluded that teachers’ classroom management style is very important factor of effective teaching, especially considering students’ school achievement. The research findings confirm the advantages of interactionist style in classroom management compared to interventionist and non-interventionist styles. Teacher who practices interactionist style encourages interaction and cooperation into the classroom, respects student’s personality, appreciates the initiatives, interests and needs of students, uses teaching methods and materials that obtain full activity of the whole class during the lessons, designs activities well focused to learning goals, implement procedures to build positive discipline based on self-control and responsibility of students. In short, teacher-interactionist shares the responsibility for the situation in the classroom with students. So, he/she contributes to social climate that stimulates learning and personal growth of his/her students. Due to the positive social climate and involving students as active participants of teaching and learning process, classroom becomes safe and stimulating learning environment. Consequently, such a teacher is able to achieve the best results in the educational process.

The Protocol for classroom management styles assessment, developed in order to realize this research, has shown good reliability, so it could be recommended for further research purposes. In educational practice, there is a need to assess one's particular teaching style and then make efforts to improve its effectiveness. Reliable estimation of teacher’s classroom management style could be the basis for planning teachers’ professional development. Taking into account that research findings has shown that at least 40% teachers practice less effective teaching styles, it is clear that there is a need to improve teaching practice. From the standpoint of the educational system in Serbia, it is obvious that it is necessary to do everything to maximize competence of teachers for effective classroom management and therefore enhance the quality of education.

Acknowledgements

This paper was created within the research project No. 179002 - Ministry of Science and Technological Development, Serbia.

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