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Behaviour Management: Evidence Based Practices Behaviour Management in the Classroom

by

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2

Nowadays, teachers have a big challenge maintaining class control and students' behaviour. This problem or challenge is common in teacher's environment and he/she has to adapt and remedy his /her situation. In our life, there is good behaviour and misbehaviour. Misbehaving children can be regarded as needing some adult guidance or they can be regarded as sinful and immoral (Lee, 2001). Children are affected by these views of adults. People have good behaviour and bad behaviour and the culture and society in each country can describe the behaviour as good, bad, appropriate, inappropriate, acceptably or unacceptable.

“Behaviour, which can be verbal or physical, is everything people do even that bad or good, wrong or right, useless or helpful, wasteful or productive” (Charles, 2002). In addition, “behaviour in general is changeable, predictable and functional except in mental disease situation” (Crone & Horner, 2003). When thinking about behaviour, we should be aware that all behaviour is learnt and has a purpose. It should also be seen as a product of the person's environment. Each society has rules and has ideas about what is right and what is wrong. Therefore, this essay will explain the variety of behaviours displayed in the classroom, define the concept of functional behaviour and then discuss the different motivations for disruptive behaviours in the classroom, clarify the level of power educators need to manage classroom behaviour, and then explain which theories teachers can use in the classroom.

The variety of behaviours displayed in the classroom

We, as teachers, have to consider many things around our students such as their environment, their thinking, their emotions, their relationship and power balance. In general, the teacher tries to have his/her control at a level which ensures his/her students have as good an environment to learn in as they can. Therefore, all things support this idea we can say good behaviour and vice versa. Sometimes, in poor countries normal behaviour in their societies is misbehaviour in other countries. For example, in some poor countries the students cannot wear appropriate clothes. Poor students do not have many clothes, so they may wear clothes which, in another school, might be considered unacceptable. So, we have to consider this topic (behaviour) in the context of the culture and school. Indeed, a person's behaviour is shaped by many factors such as our emotions and those of people close to us and also by events beyond our control (Your dictionary, n.d.). We have a range of misbehaviour in schools around the world. In general, misbehaviour in the classroom is an action or conduct that is unsuitable, wrong, unfitting, or unaccepted (English Dictionary - With Multi-Lingual Search, n.d.). Moreover, misbehaviour can be verbal or physical, and all teachers try to curb misbehaviour as their classes are affected by students' behaviour. For instance, if students do not pay attention to their teachers or their rules, they are misbehaving. A student who disrupts a lesson by making a noise or doing something inappropriate is misbehaving (Scott & Nelson, 1999).

Below is a list of words describing inappropriate behaviour if occurring in a class or any other social situation:

- Hostile: verbally or physically threatening
- Confrontational: often arguing with people.
- Domineering: always telling people what to do.

Behaviour Management: Evidence Based Practices

Maher Albeshr

Dr. Ahmed Bawa

4

- Deceitful: doing or saying anything to get people to do what you want or to get what you sly or dishonest want.
- Bossy: constantly trying to control others.
- Selfish: not caring about others or their feelings.
- Annoying: bothering people.
- Overexcited: acting just a little crazy.
- Scheming: always trying to influences other people.
- Temperamental: being unpredictable; changing moods often.
- Offensive: treating people badly; breaking social rules.
- Nasty: seeking revenge; hurting others because you didn't get what you want.
- Inconsiderate: not thinking about the effects of your actions or words.”
(your dictionary, n.d.).

On the other hand, good behaviour in the classroom generally is an action or a conduct that is appropriate, proper, correct, or accepted (Canadian Education Association, 1996). All teachers are looking for good behaviour from their students to ensure a good environment for learning. For example, if students help their teacher to keep their classes under control, they are behaving well. Another example, if students ask their teacher to bring tools for them to use in their next lesson, they are displaying good behaviour. When they try to keep a good learning environment in their classroom then that is good behaviour.

Below is a list of words describing appropriate behaviour if occurring in a class or any other social situation:

- “kind: desire to help people.
- Amiable: pleasant, delightful.

- Thoughtful: thinking of others.
- Keen: has strong feelings; ardent.
- Honest: being loyal.
- Witty: causing people to laugh with polite way.
- Generous: thoughtful, caring.
- Agreeable: polite.
- Well-mannered: exhibiting good manners.
- Truthful: being totally honest.
- Considerate: thinking things over” (your dictionary, n.d.).

The concept of functional behaviour and then the different motivations for disruptive behaviours in the classroom

Functional behaviour has a long definition and its meaning depends on the environment. Functional behaviour is an interactive behaviour of an individual with the work system. Another definition of functional behaviour is an interaction of the individual or the group within their environment system or organization system which has specific jobs and specific responsibilities (General Organization for Technical and Vocational Training, 2009). Related to these definitions, functional behaviour includes what the person does verbally or physically and what the motivation behind that action was. In addition, “Functional Assessment is a process of gathering information that can be used to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of behavioral support” (O’Neil, Horner, Albin (1997). There is a different between acceptance things or trying to accept things. Therefore, people say “When you accept something, you already have a conviction about it”. However, when you try to accept something you are approaching it with a negative attitude knowing that you need to accept it. So, trying to accept something depends on your abilities to adapt to your environment (General Organization for Technical and Vocational Training, 2009). Since the

Behaviour Management: Evidence Based Practices

Maher Albeshr

Dr. Ahmed Bawa

6

Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis (JABA) was first published over 30 years ago, it has brought great benefits to educational psychology (Sulzer-Azaroff, Drabman, Greer, Hall, Iwata, & O'Leary 1988). A functional behavioural assessment comes after the analysis process of misbehaviour and sometimes comes before the misbehaviour. We have to take care of our students' actions and their interaction to stop the bad behaviour directly or before misbehaviour happens. The educationist should aim, "through a behavioural intervention plan, any need for positive behavioural strategies" (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001). An applied behaviour analytic approach has many benefits for educationalists. It is particularly useful in meeting the legal requirements of IDEA for conducting functional behavioural assessments for use in planning behavioural support strategies for students displaying challenging behaviours (Gresham, Watson, & Skinner, 2001). We need to understand the concept of reinforcement. Reinforcement increases the chance of a behaviour occurring. Positive reinforcement is something given (or expressed) which increases a behaviour, whereas negative reinforcement is something which is withdrawn which increases a behaviour. Punishment is imposed to suppress behaviour. So the difference between negative reinforcement and punishment is that the former decreases behaviour, whereas the latter suppresses it. According to Carr et al, (1999) functions of behaviour include: Positive social reinforcement, (Attention seeking, social communication, nurturing or comfort with others), Material or activity reinforcement (access to desirable tangible item or preferred activities), Negative activity or social reinforcement (avoiding or escaping activities, events or people) and Automatic or sensory reinforcement (visual, auditory, tactile etc stimulation). So, teachers have to identify the function of the behaviour to help manage the classroom properly.

There are different motivations for disruptive behaviours in the classroom. In addition, many teachers believe that if a student misbehaves, he tries to achieve his goal. When we analyse students' misbehaviour, we will find their misbehaviours depend on their goals for these actions. These usually include: getting attention, seeking power, taking revenge and avoiding failure (Porter, 2007). Some students misbehave to show their classmates that they are there with them and they are funny people. These actions relate to the goal which is called "getting attention". Some other students misbehave because they need to feel that they have power in the classroom and with their classmates. In my experiences as a teacher, I have found that kind of students who misbehaved in the classroom for seeking power. When asked why they behaved that way the students said that sometimes "we are the leaders in the class or we do not like our teacher". Others may say "we do that to hurt someone who hurt us." This last action relates to the goal which is called "taking revenge". In addition, I found a student, who was in grade six, misbehaved in my class when I asked my students to do hard work. At that time, I asked him directly to check on his classmates to see who had started. He stopped his misbehaviour directly because I gave him another job which was easy instead of his classmates' job. The goal of his misbehaviour in that situation is called "avoiding failure".

The level of power teachers need to manage classroom behaviour

A relation is one word but it has many meanings depending on who has this relation with you. We have relationships with people around us. These can be good or bad relationships. For instance, we have relationships with our friends, neighbours, parents, children, classmates, teachers and other people we meet. One of the most important relationships is that between a teacher and a student because it will affect

Behaviour Management: Evidence Based Practices

Maher Albeshr

Dr. Ahmed Bawa

8

on the student environment in either a good or bad way. Indeed, teachers have power in their class and that power depends on the teachers. Some teachers like to have a high level of control with no freedom which makes the students look like machines without options. On the other hand, some teachers give their students a high level of freedom which makes their classes appear as if they are uncontrolled. I believe that we need a high level of control but with freedom, discussions and a positive atmosphere. We need to have a good relationship with our students because they will react positively with us and with their school environment when they have a good feeling about the relationship. I do not like to force my students to do what I ask them to do because I have power. I like them to do what I ask because they are happy with me and enjoy with my class. Rarely, I use my power when I feel that I will lose the control of my students or to show them we have rules which we have to follow. I found a theory called the social exchange theory. It is very helpful in learning to control your classes. Social exchange theory proposes that social behaviour is governed by a process of exchanges between people. The decision whether or not to initiate an exchange is made after implementing a cost-benefit analysis (Wikipedia, n.d.). Therefore, we have good communication with our students because then we will be sure of their actions and we will be sure of their feelings. I believe when the teacher understands his/her students' feelings, he/she has control over his/her class. We remember some teachers because we enjoy our classes with them. Moreover, we sometimes like a subject because we like the teacher who teaches this subject and we always do what he wants directly and sometimes without thinking even when the task is a difficult one. I like that type of control when I have a happy time with my students, and they enjoy learning different things with me.

Blend of theories, as outlined in Porter (2007), I would use in my classroom

Managing behaviour has many theoretical approaches such as Limit Setting, Applied Behaviour Analysis, Cognitive Behaviour Approach, Neo-Adlerian Theory, Humanism and Choice Theories. Many theoretical approaches describe and explain the relation between the teacher, the student and the classroom system. In addition, these approaches describe the classroom's rules, and behaviour management in the classroom. Some schools try to choose general or specific approach and ask their teachers to know and use this approach in their classroom to make general rules for their school. For example, The University College of Jubail made general rules which describe the relation between the students and the teachers and showed their students the rules. These rules include the rewards and the sanctions. Their system tries to follow the limit-setting approach. Moreover, many teachers use one of the approaches for behaviour management but others use two or more and mix them to manage their students' behaviour. In my classroom, I would like to use Assertive Discipline (Limit Setting). To use this approach I have to explain the classroom rules to my students and also the rules for various classroom activities. In addition, my rules include the rewards and sanctions. I will clarify classroom's rules and write them on the board. I will give them enough information about what they have to do, the classroom requirements and their responsibilities. I know from my own experience as a student that students hate the situation when the teacher alone makes the classroom rules. In this matter, I would like to ask my students to help me and create some of the rules for the class. I will try to ask them about specific points such as the rewards and the sanctions. I would like to change their feeling about this approach and let them think they made the rules not me.

Behaviour Management: Evidence Based Practices

Maher Albeshr

Dr. Ahmed Bawa

10

Furthermore, I will use Applied Behaviour Analysis because I would like to show the students the benefit of their learning. I like to discuss some points with my students to improve their thinking and to get positive feedback about my teaching and my subject. This approach is very necessary with some students as they need to feel the benefits. So, I need to pay attention to these kinds of students and their reactions within the classroom. I believe that when I make a happy environment in their classroom, they will learn more and more and they will like to come to my class and to meet me. This approach will keep them excited about learning. I believe that their enjoyment will become a motivation to keep them on the learning road.

Sometimes, I will use Humanism and Choice Theories with my students to have good communication with my students to make conversation or to discuss some issues around our classroom or in our school. With this approach, I do not like to lose my power, so I will switch between these approaches: Limit Setting, Applied Behaviour Analysis and Humanism and Choice Theories. I believe that we need the happiness, respect and power to make a good and pleasant classroom because the students are affected by all things around them specially classroom environment. On the other hand, I do not like to give my students the absolute freedom to manage themselves. This system relates to the cognitive behaviourist approach. In this approach, the teacher needs to be aware of the behaviour and some students may not have the ability to make choices about their own behaviour. Moreover, I avoid using Neo-Adlerian Theory because students are required to exercise self-discipline, and changing student behaviour is difficult and teachers have little control over preventing disruptive behaviour.

Ultimately, teachers need to know about different levels of behaviour because they usually meet many kinds of students' behaviours, both good and bad. Moreover, teachers have to create the best communication with their students as they can. The teacher can make a good classroom environment when he/she can adapt to his/her students' personalities. When teachers understand students' behaviours, they will have control in their classroom and they will have good relations and communication with their students. Teachers can use various theories or approaches for behaviour management, and they can mix some of these together when they feel this would be beneficial. As teachers we have to bear in mind that "students are affected by their cultures, their environment, their thinking, their emotions, their relationship and power balance." Indeed, different cultures or environments show different rates of misbehaviour. Also, some students may misbehave by accident, so teachers have to be patient and persevere with them to achieve good learning environment.

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