THE DISCIPLINE DEBATE IN NATIONAL
AND LOCAL CONTEXTS

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The following three brief papers are summaries of three of the presentations to the symposium on the discipline debate. Malcolm Lovegrove summarises the research framework of La Trobe University studies in classroom control, Eva Burman presents a brief summary of research results from the studies and Keith Simkin presents some implications for classroom management of the literature on Non-English speaking background students.

STUDIES IN CLASSROOM CONTROL
THE RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

Malcolm Lovegrove

Of all the social interactions which take place in the classroom, those relating to teachers' attempts to keep students on task by means of sanctions and encouragements are in the forefront of teachers' concerns. In a recent study Veenman (1987) reported that classroom discipline was the most seriously perceived problem with which beginning teachers have to contend. Experienced teachers too, contend that student misbehaviour in the classroom is a major stresser (Otto, 1986). It is also reported as one of the most frequent reasons stated by teachers for resigning from Government secondary schools in Australia.

However, the origin of the studies undertaken by my colleagues, Dr Ramon Lewis and Mrs Eva Burman and me at La Trobe University, pre-date such observations and were not associated in any way with the locus of authority. Rather, they arose from a practical problem which came to light within our Diploma of Education course in the late 1970's. It was at that time - before the advent of performance indicators - we introduced the practice of asking students to evaluate the Diploma course. While the results of such evaluations produced different reactions from staff ranging from rejection to elation it became abundantly clear that students considered that insufficient attention was being paid to issues relating to classroom discipline apart from the tips they received from supervising teachers. You know the sort - "show them who is boss", "don't smile for the first month", "be tough then gradually let up", or in my day, "knock anything to the ground that moves".

At that time, and may be even today, the concerns reflected by our students were probably widespread in teacher education institutions, both
here and overseas. For example, a study undertaken of the opinions of Local Education Authorities in the United Kingdom on initial teacher training courses was given the following terms of reference: (Lawrence et al, 1981:54)

In view of public concern about violence and indiscipline in schools and the problems faced by the teaching profession today, to consider what action can be taken by central government, local authorities, voluntary bodies owning schools, governing bodies of schools, head teachers, teachers and parents to secure the orderly atmosphere necessary in schools for effective teaching and learning to take place.

The report concluded that the central problem of disruption could be significantly reduced by helping teachers to become more effective classroom managers and emphasised not only the pupils' contribution to disruptive situations but also the teachers'. Further, it highlighted the roles of initial and in-service training as crucial and suggested that there was a need in the first year of teaching for a teacher to improve mastery of classroom management and control skills.

For our part, we responded to the students' concerns, firstly by developing an elective in classroom management to be included in the Diploma of Education programme. A search of the literature indicated that there were a variety of models of classroom discipline to which we could refer ranging from suggestions that teachers become more assertive and adopt a 'take charge' approach to appeals to teachers to stop crippling children with discipline - and to engage in power sharing, problem solving and negotiation. A characteristic of these approaches was that they represented the opinions of educators and related professionals. Few studies focused on what students thought in terms of their perceptions of how they were treated by teachers. Accordingly, the first of our studies focussed on this area of research.

THE INTERVIEWS

To ascertain the strategies which teachers employed to help ensure that classrooms are effectively run we started by audio-taping interviews with Year 9 students in five state schools in Melbourne. Year 9 students were selected because teachers told us that, in their opinion, Year 9 students were eager talkers. They had got over the shock of moving from primary school and were not as worried about outside examinations such as VCE as were students older than themselves.

The interviews consisted of three parts. During the first part students were asked: 'What makes a good teacher, a poor teacher, and a likeable teacher?'
During the second part they were asked to describe what things teachers did to control misbehaviour and which of these were good, bad, fair or unfair, and how they felt when teachers did them.

The third part of the interview was directed towards encouraging students to try and explain why 'good' and 'bad' teachers behaved the way they did in matters of classroom control.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

We used the discussions recorded in the interviews as the basis for our control questionnaire. The questions were written in the language students used in the interviews. This was done to assist students to understand what we were asking when they filled in the questionnaire.

Answers were designed to make it possible for students to indicate the extent to which they agreed (ranging from Strongly Agree i.e. S.A. to Strongly Disagree i.e. S.D.) that various practices were used by teachers they knew. Care was taken to ensure that neither the students' nor teachers' names were recorded. For example, in one form of the questionnaire students were asked to:

think of a female teacher who teaches you one of the following subjects: science, mathematics. DON'T write down her name.

Keep this teacher and only this teacher in mind as you answer the questionnaire.

They then answered questions such as the following:

Makes rules for behaviour very clear. SA A D SD

Walks out of class when most of the class misbehave. SA A D SD

Separates kids who misbehave. SA A D SD

THE STUDIES

Listed below are details of the studies. Unless it is otherwise stated, questionnaires were used.

Study 1: Interviews with 110 students in 5 co-educational schools in Melbourne. (1979)

Study 2: 264 students in 11 co-educational schools in Melbourne. (1980)
Study 3: 364 students in 16 co-educational schools in Melbourne. (1981)

Study 4: 710 students in 10 co-educational schools in Melbourne. (1982)

Study 5: 408 students in 10 co-educational schools in Melbourne. (1982)

Study 6: Interviews with 20 teachers in 10 co-educational schools in Melbourne.

Study 7: 532 students in 5 co-educational schools in Buffalo, New York State. (1982)

Study 8: 215 students in 5 co-educational schools in Tromso, Norway. (1982)


Study 10: 700 students in 30 primary schools in Melbourne. (1984)

Study 11: 1,300 teachers and 2,000 parents in 50 schools in Melbourne (Primary, Secondary and Technical) 600 students in 10 schools - years 7,9,11. (1986)

Study 12: Interviews with 35 teachers and 50 parents. (1986)

Study 13: Survey of 800 students in 10 schools in Auckland, New Zealand. (1986)

Study 14: Survey of 600 students in schools in Melbourne. (1987)

Study 15: Survey of 500 students and 600 teachers in Melbourne. (1988)

Study 16: Survey of 300 teachers and 300 students in Melbourne. (1989)

Study 17: Survey of 800 teachers in Melbourne. (1990)

It was prior to the commencement of Study 11 that we considered it appropriate to include items in the questionnaires for students, teachers and parents which had a theoretical foundation in terms of assessing preferences for particular styles of classroom discipline. For our purposes there were three in number.

1. interventionist: the child develops as a result of external conditions. i.e. the teacher centred model. Briefly, the teacher centred model assumes that teachers have the right and obligation to decide the rules for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. Further, by a judicious use of
recognitions for appropriate behaviour and punishment of inappropriate behaviour, teachers should ensure that their expectations are met. In short, power and responsibility rests with the teacher. This approach is primarily interested in the student conforming to the pre-determined rules and consequences.

2. interactionist: the child develops from the interaction of inner and outer forces, i.e. the sharing of power. In contrast to the teacher oriented model, there is an alternative where power is shared by teachers and students. This approach emphasises negotiation as a means of handling behaviour in the classroom. It is based on the assumption that students who are disciplined by powerful teachers will not develop self discipline. Therefore teachers have an obligation to provide students with the opportunity to experience the results of appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, experience the related consequences and if need be modify the way they behave.

3. non-interventionist: the child develops from an inner unfolding of potential, i.e. the student in charge. The last of the models of power sharing in a school setting falls between the teacher and student oriented approaches. It is the group oriented approach and assumes that individual students as members of a school community are responsible to that community. Supporters of this approach believe that power resides with the group. Therefore, all rules and consequences are determined by group meetings. Here the teacher is a group leader, but has no more right to determine classroom policy than any other member of the group. However, once policy is determined the teacher is obliged to implement it. With this approach the use of a choice is genuine and although unpleasant consequences may follow bad choices, the right of the students to choose is of the utmost importance.

An item such as

The teacher should make the decision about how children behave in the classroom
refers to the first assumption.

Teachers and children should make the rules for behaviour together
refers to the second assumption.

and Teachers should let children make up their own rules for behaviour
refers to the third assumption.
1. For an extended treatment of this topic please refer to


REFERENCES:


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THE LA TROBE STUDY - RESEARCH RESULTS

Eva Burman, La Trobe University

The La Trobe team researching discipline and classroom management has been involved in studying perceptions of teachers' management strategies
for over a decade now. Thousands of students have been surveyed from Year 6 to Year 12 with most at Year 9. We have also administered modified questionnaires to teachers and parents as well as having conducted interviews with them.

I would like to report our major findings to you, admittedly on a selective basis.

The first finding (and it is one that is reassuring) is that notwithstanding what you might read in the press or how you might actually feel about what is going on in the contemporary classroom, there exists a tremendous reservoir of goodwill in students towards teachers. This is a point which I can't emphasise too much. Our results demonstrate quite clearly that most teachers are behaving in a way that doesn't upset students.

Point number 1.

Point number 2 is that in those cases where teachers are using strategies which upset students or distract them from their work the following behaviours were cited as being the most undesirable:
* punished the whole class or the wrong student
* lost their temper
* didn't let students know that they were pleased when the students behaved appropriately
* didn't provide students enough opportunity to explain their side of the story
* didn't make rules clear enough

Point number 3 is that these behaviours were by implication part of a wider constellation of student preferences.
* the teacher should be in charge of the classroom
* there should be clear rules
* students should help make the rules
* the rules should be to protect the ability of students to learn and teachers to teach
* a warning should always be given before punishments are used
* only misbehaving students should be punished
* the teacher should not lose his or her temper when punishing a student
* students should not be embarrassed
* punishment should 'fit the crime'
* other teachers should not be involved
* parents should not be involved
* students who misbehave should be made to sit by themselves in the classroom
* students who misbehave should be made to sit outside the classroom
* students who misbehave should catch up on any work missed
* the good behaviour of student and class should be recognised by the teacher
* students should have the right to explain their side of the story if they wish
* the teacher should talk to the student to find out what the problem is
* the teacher should model appropriate behaviour

Point number 4 is that students ideally would like class discipline to be a co-operative affair involving themselves and the teacher. However, students are quite prepared for a teacher to be totally in charge as long as the teacher keeps in mind and practices the student preferences to which I have just referred. In short, students prefer the interactionist model mentioned earlier by Malcolm Lovegrove.

Point number 5 and those that follow, in the main, pick up a number of the findings relating to teachers and parent perceptions.

Point number 5 then is that in general both teacher and students would be happy with
* a teacher in charge
* the teacher and the class in charge together

Point number 6 relates to parents and students sharing control.

* Parents make up their mind about what sort of discipline is best in schools by thinking about what they themselves had experienced at school and at home.

* Parents who like the teacher being in charge feel that students aren't able or willing to control their own behaviour.

* Parents think that students will respect adults more if they learn to do what the teacher says.

* Parents who like the teacher being in charge often haven't thought about whether schools are meant to teach students how to control themselves.

* If parents have thought about this issue they think students should have a say as they get older.

* If parents have seriously thought about how adults should participate in a democratic society, they like students to have a say in the classroom.
Parents who want students to have a say trust them to make sensible decisions and think they'll improve with practice.

Parents feel that if students do have a say they'll be more likely to do the right thing.

Point numbers 7 and 8 are more specific and particularly interesting in that they relate to gender and developmental differences in power sharing.

Point number 7 is that while there is in a general tendency amongst teachers and parents irrespective of sex to share power between teachers and students, more male teachers and parents subscribe to the locus of power residing in the teacher. Conversely female teachers and parents are more willing to entertain negotiation techniques.

Point number 8 is that both teachers and parents and to a certain extent students themselves believe that as students mature the less they should be involved in power sharing.

What are the implications of this medley of findings? In keeping with the theme of this conference we developed an approach to discipline which we call the 12 STEP - CR SYSTEM.

It assumes that altering students' behaviour through behaviour management techniques should not be the main aim of the teacher.

Instead, any action taken by the teacher should have an educational function which focuses on developing within students a sense of communal responsibility.

The diagram below which we will call the CR TRIANGLE indicates the four main elements of the CR System

*  
* Communal *  
Responsibility  
*  
Classroom Rights  
*  
Classroom Rules  
*  
Consequences - Recognitions  
*  
*  
*
By schools adopting this system in schools, and teachers adopting this system in classrooms, students should be learning skills of participation in conflict resolution and problem solving as well as developing attitudes which will prepare them for a participatory role in the classroom, at school and in the wider community.

The major aim of our system refers to CLASSROOM RIGHTS. These can also be extended to include SCHOOL RIGHTS. These are based on the rights of students, teachers and parents and are discussed and agreed to by the members of each group. With each RIGHT a related responsibility must be identified and discussed. From these RIGHTS a set of RULES are developed which on one hand reflect the Rights of teachers, students and parents and on the other protects their RIGHTS. The third element of the triangle deals with RULES.

The two RIGHTS which we consider the most important in justifying RULES are

STUDENTS AND TEACHERS HAVE A RIGHT TO FEEL PHYSICALLY AND EMOTIONALLY SAFE IN THE CLASSROOM.

STUDENTS HAVE A RIGHT TO LEARN AS MUCH AS THEY ARE ABLE.

We believe that in order to develop a sense of communal responsibility it is necessary to develop a systematic approach to classroom behaviour.

Initially the teacher should adopt a teacher-oriented approach - one where he or she is perceived to be firmly in charge. In time this approach will lead to the group participating in the decision-making process and the group will ultimately take responsibility for the behaviour of its members. In order for the teacher to initially take charge of the group, the teacher and students need to plan carefully the positive and negative consequences for behaviour which will be part of the overall discipline structure within the classroom. It is important that when the transition occurs from `teacher in charge' to `group in charge' it should occur in a way that allows the teacher to feel comfortable and confident.

Therefore it is necessary for teachers to:

* provide the students with the necessary skills, for example turn taking and listening so that they can participate effectively.
* encourage the students to want to accept the responsibility inherent in democratic decision making.

It is our firm belief that for this CR to work effectively there must be a commitment to the programme by the total school community which includes administration, teacher, students and parents.

REFERENCES:


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ETHNIC DIVERSITY AND CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Keith Simkin

The literature on classroom management has not concerned itself in great detail with the implications of ethnic diversity in Australian schools. Research into ethnic diversity has produced several distinct perspectives relevant to the classroom teacher.
Some of these perceptions suggest that there are problems of classroom management that arise directly from the views held by non-English speaking background parents and students about authority, discipline and appropriate behaviour in schools. Other perspectives focus on the indirect problems for teachers when students having difficulty with the English language are treated as academically inferior, or when issues of prejudice and racism influence relations among students and teachers.

AUTHORITY

The general view in the research is that parents expect teachers to exert more, rather than less, authority in the school (e.g., Nguyen, 1987; Hartley and Maas, 1987). Some groups will sometimes not accept a teacher's authority (e.g., a white teacher in an Aboriginal setting, a young female teacher in a class of Middle Eastern adolescent males). But many ethnic groups expect the teacher to be obeyed on grounds of traditional authority.

Students from different backgrounds will not automatically know acceptable school practice. Some will not want to work alone, be silent, ask for help when confronted by difficulty, or stay in one place. If they are rebuked, their response is often to remain silent, not offer an explanation or an apology. This can lead to a rebuke from the teacher, since it can be misinterpreted as sullenness rather than acceptance of the teacher's traditional authority.

In practice, most teachers profess to want, to some extent, children to develop into self-directed individuals who accept rational, co-operative authority rather than traditional authority (Lovegrove, Lewis and Burman, 1989). The research literature suggests strategies for defusing potentially confrontational situations by appealing to rational notions of classroom authority, by building up co-operation and participation, and by developing empathetic skills to deal with culturally different views of authority (e.g., Lippman, 1973; Pettman et. al., 1986; Pettman and Henry, 1986; Lovegrove and Lewis, 1991).

DISCIPLINE

The most often reported pressure on teachers from non-English speaking background parents in the area of discipline is towards more stringency: i.e., stricter rules, firmer punishments, emphasis on good behaviour, responsibility, obedience, diligence and studiousness (e.g., Hartley and Maas, 1987). A majority of Fields' Italo-Australian girl students in senior secondary schools stated that discipline at school was more lenient than discipline at home. (Fields, 1986).
Where this difference does exist, students sometimes do not respond in ways the teacher thinks appropriate because cues are different from those at home. They sometimes find ingenious ways to attract more attention: one sophisticated method is to argue that "You don't love me because you don't shout at me enough."

The teacher obviously has to try to clarify what are meant by various types of verbal warnings about misbehaviour in the classroom, and to be aware of the significance of different disciplinary actions for both the child and the parents. In some cultures answering back, interrupting, laughing, moving freely around the classrooms and borrowing others' possessions without prior approval are not necessarily misdemeanours. In other cultures, they are, and they merit physical punishment at home. So whole school disciplinary policies must be developed in conjunction with as many parents as possible.

APPROPRIATE LEARNING BEHAVIOURS

Observational studies of children in classrooms and in their own homes indicate the wide variation in culturally appropriate behaviours associated with learning. Some children are encouraged to learn co-operatively, seated around a circle; others are rewarded for individualism, initiative and independent endeavour. Some children will not give a direct denial, refusal or contradiction, so that verbal acquiescence is not always followed by completing the task. Some children do not welcome overt praise. Some children have a competitive, zero-sum discussion style that makes the "hands up, one at a time" convention difficult to establish.

Most confusing to many non-English speaking background students is the structure of explanation and argument in Australian school culture. The direct, linear, cumulative, logic of argumentative or analytical writing has to be learned by students who come from cultures where the required structure could be discursive, meandering, circular, tapered or allegorical. (Kordes, 1990). These students can appear to be rambling, confused, illogical. But to the student, the teacher can appear to be disrespectful to tradition, to the author, to the proper order of things, to nature and to God. If the teacher raises her voice in exasperated explanation, this can signify excitement, emotion, anger or rudeness. If the teacher asks the student to stick to the point or explain the relevance of something, this can signify inattention or placing in doubt the student's sincerity or ability (see
These issues can be problematic in different ways. If the school wishes to emphasise a democratic multicultural orientation towards the wishes of its clients, a theoretically possible option would be to adopt a sort of time-sharing policy. The teacher and the class could negotiate the rules they wish to use for conducting discussions, handling interruptions and questions, expressing praise and displeasure, organizing seating arrangements, and writing different types of prose. By systematically varying teaching methods and learning activities, the teacher could ensure that different groups receive an opportunity to behave and learn in ways they find culturally appropriate. The practical ramifications of this approach at a whole school level would be staggering.

On the other hand the school could emphasise another approach to multiculturalism, and argue that cultural diversity is best maintained not by the imposition of parental values but by the willing embracing of it by students as a free mature choice. This approach emphasises the production of students who are independent learners and thinkers, who evaluate knowledge and social practices and learn to accept cultural diversity in their school and community. This pluralist, progressivist model of teaching and learning tends to reject the acceptance in classrooms of behaviours and learning styles that do not support a co-operative learning environment. The difficulties for some cultural groups in this approach are obvious. In addition, this progressivist approach sometimes over-emphasises process at the expense of content and skill, to the academic disadvantage of non-English speaking students (Kalantzis, Cope, Noble and Poynting, 1990.)

LANGUAGE, ABILITY AND ACHIEVEMENT

In a general way the picture of what happens to many students from non-English speaking background children in Australian schools is well known. Many are not given adequate introductions to school routines; they do not have sufficient bilingual teaching; English as a Second Language classes are often inadequate; tests and evaluations confuse their lack of English with lack of ability; they often are placed in low ability streams and have limited educational and career opportunities (Claydon, 1977; Marjoribanks, 1980; Sturman, 1988; Kalantzis and Cope, 1988; McInerney, 1989).

Curiously there is little direct connection between this and the literature and classroom management. The major exception appears to be the material on Teaching English as a Second Language which argues for the prevention of management problems by facilitating the learning process.
Suggestions include bilingual staff and materials, language experience programs and topic approaches (e.g. Mansfield and Pledge, 1983; Rado, 1984; Evans, 1986).

PREJUDICE, RACISM, VIOLENCE

These manifestations of conflict between students of different ethnic backgrounds are sometimes frequent in schools. In others they occur only rarely. Management policies adopted by the teachers and schools are often the source of the difference. The classroom management literature deals with prejudice if at all, as a type of inappropriate attitude or behaviour. The literature on prejudice in schools has carried through the analysis to look at management policies in the classroom, the schoolyard and the school structure, as well as manipulating the curriculum to assist in solving management problems.

The literature on prejudice appears to identify several approaches to management issues: ignore it, contain the offensive behaviour, or change both the behaviour and the underlying attitudes. There is a variety of short term strategies such as picking up on the behaviour, establishing the reason for it, counselling, classroom discussion, devising strategies for tackling ignorance, fear and illogicality. There are long term strategies such as developing a co-operative classroom climate, high levels of self-concept, negotiated class rules, teacher in-serviceing, anti-prejudice curricula, school structural reform, community education and participation (e.g. Lippman, 1973; Debney Park High School, 1984; Skelton, 1985; Pettman et. al., 1986; Pettman and Henry, 1987).

CONCLUSION

The literature on classroom management at this stage seems not to offer teachers of non-English speaking background students a systematic guide to practice. The literature on multi-cultural education provides several perspectives, some clearer than others. There are some implications for classroom teachers on a long term basis. These include: learning the attitudes of parents and students to discipline, authority and appropriate learning behaviour; following programmes that enhance English learning and general competence simultaneously; adopting a variety of teaching strategies; incorporating the cultural and linguistic skills of the students and parents into the curriculum; devising anti-prejudice procedures, and maximising parental and student involvement.

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