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Enabling peer culture, as opposed to adult culture, to emerge and flourish in classrooms is important because it has been shown to enhance student motivation and learning. This descriptive study examined how a primary teacher enabled students to develop and maintain a peer culture so that it coexists with the school culture. Ethnographic techniques were used to collect data in one primary school classroom. The findings showed that the teacher's beliefs and the establishment of structures, processes and an environment conducive to empowering students are central to peer culture. The study highlighted the importance of peer culture in enabling students to pursue and coordinate multiple goals.

Peer Culture

A peer culture "consists of the descriptive and evaluative meanings that peer groups assign to behaviours and relationships" . More specially, students construe the world in their own way and develop a shared set of "activities or routines, artifacts, values, concerns, and attitudes" that are appropriate and real to the students although not necessarily to adults. This can be described as peer culture as opposed to adult or school culture .

Students within a class are peers and they tend to form their own culture through their interactions . The meanings that this culture adopts are likely to be influenced by the students' attitudes, norms, beliefs and values which they have formed from interactions with others including their family, the media and teachers . Thus, it is likely that teachers are in a position to influence the peer culture that exists in their classrooms. So what sort of peer culture is appropriate in classrooms? School staffs, and most likely parents, probably consider a peer culture that aligns to the goals of the teachers and the school as appropriate rather than one that resists.

In primary schools Bank argues that teachers have more influence over peer cultures than they do at higher levels of education. In primary school classrooms, for example, teachers can engage students in interdependent group work to increase the likelihood that students will develop positive peer relations . Yet little research has been conducted on ways in which teachers can enable students to develop and maintain a peer culture so that it coexists with the school culture .

The Study

This research was part a wider investigation into examining what student empowerment is and how it can be enabled in a primary school classroom . A descriptive study using ethnographic techniques was used in the natural setting of a primary school classroom.

A purposive sample of one year five class, (mainly ten year olds) including the teacher ("Gemma") and 29 students, was studied continuously for five weeks. The school, an Australian Catholic primary school located in a middle-class area, was chosen because it was known to emphasise student-centred learning and it was likely that various aspects of

empowerment would be manifested in the structure and programmes of the school. In consultation with the principal, a class was selected on the basis of student-centred learning approaches being used and because the teacher, made efforts to develop students' self-esteem. Therefore, there was an expectation that empowerment might be a phenomenon occurring in the functioning of the classroom.

This research centred on the teachers' and students' perceptions of daily life in the classroom with a focus on empowerment. I participated in the classroom as far as possible as a student rather than a teacher in an attempt to enter the students' world .

Techniques used for data collection were interviews, observations and field notes. Informal and semi-structured interviews were held with all participants in response to observations to gain perceptions and conceptions of life in the classroom and in particular of empowerment. All semi-structured interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Observations were used to provide a description of the setting, participants' actions, activities and interactions. Field notes were kept to record observations, points for clarification and reflections.

The analysis of the resulting data was an iterative process, building on ideas throughout the study. Regularities, patterns and topics were identified to initiate the establishment of coding categories. Moreover, irregularities were sought. Words and phrases that represented these patterns and topics were then recorded and called coding categories. Initial coding categories were assigned to data to test the "workability" of the categories. Modifications were made which included adding new categories, discarding and merging other categories. Then the categories were clustered into themes or dimensions and verified with the original data. Key events were identified and used to "provide a lens through which to view a culture" . Finally, Gemma was asked to read the descriptions to verify they contained the essence of her original experiences and whether the interpretations accurately portrayed aspects of classroom life.

This paper considers one aspect of this larger study by addressing the question, how can a teacher develop and maintain a peer culture so that it coexists with the school culture?

Findings

In analysing the descriptive data obtained, four themes were discerned, namely (a) the teacher's belief system about students and their life in the classroom, (b) creating an environment including the social, emotional and physical context, (c) encouraging the use of processes for things to happen, and (d) establishing structures or organisational arrangements for students to use, all of which were conducive to the establishment and maintenance of an appropriate peer culture. The findings presented are descriptive in nature and the accounts provided are filtered through the researcher's own perceptions of the experience.

Firstly I will introduce Gemma, the main teacher of the class. Gemma, in her mid twenties, had six years teaching experience, including at a large country Catholic school and the school at which she was currently teaching. She had taught third to sixth grades and worked in open space units. Gemma was an active member of staff who participated on many school committees. Gemma enjoyed teaching and enjoyed her current job.

Teacher's beliefs about students and their life in the classroom

From analysis of primarily observation and interview data, it was possible to develop an abstraction of the teacher's beliefs. In the section that follows, Gemma's beliefs are

identified. These appear in italics and each is followed by an elaboration of why Gemma held each belief.

Students should be encouraged to seek help and support from each other. Gemma recognised that students often had problems and believed that they did not learn effectively unless steps were taken to address or solve the problems. She believed that students should learn to solve problems independently from her with the support of their peers because adults will not always be available to help them. Additionally, students should be aware that other people have problems and should learn ways to support them.

Gemma encouraged students to seek procedural and academic help from peers as she recognised that all students had knowledge, skills and experiences to share. Many options were available to students when they needed help or support to solve a procedural or academic problem. Gemma facilitated students to seek help and support by sitting them in groups and allowing free movement around the classroom. She encouraged independence by asking students to think of someone who might be able to help them.

Students should work with all students in the class and learn skills to be able to work together effectively. Gemma believed that it was important for students to be able to work with anyone whether they liked them or not because in the workplace people are expected to do this. She explained, "So I think all the kids should get the opportunity to work with everyone in the class" (Int, Gemma, 31/7). Gemma expected students to sit with all members of the class at various times. She encouraged this by randomly selecting seating arrangements, arranging groups from which students selected with whom they wanted to work, and by allowing students to choose with whom they wanted to work. Gemma taught students cooperative skills to help them work with others more effectively through such approaches as role-play and student modelling.

Students learn more effectively when their social needs are met and it is important to address these needs. Gemma attempted to be aware of and cater for students' social needs. To support students, she actively taught social skills that helped them interact and relate to others. Gemma believed that social skills should be taught to students. She explained:

I suppose it (teaching social skills) is probably one of the highest priorities because if the kids aren't happy at school, if they're not happy in the environment, and they don't get on in the environment, then learning is going to be the least of their worries and they're not going to learn. Ultimately they are there to learn, but we need to make an environment where they are happy to learn and are comfortable. (Int, Gemma, 5/8)

Students learn more effectively when they have fun and participate in learning together. Gemma believed that students should have the opportunity to share ideas and learn from each other as higher order thinking occurs when students explain their work or teach others. She endeavoured to make students feel more comfortable by creating a collaborative and non-threatening environment where students built on each other's ideas and took risks. Gemma used cooperative learning extensively and she defined cooperative learning as students working together towards a common goal where all members have to contribute.

Gemma thought that society expects children to mature too quickly and, therefore, she believed that it was important to let children be children. Thus, Gemma encouraged students to have fun, participate in activities together and to play games daily as a class.

A relaxed, happy, supportive and safe classroom where students feel comfortable to share and to open up should be created. Gemma endeavoured to create a relaxed, safe environment where students felt comfortable to take risks and to laugh at funny occurrences. She held high expectations for a positive and collaborative environment. Gemma expected students to respect each other and encouraged them to value differences. She used the behaviour management policy to support students and their right to be respected.

Physical arrangement of the room should be conducive to group work and for the class to sit in a circle. Gemma believed that there should be areas for students to work in groups on the floor and at tables, as students should be able to communicate with ease when working with others. Additionally, the furniture should be arranged so that the class can move freely into groups. Gemma also believed that it was important for the class to be able to sit in a circle and as a class group to enhance unity and closeness. Gemma said:

I think it's really important to have the closeness as a class group as a unity, you know that we're a group together. I also like to have a circle because I think the symbol of the circle means that we are all a part of it and all included in class, which is really important. (Int, Gemma, 7/8)

In this section, I presented an abstraction of Gemma's beliefs which focused on the students and their life in the classroom. The beliefs clearly indicate the importance Gemma placed on aspects related to the social needs and lives of students.

Environment: The social, emotional and physical context

Atmosphere

There seemed to be a positive collaborative climate in the classroom and a sense of community cohesiveness. Gemma and the students communicated with respect for each other and showed concern for each other's welfare. Students were often observed seeking and receiving help, and showing interest in each other's work. On many occasions, I observed groups of students sitting in a circle and talking. When someone was speaking, those listening gave eye contact and if they could not see the person speaking, they often leant forward. I rarely heard or saw Gemma or students put others down.

The atmosphere seemed informal, and there was usually a busy hum of activity and purposeful movement. Most of the time, one could see and hear students laughing, talking to each other, and students moving around and in and out of the room. On one occasion I commented, "there is a buzz in the room and a sense of excitement" (Field notes, 22/7). Students often began lessons quite loudly especially as they were organising themselves but in time, the noise level dropped as they began the task. Gemma allowed this time of settling to occur and did not ask the students to quieten.

There was a sense of trust in the classroom. Gemma and the students openly shared, for example, their ideas, opinions, and feelings. Trust was also shown in a more physical sense. Gemma's handbag and sometimes a lap top computer sat on the floor by her desk even during break times. In addition, students lent their belongings freely to others.

Physical Environment

Gemma arranged groups of tables usually catering for four students to facilitate group work and communication between them. Students sat at allocated tables for much of each day.

The allocation of students' seats at tables occurred randomly. Students drew coloured tokens from a container to determine where they would sit for approximately two weeks. Gemma made some changes to the seating arrangements to ensure there was not only one boy or one girl at a table group. She then expected students to stay at that group of tables until the next move. If students had problems where they were sitting, Gemma supported them to work out their problems. When students worked with others not from the table group, they often moved to sit together.

Gemma arranged other aspects of the class so students could easily access what they needed. There were many resources freely available to students, including books, stationery, computers, art and craft supplies. There were various areas available for students to work, such as the shared space in the open-spaced unit, floor spaces, the room next door and an area outside.

Displayed around the room were student and teacher created posters, such as rosters, the class rules, base group members and lists of class duties. Covering the door were yellow stars. When students received a "positive", a positive comment from another student, they recorded the positive on a star. Students then placed the stars on the door. Interestingly, there were no stars available for the students to use while I was collecting data.

Student Movement

Gemma allowed students to move around the room as they needed for example, to collect items and speak to peers. Many students had jobs or lessons that required them to leave the class at certain times. These students always left and returned quietly. When students returned from being out of the classroom, they joined the class in unobtrusive ways finding out what the class was doing.

Physical Presence of the Teacher

Gemma's physical presence in the classroom varied at different times according to the role she assumed. When Gemma spoke to the class as a whole her presence was very noticeable. She usually sat on a chair next to the Person of the Day in front of the students who sat on the floor. However, if the class was sitting in a circle then typically Gemma would sit on the floor as part of the circle and thus her presence was less noticeable.

When students were working, Gemma's presence was not obvious. When Gemma spoke to students she moved near them and she rarely called across the room. Gemma gave eye contact and spoke in a voice that the student(s) with whom she was talking could hear. To obtain the same eye level as the student with whom she was speaking, Gemma often leant over, squatted down or sat down. While the students worked, Gemma sometimes worked at a student's desk or on a chair out the front.

Gemma often left the room to monitor students working in the room next door, outside or in the shared space of the unit. On most occasions, students did not notice Gemma's movement in and out of the room. This was evident because the students' behaviour did not change and they did not make comments about her absence. An exception to this was when students wanted to speak to Gemma and could not find her. Students would then ask others if they knew as to Gemma's whereabouts. If Gemma had to go to another classroom or office in the unit, she usually asked the Person of the Day to "keep an eye on things".

Overall, Gemma did not have a strong physical or verbal presence when the students were working except when she was addressing the class on the carpet.

Teacher-Student Interaction

The nature of teacher-student interaction appeared to be based upon respect and trust. Gemma demonstrated respect when interacting with students. When she spoke to students about serious issues, such as their behaviour or social problems, she conducted the conversation in private. Gemma sometimes asked students to remain behind class to discuss an issue or she met with them away from others and used a quiet voice. When managing students' behaviour, Gemma spoke to students in a manner that enabled them to explain their actions. Gemma accepted choices made by students but encouraged students to consider other options that were available. This is illustrated in the following conversation:

Carl was upset. He approached Gemma and explained that Robert had said something that that put him down. Gemma taped the subsequent conversation she held with Carl and Robert (Field notes, 6/8).

Gemma Did you say something to Carl about this?

Robert No.

Gemma You didn't say anything to Carl at all?

Robert I went over and just said, "How's the TV going?" and looked at it and...

...:

Gemma Right now, Carl's got a problem about something that you did. Can you think about what you might have done?

Robert No, I came over and I said, "How's the TV going?" and then I twirled it around like that ((demonstrated how)) and I saw that- and I asked if "Where's all the stuff gone?" and he said "It's not a TV any more it is a video recorder" or something...

Carl No, no...

Gemma Pardon?

Carl I said, "Philip's got the TV".

Gemma Right, so did you say anything negative to him? You know a put-down or anything? Carl did you feel like you received a put-down?

Carl Yes. ... He picked it up like this and then he puts it down and goes "That's crap", and then walks off.

Robert I did not! I did not!

Gemma ... Where would he get the idea that he had that said to him?

Robert I dunno.

Carl Well, I must have mistaken his words or something. Maybe he um- Maybe I heard something different that what he thought he said.

Gemma So you don't think that you said anything incorrectly?

Robert I didn't. I think I said, "It might need a bit of work" Did I? I dunno.

Gemma Did you say positive things about it?

Robert Mm. Is it a TV or is it a video recorder?

Carl Video camera.

Gemma A video camera. All right, well then what can you do next time when you are with someone who's working and you're talking about something they've created? Remember you might have something to say to improve it. Say, "That's good what you're doing so far, but perhaps maybe it needs something." Rather than telling them, "No". I'm not sure whether you did it or not, but you're saying you didn't, which I believe what you are saying, and Carl said he may have misheard. But just for future notice in case there is an argument, just remember to try to look for something good and then you can give suggestions. You might say, "One idea is..." Okay?

Robert&Carl Ah ha.

Carl Like "Can you help me with my TV?"

Gemma Yeah, all right then. Okay.

(Conversation, Gemma, Robert & Carl, 6/8)

This conversation also illustrates how Gemma accepted what students said. She also clearly expressed her expectations that the students should respect each other and presented ways in which the students could show respect and give constructive feedback to each other.

Student Interaction

Throughout the school day students interacted with their friends and peers. There was only one occasion when students were not allowed to communicate with each other and that was when a National English test was administered but usually students could initiate interaction as they wished. Sometimes lessons were structured so that students had to work with others. In fact when working, students expected to be able to collaborate with each other and competition between students was not evident. Students seemed happy to work with everyone but they tended to work with their friends who were usually of the same gender or with peers located near them. Students were usually able to choose with whom they would work, but sometimes this choice was restricted. For example in Mathematics, Gemma placed students into groups of about eight and then they selected whom they would work with from within that group.

Being able to interact freely with peers seemed to affect students' perceptions of subjects and facilitate friendships. Students seemed to prefer subjects in which they could interact

freely with peers, particularly friends. A reason provided by some students was that they did not get bored when they were able to interact with others. Students also perceived that they were able to facilitate their friendships in the classroom by being able to interact regularly with each other. Tom explained:

Anna What about your friends and that, um, do you stop being friends when you come into the classroom, or do you...?

Tom No.

Anna No? So how do you keep your friendships up in the classroom? What sorts of things happen?

Tom Um, sitting near them, talking to them.

Anna And do you think that's important, that you can sit near them and talk to them?

Tom Um yeah, 'cause I think we should be able to develop um, sort of like, social skills.

(Int, Tom, 13/8)

It was clear that students respected and valued each other. Students did not openly reject any peers but rather accepted each other for who they were. Generally, students communicated in a positive manner and they demonstrated a caring attitude by readily helping and supporting each other. When discussing issues related to peers, students considered each other's feelings. Students readily shared ideas and accepted differences in perspectives and opinions.

Social skills helped students interact and develop positive relationships with each other. For example, students were assertive with each other in trying to meet their needs as illustrated below:

Michael and Antonio were sharing a table and Michael was swinging on his chair.

Antonio "Can you stop doing that Michael?"

Michael "Why?"

Antonio Because the table is rocking up and down."

Michael stopped swinging on his chair.

(Field notes, 30/7)

Occasionally students were off-task, but usually not for very long. Students held each other accountable as they expected each other to contribute. I observed students ask peers who were off-task to return so that they could continue with their work. For example when Simon came into the room from next door, he said to Tom, who was helping Damien on the computer, "Tom you are suppose to be helping us in our group". (Field notes, 6/8). I also

observed students encourage and help peers who did not have as well developed social skills to participate in discussions rather than be passive. There were, however, some exceptions when students were off-task or did not actively contribute for long periods.

Students provided support and encouragement to each other to achieve success. The following incident illustrates this:

The group I am sitting with is timing each other to say things for a Maths activity. The group decided to say numbers backwards. Damien tried first but had trouble doing this. Aaron said to Damien, "Why don't you time me instead." Aaron tried and was very slow. Stephen said, "Don't worry that was much better than my first go." It was like Stephen and Damien wanted Aaron to be successful, and they kept encouraging him to have another go. (Field notes, 19/8)

This incident also demonstrates how students seemed happy to take risks. Moreover, students accepted each other and did not put each other down.

The interaction between students whilst they worked varied. Students discussed issues related to their work, organisation, and life in the classroom. Furthermore, students often talked aloud to themselves, verbalising their inner speech. Most conversations between students were either on-task or exploratory in nature. Students demonstrated respect and provided each other with support. Moreover, students did not seem to be afraid to take risks and they were able to monitor their discussions so that they came back on task.

The content of discussions varied although it often related to their work. Students showed interest in and concern for each other's work. Additionally, students readily sought and received help and feedback from each other, discussed ideas, clarified tasks and discussed the point at which they were working. Students also discussed organisational matters such as borrowing items and arranging to work with each other. Additionally, students talked about issues related to life in the classroom, including other lessons, activities, peers and duties. Finally, students sometimes verbalised their inner speech, which on occasions was the stimulus for further discussion.

In summary, students were able to interact with their peers throughout the day. They interacted in a variety of ways. Students tended not to take advantage of this freedom in a negative manner, but rather used it to enhance their learning and relationships.

This section shows how the environment helped enable students to develop and maintain an appropriate culture. The atmosphere and physical environment established in the classroom seemed conducive for students to develop a peer culture. Student movement supported students to maintain their culture in the classroom. The teacher's physical presence was not overly dominating further supporting students to develop their own culture. The teacher's interaction with students enabled her to influence the peer culture so that it aligned more appropriately with the school goals. As students were able to interact throughout the day they were able to maintain their culture.

Processes: Ways things happened in the classroom

Teaching Strategies

Gemma used a wide variety of teaching strategies that were student-centred. Strategies included questioning, problem solving, modelling, cooperative learning, group work, guided-discovery learning, hands-on learning, contracts, open meetings and class meetings. Many lessons began by focusing students on the lesson. Gemma did not spend much time talking to students before they moved off to work. After students had moved from the floor to begin work, Gemma rarely interrupted the class to give further instructions or information. Gemma monitored students by initially waiting until students were on task and then moving around the room talking to students about their work.

Gemma tried to structure lessons so the students could "take control of themselves" (Int, Gemma, 15/8). She organised some lessons so that the students knew what they had to do and thus they needed very little teacher support such as in spelling, class meetings and base groups. Gemma gave guidelines from which students could make decisions such as, how to approach a particular task and how to present their work.

Teaching Social and Cooperative Skills

For the first few weeks, at the beginning of the year, Gemma focused on teaching social and cooperative skills. She explained that she spent less time on academic learning until "the class feels that they are 'one' class and they are a group that works together" (Int, Gemma, 5/8). Once Gemma felt the class had reached this stage, she continued to teach social skills that were relevant to the students' needs. Gemma planned weekly lessons to teach social and cooperative skills. In addition, when issues developed Gemma altered plans to meet students' needs.

Gemma taught social and cooperative skills throughout the year. She taught social skills such as listening and problem solving and used base groups as a structure to teach them. Gemma taught cooperative skills in context whilst the students were working in groups. She taught all skills by identifying the skill then discussing and reflecting their use.

Behaviour management

If students felt other students were not treating them with respect, which was one of the classroom rules, they usually informed the teacher who determined the consequences if deemed appropriate. A conversation held with Sarah and Karen highlights how the behaviour management procedures were perceived by students to support their right to be respected.

Anna You know if someone put you down in the class, what would you do about it?

Sarah Um, usually tell the teacher.

Anna What does the teacher do?

Sarah Well she says "Go and do..."

Karen Or sometimes she says "Get the um, go get whoever it is, I dunno."

Sarah Yeah, and then she'll have a talk to both of you and usually, lots of the times it turns out that they've done something first to that person, so that's why they've done it.

Anna Yeah and what would happen to them?

Sarah Um, usually, sometimes they get a straight timeout if she's in a really bad mood. (laughter)

Anna What if it's really bad?

Sarah They'll get um get um, a warning.

(Int, Sarah & Karen, 18/8)

Solving Problems

Gemma expected students to take responsibility for getting help and there were many options available to them for gaining it. First, if students had personal or social problems they could attempt to solve the problem on their own, seek support from a friend, the teacher or principal, call a base group meeting or discuss it in a class meeting. Gemma particularly encouraged students with personal or social problems to seek help from their base group. Second, if students had academic or procedural problems Gemma encouraged them to seek help from a friend, the group of students that shared the table or those who were doing the same work.

The teaching strategies that Gemma employed enabled students to maintain their own culture during class time rather than trying to maintain it during play times. In particular, the teaching strategies Gemma used allowed students to interact relatively freely. Gemma influenced the peer culture so that it was more encompassing of all students in the class in a positive way. The process of behaviour management supported the maintenance of an appropriate peer culture. Finally, solving problems encouraged students to develop a peer culture.

Structures: Organisational arrangements in the classroom

Base Groups

The Staff Information Booklet (1996) described base groups as groups of four students chosen from the class by the teacher as a support group for its members. Gemma established the groups in the second term. Students gave suggestions to Gemma as to who they thought would be good in their group. Gemma then selected the groups based on the students' suggestions and her own opinions. The groups were heterogeneous consisting of both girls and boys.

Gemma explained to students how the base groups would operate. The teacher would not listen to or join in meetings unless invited. A rule was set that students must keep issues discussed in base group meetings confidential. However, if at any time a student was or could be hurt the group must inform a teacher.

The teacher or individual students called base group meetings. Gemma called weekly base group meetings so students could discuss issues of concern, such as personal and social problems, and to teach and reinforce social and cooperative skills. Individual students called meetings whenever they had a problem that they wished to discuss. When students called base group meetings they would check with the teacher if it was appropriate to hold a meeting and then inform the group members that they had called a meeting. The students would find a place outside the classroom, but within a short distance, where they could talk in private. The group would sit at the same eye level in a circle.

Class Meetings

Class meetings were held weekly and run by students. Students assumed various roles during the meetings for which there was a roster organised by the teacher. The roles were chairperson, recorder, observer and timekeeper. Students established an agenda for the meetings by recording items they wished to discuss with the class. Agenda items related to both class and school issues.

Games

The class regularly played games chosen and organised by students who held particular roles, such as the Person of the Day and the chairperson of the class meeting. They played games at various times throughout the day, including when the class were finishing packing up, at the end of a class meeting and at times when the class sat on the floor and Gemma had to give her attention elsewhere.

Gemma did not participate in playing games with the students, but rather she continued other activities such as work whilst they played. At times, Gemma provided support to the Person of the Day and chairperson when she thought it was required. For example, on one occasion the Person of the Day was having trouble gaining the class's attention. Gemma intervened by obtaining the class's attention and explaining that they should show respect for the Person of the Day (Field notes, 11/8).

Students showed much enthusiasm for playing games as they participated eagerly. One student, Sarah, suggested that teachers should arrange for students to play games to help them have fun at school and prevent them from thinking school is boring (Int, Sarah, 14/8).

This section shows how the structures established in the classroom helped students maintain their culture. The base groups, class meetings and games all provided students with good opportunities to establish norms and expectations that influenced their culture.

Summary

The teacher, Gemma, accepted that a peer culture of some sort would exist in the classroom but she expected it to align with the classroom and school goals. Through creating an environment, processes and structures, Gemma enabled the students to develop and maintain a culture that could coexist with the school culture. In addition, although Gemma influenced the peer culture she did not try to "control" it, therefore the students retained a sense of ownership over it.

Discussion

In this section I discuss agendas and goals because they are helpful to gain a greater understanding of the importance of peer culture.

An *agenda* is someone's plan of things to do to achieve an outcome or goal. I chose to use the term "agenda" over "plan", which motivational psychology literature often uses, because it is useful to gain a greater conceptual understanding in explaining the findings of this study. I have adopted the notion of an agenda from Manke and Oyler in preference to other possible notions because it is useful in explaining how the participants went about trying to achieve their goals. Goals cannot be seen, but the pursuit of goals or people's agendas are more explicit. In addition, the notion of an agenda, or plan, is used in motivational literature to gain a greater understanding of people.

What are goals? Motivation literature informs us that students have purposes for what they do, that is they establish and pursue goals. The two main types of goals, achievement and social goals are relevant to this study. Achievement goals are academic in nature and are concerned with "perceptions about the broad, overarching purposes of achievement behavior" . On the other hand, many social goals are interpersonal in nature and can be broadly defined as the intended outcomes of behaviour when interacting with other people . Students simultaneously pursue multiple goals and the goals are "fluid and dynamic" . Namely goals are not set, but rather students are constantly establishing new goals, modifying or abandoning them .

The dimensions seemed to encourage the development and maintenance of peer culture. Enabling peer culture to emerge and flourish is important because it has been shown to enhance student motivation and learning . Gemma's beliefs were conducive to students establishing and maintaining their own culture. She encouraged students to use the structures, be aware of and involved in the processes and to take advantage of the environment, all of which enabled the peer culture to flourish. This growth of the peer culture particularly occurred because students were able to pursue their own agendas and gain control over their lives more effectively with access to the structures, processes to guide them, and their freedom to move and interact with peers . Hence, it is likely that because the dimensions enhanced the development and maintenance of peer culture the students experienced some level of empowerment . The peer culture in this class coexisted with the school culture. Enabling peer culture to develop and function alongside of school culture can lead to social and cognitive gains .

The findings suggest that Gemma enabled students to pursue social goals in the classroom and she probably helped them to coordinate these with achievement goals. Gemma facilitated students to establish and pursue social goals principally by promoting the development and maintenance of peer culture . The peer culture in this class coexisted with the school culture which probably helped the students to coordinate their social and achievement goals. Additionally, Gemma probably helped students to coordinate their personal goals by not imposing her goals on to the students but rather allowing students to set their own and attempting to negotiate or influence others.

In enabling students to pursue both achievement and social goals, Gemma was not only allowing but also encouraging the pursuit of multiple goals in the classroom. Students who pursue multiple goals simultaneously and those who pursue both social and achievement goals have been found to be more successful at school . Moreover, enabling students to pursue both types of goals facilitates "optimal school adjustment" .

Although the students were able to establish and pursue their own goals, Gemma actively influenced the pursuit of them. We know that students choose goals that are either appropriate or inappropriate. Gemma tried to guide students towards pursuing appropriate goals by expecting suitable social behaviour and helping those students who did not exhibit such behaviour. In discussing incidents with students, Gemma challenged the students' goals and influenced them to set goals that were more appropriate. Furthermore, Gemma led the students through a process that required them to take into account other people's needs and goals which is a requirement of successful goal coordination. Such teacher mediation is said to help students learn to coordinate goals and deal with conflicting goals. It has been found that students who successfully coordinate appropriate goals, in the way Gemma promoted, are more likely to achieve at higher levels.

Conclusion

This study indicates the importance to student motivation and achievement of encouraging students to establish and pursue appropriate social goals. Typically, schools encourage students to pursue achievement goals but not social goals, hence schools should reconsider this priority. The study highlights the value of enabling students to establish and maintain a peer culture which in particular helped students to establish and pursue social agendas and goals. Moreover, the study indicates the importance of a teacher holding beliefs, establishing an environment, processes and structures to enable the development and maintenance of peer culture so that it coexists with the school culture.

This study is significant as it reports one way in which a teacher helped students to pursue appropriate social goals addressing a call for more descriptive examination into the influence of teachers on student motivation in the natural context of the classroom. In order to increase motivation and achievement, teachers should consider how they enable students to establish and pursue both social and achievement goals in the classroom.

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