



Training inservice teachers' competencies in classroom management. A quasi-experimental study with teachers of secondary schools

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H I G H L I G H T S

- ▶ We evaluate the effectiveness of a newly developed training program for teachers.
- ▶ Teachers showed increased knowledge in classroom management after training.
- ▶ Teachers improved some practices of classroom management after training.
- ▶ Student engagement increased after training.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Article history:

Received 16 January 2012

Received in revised form

30 August 2012

Accepted 26 September 2012

Keywords:

Classroom management

Teacher training

Video

Inservice teachers

Secondary school

Professional development

A B S T R A C T

The current study evaluated the effectiveness of a training program for inservice secondary school teachers in classroom management. In a non-randomized pre-post-design, 19 teachers participated in a newly developed training (the intervention group) and 18 teachers participated in a control training (the control group). All participants reported better knowledge of classroom management after training. However, hypothesized positive effects on teachers' competencies and increased student engagement occurred only in the intervention group. These findings are supported by participants' reported high subjective validity of the training. Further research is needed to study sustainability of the observed effects.

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1. Introduction

Classroom management is one of the main domains of teacher expertise and a critical component in effective teaching (Brophy & Good, 1986; Gettinger & Kohler, 2006; Hattie, 2009; Kunter et al., 2011; Seidel & Shavelson, 2007). Many studies have shown that successful classroom management enhances students' academic learning time by influencing their attention, engagement, and motivation positively (Oliver, Wehby, & Reschly, 2011; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993). For teachers, classroom management is one of the most enduring and widespread challenges (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006a; Merrett & Wheldall, 1993; Pigge & Marso, 1997); difficulty in establishing and maintaining effective classroom management has shown to correlate with teacher burnout and job dissatisfaction (Brouwers & Tomic, 2000; Friedman, 2006; Melnick & Meister, 2008).

Classroom management competencies are an integral part of the "landscape of professional knowledge" (Leinhardt, McCarthy Young, & Merriman, 1995) and encompass a wide variety of skills and theoretical frameworks (Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2003; Evertson & Weinstein, 2006a; Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, Myers, & Sugai, 2008) that may no longer be best conceived as referring primarily to handling disciplinary problems (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006b). Characteristics of expert teaching such as "fluid performance" and "intuitive grasp of the situation" (Berliner, 2004, p. 22) are connected not only with the application of preventive strategies such as establishing rules, monitoring student behavior, or cultivating a functioning working alliance, but also with reactive strategies such as effectively dealing with disruption or resolving conflicts (Hardin, 2008; Little & Akin-Little, 2008). According to this broad understanding, classroom management goes beyond mere behavior management but also supports instruction and gives credit to the relevance of the teacher–student-relationship (Brophy, 2006; Manning & Bucher, 2007; Martin & Sass, 2010; Pianta, 2006).

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The specific classroom management skills required vary depending on myriad factors. At secondary schools, required competencies differ markedly from those needed for managing primary students (Baer, 1999; Emmer et al., 2003; Emmer & Gerwels, 2006). For example, rates of aggressive and antisocial behaviors are higher in secondary schools, and the student–teacher relationship faces challenges that are less common or less severe in primary schools (e.g. conflicts between students, adolescents' emotional and personal needs). Cognitive and organizational demands on secondary school students are higher as well (Emmer et al., 2003; Emmer & Gerwels, 2006; Pomeroy, 1999; Weinstein, 2007). All these conditions require specific skills for motivating, instructing and managing secondary school students compared to primary school students.

Numerous cross-sectional and longitudinal studies have shown that competencies in classroom management can be improved through specifically designed courses at universities or inservice teacher training programs (Evertson & Harris, 1999; Freiberg & Lapointe, 2006; Weinstein, 1999). However, most of these training programs are designed for primary schools (Freiberg & Lapointe, 2006) or focus on the needs of preservice teachers (Jones, 2006; Stough, 2006). Furthermore, Jones (2006) concluded that too many of those programs fail to support teachers in transferring their newly acquired skills into practice. There is still a need for effective inservice teacher programs in classroom management, particularly relating to secondary schools.

The purpose of this study was twofold: first, to evaluate the effectiveness of KODEK (Kompetenzen des Klassenmanagements: classroom management competencies), a training program developed by the authors for inservice secondary school teachers aimed at improving competencies in classroom management; second, to investigate the impact of different instructional methods on teachers' evaluation of specific training modules.

We designed KODEK with two objectives in mind: to convey empirically sound classroom competencies, and to use methods that have been proven reliable for training experienced teachers. In this paper, we first review what constitutes effective classroom management. Then, we suggest methods to provide appropriate learning opportunities for training experienced teachers. Finally, we outline the KODEK training program, our research hypotheses, and the results of our initial investigation.

1.1. *Strategies and prerequisites for effective classroom management*

Following the ecological approach (Doyle, 1984, 2006; Kounin, 1970), "classroom management is about how order is established and maintained in classroom environments" (Doyle, 2006, p. 99). Whether teachers succeed in classroom management "depends upon the strength and durability of the primary [. . .] vector of action" (Doyle, 2006, p. 106), which is strongly connected to a teachers' intended "programme [sic] of action" (p. 99).

The notions of program of action and vector of action are crucial to the ecological view of classroom management. In order to guide students' attention toward the target of the lesson, teachers develop a program of action encompassing a planned sequence of activities. Experienced teachers frequently use "general guidelines for lessons that are designed to be responsive to the unpredictability of classroom events" (Borko & Livingston, 1989, p. 476). In a specific classroom situation, teachers must implement their program of action in response to the current circumstances by establishing a vector of action, which orients students' attention and behavior and points it toward learning goals. "Once entered into, [vectors of action] pull events and participants along their courses" (Doyle, 2006, p. 102). In classrooms where the vector of

action tends to be weak and unstable, teachers stabilize it by continuously signaling expected behavior. They must shield their program of action against disruptions, which Doyle (2006) calls "secondary vectors" (p. 114). According to this approach, student misbehavior is not a "property of an action" but "any behaviour [sic] by one or more students that is perceived by the teacher to initiate a vector of action that competes with or threatens the primary vector of action at a particular moment in a classroom activity" (Doyle, 2006, p. 112).

Order is the main precondition for an effective program of action. However, order in the classroom does not necessarily mean that students merely follow rigid rules or carry out standardized procedures (Doyle, 2006). The notion of appropriate order depends on contextual elements such as the curriculum, lesson subject, activity structures, and student ability (Berliner, 1983; Leinhardt, Weidman, & Hammond, 1987). The ecological approach underlines how the dynamic aspect of order can be described as a social condition: The teacher introduces expected conduct, but in the end the teacher and the students jointly constitute an orderly learning environment that "supports and facilitates both academic and social emotional learning" (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006a, p. 4).

To make effective use of the ecological approach, teachers need delicate and complex competencies, which are best thought of as comprising a holistic approach to classroom management, rather than a set of discrete techniques or skills (Brophy, 2006; Doyle, 2006). However, there are certain practices that have been shown to contribute consistently to successful classroom management, which we will classify broadly as preventive and reactive strategies (Hardin, 2008; Little & Akin-Little, 2008) in the following.

Preventive strategies were first identified by Kounin (1970), who found that successful teachers are capable of management strategies like withitness, overlapping, and group mobilization. Group mobilization supports student activation and leads to more engagement and on task behavior (Copeland, 1987; Kounin, 1970; Leflot, van Lier, Onghena, & Colpin, 2010). Being able to simultaneously engage students individually and the class as a whole (i.e. overlapping) is crucial for maintaining the vector of action (Doyle, 2006; McGarity & Butts, 1984; Stallings, 1980). Continuously monitoring each student's learning activities while teaching allows teachers to acknowledge students who are engaging and to identify undesired developments early on (Doyle, 2006; Evertson & Emmer, 1982). This helps keep the learning process running while dealing with disruptions in a timely and unobtrusive manner, which in turn prevents ripple effects (Witt, van der Heyden, & Gilbertson, 2004). Moreover, teachers who provide a clear and structured program of action may encourage and enable students to engage in academic tasks over the course of the lesson (Chilcoat, 1989; Doyle, 1984; Smith, 1985).

Another important prerequisite for organizing and structuring learning processes is skillful time management (Coddington & Smyth, 2008; Doyle, 2006; Weinstein, 2007). Clear procedures and shared routines for recurring situations (e.g. procedures for taking attendance, distribution of working materials, and transitions) help teachers allocate academic learning time effectively (Arlin, 1979; Leinhardt et al., 1987; Nash, 2009; Woolfolk & Brooks, 1985). As Evertson and Harris (1999) pointed out, it is crucial to establish these routine interactions at the beginning of the school year. This enables teachers to use simple cues and prompts to initiate routines (Kounin & Gump, 1974), allowing more time for academic learning. A second step to scaffold interaction in classrooms is to set up clear behavior expectations, a system of sound rules that is established consensually with students (Evertson & Harris, 1999; Little & Akin-Little, 2008; Marzano, Gaddy, Foseid, Foseid, & Marzano, 2005).

Teachers use reactive strategies to deal with inattention and disruption such as misbehavior, talking, or call-outs (Hardin, 2008;

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