



Success and near misses: Pre-service teachers' use, confidence and success in various classroom management strategies

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ABSTRACT

While the importance of effective classroom management is repeatedly made, there is little comprehensive research identifying the management strategies pre-service teachers employ, nor how successful or confident they find various strategies. Accordingly, 336 Canadian pre-service teachers were surveyed. It was found that pre-service teachers report most frequently employing initial corrective strategies (for example, physical proximity), even though preventative strategies (such as establishing regular routines) were reported to be as successful as these initial corrective strategies. The strategies pre-service teachers report most frequently employing were also those they felt the most confident in. Recommendations for teaching programs conclude the paper.

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1. Introduction

Effective classroom management contributes significantly to student learning and development, (Stough, Palmer, & Leyva, 1998 as cited in Ormrod, 2003) and is considered by principals, teachers and pre-service² teachers to be an important skill to acquire (Stoughton, 2007). At the same time, classroom management is the most significant cause of concern for pre-service teachers (Bromfield, 2006), particularly during the practicum (Mastrilli & Sardo-Brown, 2002) and is a deterrent to joining the profession (Priyadharshini & Robinson-Point, 2003). While most teacher preparation courses include classroom management subjects (Baker, 2005), there is little comprehensive research highlighting the management strategies pre-service teachers would employ, how confident they feel in using different strategies and finally, how successful they find these various strategies. Thus, data on the classroom management strategies that pre-service teachers would employ and how confident and successful they find these different strategies provides important information for teacher education programs, as well as ongoing teacher professional development activities.

2. Literature review

While there are various ways classroom management has been defined, they usually involve actions by the teacher to establish 'order, engage students, or elicit their cooperation' (Emmer & Stough, 2001, p. 103). Burden (2003, p. 3) adds a positive dimension to this definition, particularly in regards to student teacher relationships, by arguing that classroom management needs to encourage 'positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation'. Charles and Senter (2008) further expand on this discussion when they highlight the association between good teaching practice, through an active and relevant curriculum, and classroom management. While the literature often employs the terms classroom management, behaviour management and discipline interchangeably, here we use the umbrella term "classroom management" to include teacher strategies that oversee student behaviour, student interactions and learning (Martin & Sass, 2010). The following literature review highlights a range of classroom management practices, as ascertained across the literature, and then more specifically outlines classroom management issues in association with pre-service teachers.

2.1. Classroom management practices

This study sought to identify the classroom management strategies that pre-service teachers employ, their confidence level in the use of various strategies and finally, what they find most successful in managing classrooms. In order to do this, the authors developed

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² In this paper, pre-service teachers include trainee teachers and student-teachers, all terms which relate to those training to be teachers.

a survey, based on a range of classroom management practices identified from a literature review. This review was based on an extensive review of the EBSCOHOST databases, for literature between 1990 to July 2008. A range of management practices was identified (see Table 1) located in either elementary/primary schools, or high/secondary schools, or both. Search terms included 'behaviour/behavior management' 'school' 'teacher' 'classroom' in primary/elementary as well as secondary/high school settings. Behaviour management textbooks commonly read by pre-service teachers were also included that incorporated various theoretical approaches, such as *Canter and Canter's* (1992) "Assertive Discipline" and *Glasser's* "Choice Theory" (*Dotson & Glasser, 1998*). Generalist texts such as *Charles and Senter* (2008) were also included. Instructional and differentiation strategies were identified when they were specifically related to behaviour management principles (e.g. *Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002*). Given the focus in this study of pre-service teachers in a generalist teaching program, strategies identified from specialised institutions such as juvenile delinquent settings and special schools were excluded. For example, Individualised Education Plans (I.E.P.s), most commonly employed in special schools (*Hartwig & Ruesch, 2000*) and the recommendation of a low ratio of students to teachers, as advocated in juvenile justice schools (*Tobin & Sprague, 2000*), were excluded as strategies in the survey developed here.

In terms of efficacy, *Walker and Shea* (1998) suggest it is important to have a wide range of techniques when dealing with student behaviour as no single intervention is effective with all children, or in all situations. Thus, the strategies identified here were the most commonly cited in the literature, across a variety of theoretical approaches.

2.2. Pre-service teachers and classroom management

There is a body of research that has examined pre-service teachers' views on the adequacy of preparation in the area of classroom management. In a survey of 54 elementary teachers with less than three years experience and 25 pre-service teachers in their final year in an elementary teaching program, *Giallo and Little* (2003) found that both groups reported feeling only moderately prepared and indicated that they required additional education in classroom management, a finding confirmed by other studies (*Atici, 2007; Houston & Williamson, 1993; Maskan, 2007*). Similarly, when asked if their teacher education courses adequately prepared them for dealing with classroom management, 81% of 117 pre-service teachers surveyed believed that teacher education was too theoretical and disconnected from the "real world of the classroom" (*Maskan, 2007*). In a discussion paper on teacher education in North America, *Darling-Hammond* (2010) argues more broadly that when pre-service teachers complain about programs being too theoretical they usually mean it is too abstract, and does not provide specific teaching tools that they can use, an argument these other studies tend to support.

Education can, however, make a difference to pre-service teachers' management of children's behaviour. *Rathel, Drasgow, and Christle* (2008) found that supervisor feedback impacted on the pre-service teachers' communication patterns when working with students with emotional and behavioural disorders. *Stoughton* (2007) analysed pre-service teachers' reflective writings and found a willingness to think analytically and an awareness of the complexity of behaviour interventions. Some teacher education programs are more effective than others; those that feature a didactic

Table 1
Classroom management strategies, per school setting, as highlighted in selected literature.

Strategy	School setting	Selected researchers/authors
Establish and maintain regular classroom routines	Elementary	Bohn, Roehrig, & Pressley, 2004
Communicate clear expectations and directions	Elementary and secondary	Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002; Ming-Tak & Wai-Shing, 2008
Establish and maintain class rules	Elementary and secondary	Ming-Tak & Wai-Shing, 2008
Teach appropriate behaviour/s (for example, anger management skills)	Elementary and secondary	Leff, Power, Manz, Costigan, & Nabors, 2001; Mitchem, 2005
Visually scan the classroom	Elementary and secondary	Rogers, 2002
Provide prompt feedback on behaviour and/or work	Elementary and secondary	Lee & Laspe, 2003
Raise or lower voice		
Praise and encouragement	Elementary and secondary	Chalk & Bizo, 2004; Charles & Senter, 2008; Mitchem, 2005
Rewards, as might exist in a token (for example, rewarding with stickers or merits) or educational (such as time on the computer) reward system	Elementary and secondary	Simonsen, Fairbanks, Briesch, & Sugai, 2008
Provide 'wait time' after an instruction is provided	Elementary and secondary	Rogers, 2002
Change classroom seating arrangements	Elementary and secondary	Kern & Clemens, 2007
Non-verbal body language (such as frowning, signalling)	Secondary	Tartwijk, van Brekelman, Wubbels, Fisher, & Fraser, 1998
Physical proximity (e.g. move closer to a student)	Elementary and secondary	De Jong, 2005
Ignore inappropriate behaviour	Elementary and secondary	Clark, 2002; Mitchem, 2005
Remove privileges	Elementary and secondary	Levin & Nolan, 2004
Use student's name as a warning	Secondary	Wood, 2008
Threats, warnings	Secondary	Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz (2005)
Yelling	Secondary	Lewis, Romi, Qui, & Katz (2005)
Time out (inside or outside of the classroom)	Elementary, secondary and special schools	Ryan, Sanders, Katsiyannis, & Yell, 2007
Detention	Elementary and secondary	Maag, 2001
Punishment e.g. picking up litter, writing lines	Elementary and secondary	Maag, 2001
Develop and implement behaviour contract	Elementary and secondary	Nelson, 1996
Refer student to principal/assistant principal	Elementary	Egyed & Short, 2006
Refer student to other professionals	Elementary	Egyed & Short, 2006
Contact student's parents	Elementary and secondary	Mitchem, 2005
Modify the curriculum to students' learning needs	Elementary and secondary	Kern & Clemens, 2007; Wilks, 1996
Match curriculum to students' learning interests	Elementary and secondary	Baker, 2005; Kern & Clemens, 2007; Wilks, 1996

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