ANALYSIS OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS FOR FUNCTIONAL EDUCATION AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract
This paper highlights the importance of primary education in Nigeria. The teacher who is at the centre of instruction in the classroom is responsible for managing classroom activities and instructions in primary schools for functional education. The focus of classroom management in the early years of studies and present day conception of classroom management has been distinguished in the write-up. Some classroom management strategies for functional primary education have also been explained. Conclusively, it has been explained that a well-managed classroom provides an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish for functional education.

Primary education is very important in the Nigerian education system. It is the oldest system. Its history in the geographical entity that is now known as Nigeria, dates back to 170 years ago, precisely in 1843 (Oni, 2009). In addition, primary education is the only link between pre-primary education and secondary education systems. It takes in successful beneficiaries of the former and supplies entrants into the latter, but more importantly, it is generally regarded as the very foundation upon which the other strata of the educational edifice is built. Primary education in the Nigerian education system is very old, has the highest patronage and occupies a very important position. Since the
rest of the education system is built upon it, the primary level is the key to the success or failure of the whole system (FRN, 2004). The general objectives of primary education include:

(i) The inculcation of permanent literacy and numeracy and the ability to communicate effectively;
(ii) The laying of a sound basis for scientific and reflective thinking;
(iii) Citizenship education as the basis for effective participation and contribution to the life of the society;
(iv) Character and moral training and the development of sound attitudes;
(v) Developing in the child the ability to adapt in his changing environment;
(vi) Giving the child the opportunities for developing manipulative skills that will enable him to function effectively in the society within the limits of his capability;
(vii) Providing basic tools for further educational advancement, including preparations for trades and crafts of the locality (FRN, 2004).

To achieve the objectives above, a number of factors must be taken into cognizance. Major among them is the teacher factor. The teacher is at the centre of instruction. Lassa (1996) observed that education is the key to national development and it is equally a truism that the teacher holds the key to sound education. James (2003) saw the teacher as pivot on which every educational development hangs. Ipaye (2002) described the teacher as the spinal cord of educational system at all levels. Central to effective teaching and learning is the teacher’s competency in his managerial role in the classroom.

The classroom is that space bounded by the wall and roof which a teacher houses his pupils/students for the purpose of giving instruction to such pupils/students. In other words, it is a shelter for both teachers and learners so as to engage in educative activities. Classroom teaching is a complex task in a complex environment. The classroom is the immediate management environment for formal knowledge acquisition. It is made up of the teacher, the learners, learning equipment and the environment. Usually, a primary school teacher in Nigeria is in a modest-sized room with between 20 to 40 pupils. Kimberly (2001) stated the five characteristics of a classroom as security, open communication, mutual liking, shared goals and connectedness.

Management on the other hand, can be seen as the process of designing and maintaining any setting in which people work in groups for the purpose of accomplishing predetermined goals. The idea of ‘any setting’ equally indicates that management is applicable to all establishments which do not exonerate educational setting.
Classroom management, according to Adeyemo (2012), is the term used by teachers and instructors to describe the act of managing their classroom and students to ensure that stressful and non-educational situations are avoided and students learn topics and subjects effectively. The term also implies the prevention of disruptive behavior. It is possibly the most difficult aspect of teaching for many teachers; in fact, experienced problems in this area cause some to leave teaching altogether (Oyinloye, 2010). Classroom management is a complex set of articulated behaviours which the teacher uses to establish and maintain conditions to enable learners achieve instructional objectives efficiently. Brown (1995) looked at classroom management as a process involving the organization of certain academic tasks which are essential for effective teaching and learning in a specific set up.

The focus of classroom management in the early years of studies was primarily on making the classroom safe and establishing behaviour management, used to control and shape student’s behaviour to conform to school rules by the classroom teacher. Classroom management using an authoritarian or punitive approach did repress disorderly behaviour, but it did not foster student’s growth or allow the acquisition of more sophisticated modes of learning, such as critical thinking and reflection (Jones, 1995).

In the 1990s, classroom management developed beyond a set of educational techniques to become a complex process in which an environment is constructed in an on-going, reciprocal manner. This process includes dialogue between teachers and students, reflection on past and present experiences, and looking at how one’s behaviour affects others in the environment (Schneider, 1996). Effective classroom management for functional education means implementing strategies that create a safe, fair and rule-based learning environment for students to flourish in. Emmor and Evertson (1981) stated that effective classroom management consists of teacher behaviours that produce high levels of student involvement in classroom activities, minimal amounts of student’s behaviour that interfere with the teacher’s or other student’s work and efficient use of instructional time.

A teacher needs to improve on his personality, his methods of teaching, possess good moral conduct, be fair and just to everyone in class discipline and administration of punishment. A deficiency of these variables and many more would result into poor classroom management. The issue of classroom management is a continuous exercise, which a teacher has to cope with any time he enters the classroom. Wong and Rosemary (2001) saw classroom management as what the teachers do to organize students’ space, time and materials so that instruction in content and students’ learning can take place. The teacher has to cope with the activities of the pupils in the class giving the pupils the deserved attention. This may be seemingly difficult because each pupil in the class
needs different things at a point in time. It is the responsibility of the teacher to pay attention to the needs of the individuals in the class.

However, Good and Brophy (2002) observed that a lot of activities go on in the classroom simultaneously even when a teacher gives the same problem for the pupils to solve. Some of the pupils may get stuck on the way, while some may neglect the problem and do something else. Others may finish solving the problem because they understood it while some may prefer doing correction of a previous work. This simple explanation point to the fact that at any point in time, each pupil needs different attention, different things, different kinds of encouragement and different materials. The question then is, how will a teacher cope with this situation? A teacher who will cope with this situation must be knowledgeable in the skills necessary for managing classroom activities and taking care of, and accommodating the individual’s needs simultaneously in the classroom.

From the exposition above, it can be seen that the importance of classroom management by teachers cannot be over emphasized. There is need, therefore, to examine some classroom management strategies that could be used by the teacher for efficient instructional delivery and improved pupils’ academic achievement. The significance of each strategy will also be explained.

Some Classroom Management Strategies for Functional Education Instructional Management

Instructional management is the most important aspect of curriculum implementation in the organized classroom plan. To this effect, Offorma (1994) stated that instructional consideration in curriculum development include teachers making daily decisions about subjects, course content, grouping of instructional materials, pacing and sequencing of and assessing how well pupils learn which directly affects pupils learning. In this process, the teacher with his wealth of experience should be flexible with knowledge of the subject matter and learners, especially the fast and slow learners. He should use a variety of methods and techniques in the course of teaching and learning and adjust where necessary. The teachers should establish relationship with the learners considering their intellectual levels and work with them cooperatively so as to contribute effectively to the process of learning.

Teacher’s varying approaches to classroom management are reflected in different levels of effectiveness. A well-prepared teacher has a much greater chance of achieving effective instructional management.
Classroom Rules
The basic tool used to manage the class are the classroom rules. The rules will be made on the first day of class. Some teachers set their rules for the kids to follow but it is good if the children are involved in making rules. If the rules were agreed upon by everybody in the class, each of them will feel the responsibility of his own action. There must be consequences for breaking the rules which should also be agreed upon by the class. Daily implementation of the rules is necessary for them to be reminded and their obedience to the rules would be established. It is important that the rules would be implanted in their hearts and minds and this will be achieved by applying it daily until it would become a part of their daily routine in the classroom. Hanging the printed rules on the walls is not enough reminder, it should be applied. What rules should you make? Well, the teacher should share his ideas and goals of what he wants his pupils to become and likewise the pupils also should be given opportunity to share what they want to happen in the classroom. From this point of view, rules should be made by the children with the teacher’s guidance.

In making rules, never use the negative word ‘don’t’. This word is not encouraging, it is an irritant, use positive words that denote action. Examples of rules that can be given include:

Listen when somebody is talking, respect the property of others, roaming around or standing is allowed only when permission is granted, talking or making unnecessary noise when the class is going on is strictly prohibited (unless it is activity time), raise hand when you need something or want to ease yourself, treat others with respect, etc.

Eye Contact
Eye contact is a silent treatment to those who are not paying attention or not well behaved in class. This is very effective to bring the class into silence than yelling at the top of your voice saying “keep quiet”. When the teacher is talking or giving instructions and some are not paying attention, he should stop and look at those who are talking. Since the teacher is already quiet, all of them will be wondering why and they will be quiet too. The talkative will realize what he did and will be embarrassed to do it again. This is also a good time to remind them of the rule: Listen When Somebody Is Talking. Eye contact is effective than yelling and threatening to keep them quiet.

Positive Reinforcement Technique
This is helpful for pupils who have behaviour problems in class. What the teacher does is to give responsibility to the one who is a trouble maker. The teacher can assign him to be the peacemaker which means he will be the in-charge of the peace and harmony in the class. It works because the student may never have trouble with others.
He feels his responsibility and is praised by his classmates which will encourage him change his attitude.

Since not all kids are responsible for their own actions, there are times that others tend to forget the agreements which were made in class in forms of rules. Instead of using the word punishment for breaking the agreement or rule, the teacher could use the word ‘service’. When somebody breaks the rule, he will be given work to do, like cleaning the office, arranging the books in the library, etc, which involves serving others. This would help them feel the joy of helping others especially if they are recognized by the people they had helped. Though it is a sort of punishment in a real sense but they do not feel it that way. We know that children do not want to do community service every day; so, this would help them to be careful not to break rules.

Classroom Arrangement Strategy
Jones (2000) noted that a good classroom seating arrangement is the cheapest form of classroom management. It is discipline for free. Many experienced teachers recommend assigned seating for pupils to facilitate discipline and instruction. They argue that pupils left to their own devices will always choose a seat that places the teacher at the greatest disadvantage. Best practices as given by Dunbar (2004) suggest a few rules to guide classroom arrangement:
1. Pupils should be seated where their attention is directed toward the teacher.
2. High traffic areas should be free from congestion.

According to Dunbar (2004) physical arrangement or positioning is done for easy communication, audience of learners, movement and consultation. Classroom arrangement will depend on the likes of the teacher, the type of class, learners’ composition, types of lesson and learners’ level. Common classroom arrangements are horse hoof, row, cluster, and round table types. The physical arrangement of the classroom should match the teacher’s philosophy of learning. Pupils should also have easy access to necessary materials.

Active Monitoring
Active monitoring from classroom research, involves watching behaviour closely, intervening to correct bad behaviour before it escalates. Brophy (1998) noted that the teacher should always be attentive to pupils’ individual behaviour and learning needs. This means that for a teacher to maintain a learning environment, he needs to actively monitor the activities of the pupils. Jones (1996) pointed out that the teacher must monitor both pupils’ behaviour and learning by keeping eyes out for when pupils appear stuck, when they need: help, redirection, correction and encouragement. In order to maintain an effective classroom management, teacher must always check pupils’ understanding. This he can do privately and publicly. Teacher must always anticipate
learners’ actions and reactions during a lesson in order to deal precisely with any problem that could occur.

**Communication Pattern**

Another important factor in classroom management according to Cowley (2003) is the communication pattern used by both teachers and pupils. The communication style of a teacher has a lot of influence on the achievement of pupils. Cowley (2003) noted that effective teacher will describe objective clearly, give accurate instruction for assignment and respond to pupil’s questions and understand the needs of the pupils. Communication should be made in clear language which will enhance pupils’ understanding. Pupils should be encouraged to make their own contribution and they should be made to understand that their contribution is valued.

**Preventing Disruptions (Discipline)**

Effectively managed classrooms are orderly (relatively speaking), with a minimum of pupil’s misbehaviour and reasonable levels of time on task. Effective classroom managers are more skilled at preventing disruptions from occurring in the first place. Teachers who are interested in fostering and promoting effective classroom learning cannot ignore classroom behaviour of their pupils. They work towards ensuring that learners acquire important habits that would help them cope with learning events (Adeyomo, 2012). They would want pupils to feel, think and act with respect for themselves and other people. These enable them to learn how to pursue their own wellbeing and to act in consideration of the feelings of others. Observant teachers know when learner behaviour becomes disruptive and interferes with classroom activities (Sharp and Smith, 1991).

Disruptive behaviour are inappropriate behaviours which interfere with the academic and administrative activities of a school (Amada, 1999). Among the disruptive behaviours commonly identified by teachers are bulling, spying, hitting, name calling, sleeping in class, prolonged chatting, excessive lateness, unexcused exit from class, verbal or physical threat to students or teachers, eating in the class (Amada, 1999). These disruptive behaviours may persistently or grossly interfere with the academic learning of the school making it difficult for both the learners and teachers to function effectively and efficiently. Learners who are disruptive have been observed not only to cause a lot of problems to their classmates and teachers but are most affected both socially and educationally (Santrock, 2004 and Sorcinelli, 2002).

A number of factors have been suggested as being responsible for disruptive behaviour in the classroom. According to Santrock (2004), the most valuable advice in trying to locate the cause of disruptive behaviour in the class would be to raise questions
in this order. Is the cause from the school/class environment? Is it from the teachers or the child?

The physical and psychological environments of the school may be such that do not promote orderly behaviour. Schools that are too large, impersonal and competitive lack rules and regulations, and may create conditions not conducive for meaningful learning. Teacher’s level of intelligence, subject matter mastery and professional competence may determine the relationship with students and success in behaviour may be influenced by the learner’s psychological disposition which in turn, may have its origin from the home (Eze, 2002, and Santrock, 2004).

Kounin (2009) identified specific approaches to keep pupils focused on learning and reduce the likelihood of classroom disruption. These include:

1. “Withitness”: - Communicating that you know what the students are doing and what is going on in the classroom.
2. Overlapping: - Attending to different events simultaneously, without being totally diverted by a disruption or other activity.
3. Smoothness and momentum in lessons: maintaining a brisk space and giving continuous activity signals or cues (such as standing near inattentive students or directing questions to potentially disruptive students).
4. Group alerting: Involving all the children in recitation tasks and keeping all pupil’s ”alerted” to the task at hand.
5. Stimulating seatwork: providing seatwork activities that offer variety and challenge.

The Use of Interactive Instruction

Teachers should establish a positive, productive learning climate and provide group participation learning (Durosaro, Shehu and Mohammed, 2012). Here, the class is viewed as a work group, engaged in a productive academic enterprise. The teacher often works with the class as a whole particularly when presenting information or modeling a process. Pupils need to acquire group process and discussion skills if they are to learn through the interactive process. Pupils that have been helped to develop these processes and abilities often do better academically because positive interaction fosters self concept. The most frequently used classroom group interaction methods are discussion and questions and answer.

Group process approach to classroom management is the molding or conglomeration of learners in order to achieve instructional objective (Lingren, 1996). It involves the grouping of learners based on social bases. Group process has goals, bears leadership, made attractive and conditioned by effective communication. This can be used for effective classroom management in the schools.
Summary/Conclusion

In a nutshell, classroom management strategies for functional education can be summarized thus:

1. Hold and communicate high behavioural expectation;
2. Establish clear rules and procedures and instruct pupils on how to follow them; giving primary level children and those with low socio-economic status in particular a great deal of instruction, practice and reminders;
3. Make clear to pupils the consequences of behaviour;
4. Enforce classroom rules promptly, consistently, and equitably from the very first day of school;
5. Work to instil a sense of self-discipline in pupils, devote time to teaching self-monitoring skills;
6. Maintain a brisk of instructional pace and make smooth transitions between activities;
7. Monitor classroom activities; give pupils feedback and reinforcement regarding to their behaviours;
8. Create opportunities for pupils (particularly those with behavioural problems) to experience success in their learning and social behaviour;
9. Identify pupils who seem to lack a sense of personal efficacy and work to help them achieve an internal locus of control.
10. Make use of cooperative learning groups as appropriate.
11. Make use of humor, when suitable to stimulate pupils interest to reduce classroom tensions.
12. Remove distracting materials (athletics equipment, art materials etc.) from view when instruction is in progress.

Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. If pupils are disorderly and disrespectful and no apparent rules and procedures guide behaviour, chaos becomes the norm. Therefore, managing the classroom is a responsibility for every teacher. The way a teacher manages his classroom will dictate the stress he may pass through, his pupil’s achievement, behaviour and the tone of the school. A well-managed classroom provides an environment in which teaching and learning can flourish.

References


