

Classroom rights and responsibilities who has more essay example

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Classroom Rights and Responsibilities: Who Has More?

Whenever classroom management is talked about, it is normally the teacher's skills that are scrutinized and put under investigation. Being the qualified professional, the teacher is expected to "run the show" and have control over the classroom discipline that fosters a conducive learning environment. This is definitely reasonable but is classroom management solely the task of the teacher? Or can we also speak of students having a role in this task as well? After all, they are the main clients of the school. Shouldn't they have a role to play in managing the classroom?

This essay features four articles that discuss the rights and responsibilities of students and how these lead to ethical and legal implications of the teacher's classroom management skills.

Article #1: Promulgating Statements of Student Rights and Responsibilities

Authored by Alan Bayer in 2004, this article published in *New Directions for Teaching and Learning* periodical asserts the claim that incivilities in the classrooms emanate from the synergy between students and teachers. The author argues that it is not uncommon that untoward incidents in the classrooms are faculty-initiated. In fact, the improper behaviour of the teacher leads to alienation of students, which in turn lead to student incivility. This line of thought led Bayer (2004) to quote Benton: "When a student is disrespectful, it is because the student feels disrespected by the teacher" (p. 78).

The author then claims that there is a need to make explicit the rights, as well as the responsibilities, of the students in any academic institution. The article contains clear statements of students' rights which can be summed up to be encompassing of all the factors that assure students of the learning context and environment that they deserve being in school. These rights of students that guarantee them the best possible education that they can receive have corresponding expectations of teacher behaviour that allows maximum learning to occur.

However, it is true too that students need to be taught how to be students. Bayer (2004) claims that student responsibilities cannot be taken as a common-sensical matter. Thus, school policies, course syllabi, student handbooks, and classroom policies have to be communicated to the students on the first day of school.

Implications to classroom management

A thorough reflection of the article of Alan Bayer (2004) gave me an insight about the ethical implications that the position of a teacher has. Oftentimes we hear it being argued among professionals in various fields of discipline that their personal life have very little to do with their performance in the office. We hear of a number of cases of employees having personality hitches disabling them from humane social behaviours yet able to deliver excellent business outputs and can consequently merit more incentives and promotions. Such a case can be considered impossible for someone who has chosen to be a professional teacher, whose main clients are students. A teacher may not be a social burden at the same time delivers excellent

outputs in his field. Teachers' clients are students who learn not only from the content that is delivered to them but learn more from how the environment is, from how the teacher is, from how positive the classroom atmosphere is. It is highly impossible for a teacher to completely delineate his personal growth from professional growth and competence. Thus, the sense of ethics of a teacher plays a great role in his professional life.

A teacher's effectiveness as a manager of his class is strongly connected with his ethical life. How he carries himself, how he lives his life, how positively or negatively his outlook is towards life is a great factor in his efficiency at work, precisely because he deals directly with young lives who are still relevantly become a reflection of the teacher.

Article #2: School Engagement and Rights-Respecting Schools

The Cambridge Journal of Education published in March 2010 a research article of Katherine Covell that dealt with an investigation of students' level of engagement in schools that are explicitly respecting students' rights. Young students within the age bracket of 9 to 11 years, a total of 1, 289 coming from 18 different schools were examined through an instrument to facilitate a self-report of their engagement in their schools in terms of the cognitive, behavioural, and affective dimensions of learning (Covell, 2010). Six of the 18 schools that participated in the study were those that fully implemented the Hampshire Education Authority's Rights Respect and Responsibility (RRR) Initiative, and hence they were deemed to be Rights Respecting Schools (RRS).

Results showed that children from RRS show higher levels of engagement than their peers in traditional schools. Covell (2010) pointed out that “ RRS students showed higher engagement in terms of right-respecting climate, participation, and interpersonal harmony” (p. 47). Although the effect size is small, a statistical significance was established which makes it even more educationally meaningful. It was also stated and empirically claimed that pupils do engage better in schools that have a positive climate. A noteworthy implication of this positive climate is the reduction of untoward incidents in school, such as bullying.

Implications to classroom management

Aside from the explicit implication made by the author of reduced bullying in Rights Respecting Schools, my reflection of this research article made me conclude that a great part of a teacher’s task in managing a class depends more on his positive influence to the students than the ability to finish his planned lesson coverage. Many times, due to the accountability that is asked for from the teacher, the main goal of teaching tends to be focused on the coverage – the transfer of knowledge – instead of nurturing the climate that is most conducive for learning. I believe that teachers must put more effort on the creation of an effective learning atmosphere rather than blindly trying to finish the prescribed list of topics no matter what the odds are.

Here again lies the sense of ethics that is demanded from teachers. A teacher may find himself in a dilemma of finishing off the list of topics in his syllabus and working towards weeding out detractors that hinder a positive learning environment. But come to think of it, a teacher who invests more

effort and time, especially at the beginning of a school term, to nurture a learning atmosphere could enjoy a smoother teaching time for the rest of the term because of the expected consequence of better pupil engagement, class participation, and harmony among the students.

Ethics, in this case, also demands teachers to respect the rights of the students that stem from their being the main stakeholders of the school and from the fact of their being human beings. Respect for who students are, treating them as their equal human being is in itself the main criterion that teachers must use as their gauge for their acting as professional teachers.

Article #3: Students as Learners and Teachers: Taking Responsibility, Transforming Education, and Redefining Accountability

Cook-Sather (2010) argues that there is a need to foster in students “ a sense of and capacity for responsibility in ways that not only address existing educational ideals but that also point to both more transformative and more achievable notions of education” (p. 556). A number of program initiatives have been launched in order to foster responsibility in students who must take on a more proactive role as actors in the learning process. The author based her claims on the general assumption that had been critiqued through the years that “ teaching is what teachers do. Learning is what students do” (p. 556). To prove a point that challenges this assumption, Cook-Sather examined the students who were involved in the programs that were intended to make them responsible and accountable in their own education. The article gives a significant conclusion from the study that was

endeavoured. It was able to prove that students who are given responsibilities as that of a teacher are able to reach the transformative stage in their education. When they are given the opportunity to see classroom learning from different perspectives, then they become empowered students - responsible and accountable for their own learning.

Implications to classroom management

This article served as a good eye opener for me because it helped me realize that learning is not a one-way process as it is usually deemed to be. Learning is not expected only from the students as teaching is expected from the teachers. We had always been used to these highly defined roles. But this article gave me the insight that learning is a two-way process where teaching and learning come from both main actors in education. Teachers and students both learn and teach at the same time.

In practice, this means that the teacher must involve the students in managing the class, as what democratic discipline theorists propose. I believe that the more actively involved the students are, the better they will behave, and consequently, the better the learning climate would be. This can be quite a challenge in the part of the teacher because it would demand from him a lot of trust and confidence in the students and competence in drawing out the strengths of the students. This outlook of the teacher must be firmly based on the belief in the capacity of students, who regardless of their age and experience must never be underestimated.

Article #4: No Child is an Island: Character Development and the Rights of Children

Educational Theory, a publication of University of Illinois, published the essay of Olivia Newman in 2012 that talks about the contrasting poles of the liberals and fundamentalists when it comes to the issue of students' rights. The liberals claim that children have the right to choose their way of life which they think is best suited for them, while the fundamentalists claim that children have the right to live a good life according to their religious beliefs.

Newman (2012) believes that education must not be fully concerned about having to choose either of these opposing claims. Rather, what is important is that educators take on what lies beneath these claims, and that is, the character development of the children.

Implications to classroom management

Reflecting on this article made me realize the possible ethical dilemmas that a teacher may face in her career and in her involvements with students. Naturally, people have different beliefs. Schools may have their institutional tendencies, parents have their firm religious practices, and teachers themselves have their own personal credos in life. It is highly possible that all these may run counter each other. But then, here lies a great demand from the teacher. He has to be able to set aside any natural inclination towards a particular way of thinking and focus on what is essential.

Conclusion

UNESCO's four pillars of learning are the most neutral, most basic, and the safest way to go in teaching. A teacher must keep these pillars in mind

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because in the end the strength of these pillars is what defines is own effectiveness as a teacher. Learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together. These are the hallmarks that must be found in every student. A teacher who is able to manage his classroom well focuses on the building of these pillars in each of his students.

References

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