

Reflection on professional practice development in the classroom



With reference to what you have learnt through academic reading on behaviour management, observations of colleagues and reflection on your own teaching, critically evaluate your own professional practice and your ability to ensure that all pupils make good progress in your lessons.

Problematic student behaviour in the classroom can be a leading cause of stress for both teacher and pupils within the lesson, causing disruption to the flow of the lesson and in turn having an impact on progress being made (Parsonson, 2012). This is supported in a study by Mawer (1995) which discovered that the major difficulty for inexperienced teachers was classroom discipline and control. Starting the course this year, not having had a large amount of teaching experience in my current school, management and control of the class was something that was at the forefront of my mind.

During my first three months of teacher training I have begun to build my own teaching philosophy, albeit raw and inexperienced. In doing so I have, pieced together knowledge learned from academic reading and theory, observation of colleagues and most importantly reflection on my own practice. What I have been fascinated by is the vast array of learning theories available most particularly in the area of behaviour, classroom management and positive learning environments.

Working in an all-girls high achieving independent school, incidents of serious misbehaviour in lessons are few and far between. Even the least able pupils generally enthusiastically participate in lessons and, overall, make good progress. I know that I am lucky to work in the school that I do, and to

teach a subject which has been found to suffer less from misbehaviour than other subjects – Hardy (1999) found that Physical Education teachers do not regularly have major or severe misbehaviour issues within their lessons. This study did, however, use the teacher's perception of behaviour within their lessons during their research and individuals' perceptions differ. Hardy (1999) did find that the frequency of more minor behaviour issues is still disruptive to lesson fluidity.

I most sincerely came to reflect on my behaviour management and thinking about why pupils misbehave when undertaking my second school placement at a contrasting co-educational state education establishment. During my first day on placement three pupils, all girls, had refused to participate in lessons in various ways, before or during the lesson. The most severe being during a lesson when they sat in the middle of the football pitch. This was something I had never come across before and what I was most interested in was not what the teacher was doing to change or manage this behaviour, but why it had occurred in the first place.

There are many factors that can lead to pupils misbehaving within a lesson and it is important to understand and define misbehaviour by its function rather than how it looks (Barbetta et al, 2005). The article by Barbetta et al (2005) states that the reason for some misbehaviours can be 'organic' for example hyperactivity and distraction due to a hyperactivity or attention disorder. Other than this most misbehaviour in the class-room is off-task behaviour which can be the result of attention seeking but more likely the result of task difficulty. Whitehouse et al (2015) also discuss the need for an awareness of the reasons behind pupil's behaviour. They state that there are <https://assignbuster.com/reflection-on-professional-practice-development-in-the-classroom/>

internal and external factors that can result in misbehaviour within lessons. Included within internal factors are; issues or incidents happening within the pupil's life outside of the classroom, friendships or relationships amongst the pupils in the classroom. External factors include; class and lesson organisation, task difficulty and communication.

It is important for both teachers and pupils that the teachers create and uphold an effective classroom in order for pupils to make progress. Having clear classroom management strategies is essential for this in order to prevent student disengagement (Beaman and Wheldall, 2000) which will then in turn lead to continued progression in lessons.

Wilks (1996) suggests that there are two types of behaviour management strategies, and although they are wide-ranging in what they include they are classed as proactive and retroactive management. Parsonon (2012) also describes proactive management but terms it as 'antecedent strategies'. These antecedent strategies 'involve pre-planned, intentional use of classroom behaviour management procedures that reduce the likelihood of problematic behaviours occurring. Proactive strategies mainly focus on anticipating negative behaviour, when it may occur and plan to prevent it. As opposed to reactive strategies which are implemented once the behaviour has occurred.

On reflection, my classroom management relies heavily on proactive strategies; clear and concise planning, relationship building and knowing the pupils. A study by Hardy (1999) found that there is some uncertainty surrounding the use of the proactive approach to classroom management

and that it may not increase the likelihood of good behaviour and on task students and, therefore, it does not secure good progress being made. The study did, however, find that reactive approaches have a negative impact on student behaviour, so, in the end proactive strategies are stronger and the preferred type of management. The merit of proactive strategies is something that is agreed with heavily in other academic work.

When I arrived on my placement, relying on proactive strategies led me to more difficulty in the first instance. I soon realised that what I rely on the most is the relationship I have built with my pupils. On the whole I do this quickly at the beginning of the initial term and then depend on mutual respect and knowing each individual, each class and how to get the best out of them to ensure they make progress. Research shows that this is not a bad strategy to follow - Parsonson (2012) lists relationship building and positive relationships between teacher and pupil as the most important approach to classroom management.

On my first day in the placement school I had no relationship with any pupil and this immediately meant that I needed to rethink my strategies. O'Connor et al (2011) found that low quality pupil-teacher relationships lead to increased displays of negative behaviour such as disruption. From my reading I knew it was better to get ahead and not react to behaviours in the moment and this meant a more considerable amount of my time was spent planning. Not necessarily on the content but more on the structure, layout and organisation of the lessons. I also knew that I needed to try to develop some relationships with the pupils. I knew this was not going to be easy - not only was I only on placement for three weeks, I was only teaching each class
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once per week, some pupils twice if groups overlapped, but also the class sizes were almost double compared to my school. In a school with over 1000 pupils, such as my placement school, it is more likely for pupils to slip through the net, become almost anonymous and end up slipping and becoming disengaged. Barker and Gump (1964) believed that in this instance, within large schools the building of relationships between pupils and teachers has even more importance which can result in positive behaviour changes and improved achievement by the student. I made a conscious effort to learn names, talk to pupils at the beginning and end of the lesson and remember things that they had mentioned to me. This enabled me to build a rapport, which was commented on numerous times by the placement teachers and was considered a strength by my mentor.

I knew from my experience in my own school that the transitions were the part of the lesson that was most likely to produce behaviour concerns that may require management, so this became a large focus of my planning. Lawrence and Whitehead (2015) state that ‘most off task activity occurs during the transitions between activities within a lesson.’ For every lesson I taught whilst on placement I meticulously planned how to move the pupils on from one task to the next with as limited disruption as possible. This included using strategies such as; keeping numbers the same between drills, using multiples of numbers (e. g. within a football lesson I may have pupils working in pairs then moving onto fours followed by eights). I also thought about the set-up of the lesson, making sure I was organised in advance, having to pick up and move cones and equipment during the lesson will give pupils more space to go off task. Lawrence and Whitehead’s (2015) opinion

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is that ‘ a well-organised teacher is better able to respond to situations during lessons than one who has not prepared fully’. Following their guidance when planning, not only did I think about the pupils but the space, equipment and time to ensure I could handle anything I may be faced with.

One of my lessons was, however, not as successful on my first day of placement. It was the second lesson of the day when I was asked to assist a school cover supervisor with a year 9 girls football lesson. I was instructed that I was to provide them with support, but the cover supervisor would lead the class. The cover supervisor was not a specialist and had less knowledge than myself. The class was a top ability group, and we were instructed to play a tournament with them. There were numerous incidents of disruptive and off-task behaviour throughout the class and after the lesson I found myself dwelling on why that was.

Although classroom management is a key component to ensuring progress within a lesson and is not the only way to shape pupil’s behaviour, ‘[i]t is crucial for you to understand that pupils need to be motivated to learn’ (Morgan et al, 2015). Motivation is a large factor affecting the effectiveness of a lesson. It can be difficult to encourage a group of pupils to go outside on a cold winter’s day, but that is just the start. Pupils are all motivated in different ways either intrinsically or extrinsically (Morgan et al, 2015) however, a pupil’s motivation is not always as clear cut. In 1985, Deci and Ryan proposed the ‘ Self-Determination Theory’ a continuum of motivation which also included amotivation; when a pupil ‘ has no desire to participate in PE’.

When teaching higher ability pupils it is usually easier to see their reasons for motivation and it is more likely to fall into the intrinsic - extrinsic categories. Lower ability pupils, however, are not usually working towards winning a cup or title and having this focus within a lesson can lead to pupils taking on a more negative attitude, leading to negative behaviours. The reason some pupils do this is to detract from their lower ability, or the perception of their ability as it changes the focus to behaviour (Ames, 1992). Ames (1992) believed that when lesson objectives focus on effort and individual improvement and the emphasis on success and performance is taken away pupils are more likely to adopt positive behaviour and in turn better progress is more likely. This theory is titled Mastery Climate which Morgan et al (2015) believe to be integral to improving pupils' motivation and progress within PE lessons. As a PE teacher teaching a wide range of abilities, I came to realise very quickly the importance of not having the same expectation of every individual. This does not mean not having high expectations for each pupil, which of course every lesson has, but in order to get the best out of each pupil they must be different.

Also, important when creating a Mastery Climate is authority and decision making within lessons. Morgan et al (2015) suggest that there should be a 'balance of decision making' within lessons. The more involvement and influence pupils have the higher their level of engagement within a lesson which will lead to better progress being made. As a less experienced teacher, my most common style of teaching is command style. I think this has been my safety net as I know I can plan and control every aspect.

Command is the style that allows the least amount of decision making by the

pupils (Mosston and Ashworth, 2002). As the term has gone on, I have experimented with the ways in which I can give the pupils some involvement in decision making – for example, picking who they work with, or deciding between two options. However, I know that a good teacher changes their style of teaching to fit the pupils and their needs, and this is a target of mine for the next term. Other styles, such as guided discovery allow pupils more authority and create a greater mastery climate leading to greater motivation and progress.

Creating a positive learning environment is crucial in order to keep behaviour issues limited and to encourage student's development and productivity. There are many elements required to create a positive learning environment, some of which have already been mentioned. Two key components are having high expectations, and using effective praise and feedback (Wilson-Fleming and Wilson-Younger, 2012). Receiving recognition, reward or feedback can have an important impact on pupil's learning (Morgan et al, 2015). Teachers use a variety of means when giving feedback. Morgan et al (2015) suggests that in order to continue a mastery climate and instil development and the want to continue to improve you should provide pupils with individual one to one feedback. It is more probable that pupil's confidence and perception of their ability will be increased, and they are therefore going to focus on individual improvement more than comparing themselves to their peers leading to better progress.

From the research conducted and my own experience it is clear to see that there is no one size fits all or set of rules for behaviour management and ensuring your pupils make progress during lessons. What is clear is that <https://assignbuster.com/reflection-on-professional-practice-development-in-the-classroom/>

negative behaviour has an impact on learning. There are however, many tools on offer to teachers to prevent this and they need to find what works for them and the pupils. As I continue to learn and mature as a teacher I need to develop a clear strategy to ensure I have optimum engagement from the pupils. ' The teacher who keeps pupils fully engaged in learning is likely to facilitate greater achievement, higher levels of motivation and less misbehaviour' (Macfayden and Bailey, 2007).

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