

Assessing Teachers' Classroom Management and Mentoring Skills: Basis for Developing a Motivating Environment for Early Childhood Education

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Abstract

Classroom management refers to how teachers influence student behavior in order to create a learning-friendly environment. Its main objective is to promote appropriate behavior and minimize instances of student misbehavior. The field of early childhood education is undergoing significant changes, influenced by various positive and negative trends impacting the profession. This article focuses on the evolving landscape of early childhood education in relation to Teachers' Classroom Management and mentoring Skills. The study aimed to assess the proficiency of teachers in classroom management and mentoring. The quantitative analysis revealed that the teachers demonstrated a high level of competence in these areas. The study's findings can serve as a foundation for improving early childhood programs and curricula, particularly in terms of the teaching methods employed by educators.

Keywords: *classroom management, mentoring skills, motivating environment, early childhood education*

Introduction

Classroom management holds paramount importance for teachers, as students' academic achievement heavily relies on the quality of their learning experiences in the classroom. When executed effectively, teachers can positively influence student behavior, thereby facilitating their learning process and personal growth. By implementing successful strategies for classroom management, educators can unlock their students' full potential, nurturing them into well-rounded and successful individuals (Casimiro, 2021).

Preparation is significant in fostering effective learning, enabling students to concentrate on their tasks, and teachers play a vital role in creating an environment that fosters successful teaching and learning. Classroom management is a key aspect that empowers teachers to not only focus on imparting knowledge but also on nurturing students' social and emotional development. These skills enable children to navigate various situations, build self-confidence, identify strengths and weaknesses, and make well-informed decisions.

Establishing an atmosphere of effective classroom management is essential in cultivating a sense of security, engagement, and enthusiasm for active participation among young learners. Skillful teachers guide children through structured activities, promote positive behavior, and maintain discipline and order, leading to increased focus and motivation. A well-managed classroom encourages children to explore their curiosities and develop a genuine passion for learning.

Apart from classroom management, mentoring skills play a significant role in creating a supportive and nurturing environment in early childhood education. Effective mentors build strong, positive relationships with their students, providing a safe space for expression and learning from experiences. Through mentorship, teachers offer personalized guidance, tailored support, and constructive feedback, nurturing each child's strengths and addressing their unique developmental needs (Casimiro, et. al 2021).

Furthermore, there is a need for comprehensive research to assess their current state in early childhood education settings, despite recognizing the importance of classroom management and mentoring skills. Identifying strengths and areas for improvement in these aspects will provide valuable insights for educators, school administrators, and policymakers, enabling the development of targeted training

programs and professional development initiatives. This will contribute to the overall enhancement of the early childhood education experience.

Related Literature and Studies

Early Childhood Education

Bakken, Brown & Downing (2017) discussed the significant evidence supporting the benefits of high-quality early learning environments for 4-year-olds, as highlighted by Ramey & Ramey (2004) in the field of child development and early education. The period from birth to age 5 is considered crucial for laying the foundations of cognitive, social, emotional, and linguistic skills that are essential for later development in various domains, according to experts like Trawick-Smith (2014). However, Brophy (2006) pointed out that economically disadvantaged children may lack readiness for school activities due to limited access to educational resources and experiences.

Motivating Environment

Regarding motivation, Pintrich (2003) emphasized that motivation is a complex and dynamic phenomenon influenced by the context in which it occurs. The orientation framework is aligned with social-cognitive models, and factors such as curriculum design and the learning environment can impact the level of motivation. Pintrich identified six continua representing different motivational factors, including compliance, individual goal setting, sense of belonging, interest, career aspirations, and a desire for a university lifestyle. Compliance reflects students' tendency to complete assignments without questioning, which often stems from conditioning by parents, teachers, and peers. Individual goal setting involves students setting personal targets, often related to grades or GPAs. The facet of interest aligns with intrinsic motivation, indicating a genuine interest in the subject matter itself.

In professional courses, a broader perspective was taken, emphasizing the importance of connecting concepts and theories to future careers, which proved to be a highly effective source of motivation. Unlike extrinsic motivation, which is often seen as competing with intrinsic motivation, this focus on career prospects aligns more closely with the learning orientations proposed by Beaty et al. (2005). These orientations include a vocational aspect with both intrinsic and extrinsic components. The latter refers to students pursuing qualifications that lead to specific job opportunities.

On the other hand, the university lifestyle aspect of motivation revolves around the social aspects of university life. However, students also consider the associated costs and responsibilities that come with enrollment. To determine whether attending university is justified, students typically conduct a cost-benefit analysis (Kember 1995).

Teachers' Classroom Management

In Lazarides, Watt & Richardson's paper, (2020), Dicke et al. (2015) defined effective classroom management as a significant concern for new teachers, impacting both their well-being (Sutton et al., 2009) and their students' academic success (Evertson & Weinstein, 2013). Classroom management self-efficacy, which refers to teachers' beliefs in their ability to handle challenging situations in the classroom, is seen as a crucial aspect of their professional competence (Kunter & Baumert, 2006) and is a predictor of successful classroom management strategies (Buchholz & Rubach, 2018). However, despite the acknowledgment that self-efficacy is context-specific (Tschannen-Moran, Hoy, & Hoy, 1998), little is known about how job-related factors influence classroom management self-efficacy and behaviors.

Classroom management self-efficacy pertains to teachers' confidence in effectively handling various tasks, including interactions with individuals and groups, setting guidelines, and managing disruptive behavior (Pfitzner-Eden et al., 2015). Research suggests that teachers who possess high levels of self-efficacy are likely to experience fewer disruptions in their classrooms (Dicke et al., 2014). However, there is limited understanding of the longitudinal relationship between self-efficacy and actual teaching behaviors related to effective classroom management. Previous longitudinal studies have mainly treated teacher self-efficacy as a general measure, showing positive effects on teacher-reported learning support, but its impact on student-perceived teaching behaviors is not significant (Holzberger et al., 2013). On the other hand, research specifically focusing on teachers' self-efficacy for classroom management has

revealed significant longitudinal connections to teacher-reported classroom management behavior (Dicke et al., 2014).

To gain a more precise understanding of this mutual development, the researchers propose considering self-efficacy as domain-specific (Bandura, 1997). Aligning specific facets of self-efficacy with the corresponding teaching behaviors being examined may be crucial. The study defines classroom management as a comprehensive term that includes various teaching strategies like clear rules, learning routines, and effective behavior management (Emmer & Stough, 2001). To capture both positive and negative aspects, the research adopts two dimensions: structure and negativity. Teaching structure involves aspects like clarity in classroom rules and establishment of learning routines (Kunter et al., 2007). On the other hand, teaching negativity relates to negatively controlling language and behaviors, such as using negative feedback and engaging in problematic interactions with students (Watt & Richardson, 2007). Negative teaching behaviors serve as indicators of ineffective behavior management and are integral to teachers' classroom management practices (Wubbels et al., 2014).

Mentoring Skills

Mentoring has gained immense popularity as a policy to enhance the retention and performance of new teachers. However, the actual impact of mentoring on teacher and student outcomes remains relatively unknown. According to Nguyen (2017) cited in Walsh and Mann (2019), the term "mentor" can have a broad definition but generally refers to a more experienced teacher who provides professional or emotional support to another. Malderez and Bodoczky (1999) explain that mentors can play various roles, such as being a role model, a sponsor, an educator, or offering support and acculturation. Mentoring can occur at any stage of a teacher's career, starting from initial training or early career phases to later stages of development.

This chapter mainly focuses on two prevalent instances of mentoring in education. The first one occurs during pre-service training when a trainee is paired with a cooperating teacher in their practicum. The second instance involves a novice teacher being assigned a mentor, typically a colleague, to help them during their initiation into the teaching profession. Research indicates that mentoring, in both of these cases, significantly reduces attrition rates. Hobson and Malderez (2013) even suggest that school-based mentoring may be the most effective way to support the professional learning and development of beginning teachers. Besides benefiting the mentees, a mentoring relationship is ideally a reciprocal one, where mentors may choose this role not only to contribute to the teaching profession but also to foster their own reflective growth (Orland-Barack and Rachamim 2009).

Research Objective

Determine the teachers' Performance of the Respondents in terms of Classroom Management Skills and mentoring skills.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive-quantitative research design, using a survey checklist to gather data. It was conducted in eight selected elementary schools in Zamboanga City Division, specifically in quadrants 1.1 and 1.2, with a total of 400 teachers. The quota sampling technique was utilized due to the teachers' skeletal system of reporting to school, and the researcher depended on their availability within the given time frame to conduct the survey.

For data collection, the researcher used a questionnaire checklist with three parts. Part I focused on the respondents' profile, including school assignment, age, sex, educational attainment, and length of service. Part II consisted of a stress level checklist based on Kebbi's (2018) indicators, which included relationships with colleagues, professional growth, work conditions, and students' behavior. Each indicator had ten statements with five options numbered and described: 5 - Very High, 4 - High, 3 - Moderately High, 2 - Low, and 1 - Very Low. Part III was a checklist on teachers' performance based on Alegado's (2021) indicators, which covered mastery of the subject matter, classroom management skills, teaching strategy, evaluation skills, and mentoring skills. Like Part II, each indicator had ten statements with the same five options for ranking. To ensure the reliability of the research instrument, the Cronbach

alpha was calculated, yielding a high alpha value of 0.975, indicating very high reliability for the survey questionnaire used in this study.

Results and Discussions

Table 1.presents the level of teacher performance of the respondents in terms of classroom management skills.

As indicated in Table 1., with regards to the level of teacher performance in terms of classroom management skills, a grand mean of 3.96, interpreted “High” was rated by the respondents to this particular indicator. Moreover, all the constructs from 1 to 10 were rated within the interval of 3.51 – 4.50, interpreted “High.” The students' highest rated construct, earning a weighted mean of 4.06, is the ability of the teacher to command respect. Following closely are the constructs: adequately preparing for the day's learning activities (4.02) and promoting a healthy and balanced instruction environment with students (4.00). Also significant are maintaining orderliness during module submission (3.98) and fostering a cordial and cooperative classroom atmosphere (3.96).

The constructs "utilizes class periods productively" and "awakens and maintains students' interest in the lessons" both received a weighted mean of 3.94, showing their equal importance. Additionally, "prepares tests effectively and returns corrected papers and other students' work promptly" achieved a weighted mean of 3.92, while "handles disciplinary problems effectively" scored 3.91. Lastly, the construct "achieves teaching objectives to the optimum degree possible for a particular subject, lesson, or activity within a reasonable time frame" received a weighted mean of 3.90.

Table 1. Level of Teacher Performance of the Respondents in terms of Classroom Management Skills

Classroom Management Skills	Mean Response	Remarks
Commands respect from the students.	4.06	High
Prepares adequately for the day’s learning activities.	4.02	High
Ensures orderliness during the submission of the module.	3.98	High
Is keen on healthy and balanced instruction with students.	4.00	High
Utilizes class periods productively.	3.94	High
Awakens and maintains students’ interest in the lessons.	3.94	High
Prepares test effectively and returns corrected papers and other students; work promptly.	3.92	High
Achieves teaching objectives to the optimum degree possible for a particular subject, lesson, or activity within a reasonable time frame.	3.90	High
Handles disciplinary problems effectively.	3.91	High
Makes classroom atmosphere cordial and cooperative.	3.96	High
Grand Mean	3.96	High

Legend:	4.51 – 5.00	Very High	Very high performance
	3.51 – 4.50	High	High performance
	2.51 – 3.50	Moderately High	Average performance
	1.51 – 2.50	Low	Low performance
	1.00 – 1.50	Very Low	Not performing at all

The findings of the study reveal that even with blended learning, most of the elementary schools mode of class instructions were through modular. However, teachers were reporting to school in some situation, in a skeletal workforce system but they would make sure that they were there during the distribution and submission of modules, and that parents observed the health protocol. that the respondents still perform their duties and responsibilities to their students and to maintain the orderliness of their classroom amidst the pandemic.

The result implies that in terms of classroom management skills, the respondents have the skills to manage the classroom activities even without the physical presence of the students, including the preparation of lessons and test questions. The result further implies that respondents prepared lessons that

caught the interest of their students, so that they would find the lessons informational and at the same time entertaining. Moreover, the respondents had the ability to write test papers objectively and made sure that the distribution and submission of the modules were done in an orderly manner.

In a study titled "Teachers' views on effective classroom management: a mixed-methods investigation in Western Australian high schools," conducted by Egeberg, McConney & Price (2021), it was found that teachers identified by students as effective in their classroom management consistently reported three key practices. These practices include building positive relationships with students, setting clear boundaries and high expectations to manage the classroom, and actively engaging students in their learning.

According to Elfrianto and Siburian (2017), classroom management is influenced by two types of factors: internal and external. Internal factors pertain to students' emotions, thoughts, and behavior, with each student having unique characteristics that differentiate them from others. Some students may lack aspects of biological diversity, intellectual abilities, or psychological factors. On the other hand, external factors are related to the learning atmosphere, student placement, group dynamics, class size, and other environmental aspects.

Johnson (2016) emphasized that mastering classroom management can be challenging, especially for new teachers. Effective classroom management goes beyond being strict or organized; it involves setting up a structured learning environment where certain behaviors are encouraged, and others are discouraged. The key to an effective classroom is to create an atmosphere that entices and motivates student learning.

On Teachers' Mentoring Skills

The level of teacher performance of the respondents in terms of mentoring skills is presented in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the grand mean of 3.69, interpreted, "High" was rated by the respondents in the level of teacher performance in terms of mentoring skills. The highest weighted mean (3.79) was obtained for the construct, which focuses on encouraging co-teachers to utilize active listening skills to enhance communication. This was closely followed by the construct involving mentoring co-teachers in content and skills difficulty, which received a weighted mean of 3.77. Other significant constructs included assisting in the proper and accurate implementation of policies (weighted mean 3.76), providing diverse growth experiences for beginning teachers and guiding them in using the curriculum guide for teaching (weighted mean 3.73), offering support and assistance as novice teachers take on new roles and responsibilities (weighted mean 3.70), conducting echo-seminars for co-teachers (weighted mean 3.67), providing guidance in designing capacity development programs for teachers (weighted mean 3.64), serving as trainers in school INSET (weighted mean 3.59). The lowest weighted mean (3.57) was given to the construct related to mentoring co-teachers in conducting in-depth studies or action research on instructional problems.

Table 2. Level of Teacher Performance of the Respondents in terms of Mentoring Skills

Mentoring Skills	Mean Response	Remarks
Mentor co-teachers in content and skills difficulty.	3.77	High
Conduct echo-seminars for co-teachers.	3.67	High
Assists in designing capacity development programs for teachers.	3.64	High
Serves as trainers in school INSET.	3.59	High
Helps in the proper and accurate implementation of policies.	3.76	High
Encourage co-teachers to use active listening skills as a means to improve communication.	3.79	High
Mentor co-teachers in the conduct of in-depth studies or action research on instructional problems.	3.57	High

Provide guidance and assistance as the novice teachers assume new roles and responsibilities.	3.70	High
Provides a variety of growth experiences for beginning teachers.	3.73	High
Assist beginning teachers in using the curriculum guide as an aid for teaching.	3.73	High
Grand Mean	3.69	High

Legend:	4.51 – 5.00	Very High	Very high performance
	3.51 – 4.50	High	High performance
	2.51 – 3.50	Moderately High	Average performance
	1.51 – 2.50	Low	Low performance
	1.00 – 1.50	Very Low	Not performing at all

The finding of the study reveals that teachers were given the chance to attend seminar and trainings, in return, they were required to re-echo the learning they acquired in the seminar trainings to their co-teachers. In a casual conversation with some of the respondents, they assert that majority of the senior teachers in their school are guiding them in doing some of their tasks, in return, the new teachers also assisted the senior teachers on how to use technology.

The result implies that respondents had a high level of teacher performance in mentoring as evident by the result of the study, where all constructs were rated high by the respondents. It means that they have a good mentoring skill and utilized these skills to assist their colleagues who are new in the teaching profession.

The study's findings are reinforced by Browman (2014) in her article titled "Teacher Mentoring as a Means to Improve Schools," where she highlights the benefits that schools can gain from implementing teacher mentoring programs. Teacher mentoring not only benefits schools but also has positive effects on teachers and students. It enhances teacher retention and fosters consistency among educators. Such mentoring initiatives lead to increased job satisfaction and enable teachers to emerge as leaders within their schools, ultimately impacting student achievement and engagement positively. Effective mentoring programs encourage teachers to work collaboratively as valued team members, fostering knowledge-sharing and benefiting students, teachers, and the overall school climate.

Meyer (2021) points out that while many views a mentor as a wise and experienced teacher guiding a new teacher in their duties, the most critical role of a great teacher mentor is establishing a professional relationship that encourages ongoing support, scaffolds the development of a professional identity, and endures over time. Given the challenges brought about by the pandemic, which led many educators to consider leaving their profession, prioritizing experienced teachers to serve as mentors becomes crucial. A good teacher mentor possesses excellent listening skills, knows when to intervene, and establishes a strong connection with their protégé.

Conclusion and Recommendations

A well-organized classroom with disciplined and engaged students not only provides teachers with peace of mind but also creates an optimal learning environment for children. When preschool classrooms are well-managed, children can thrive cognitively, socially, and emotionally without disruptions. This study observed that teachers exhibited a high level of classroom management and mentoring skills. Classroom management is crucial as it directly influences students' learning abilities and the teachers' effectiveness and enjoyment in teaching. Moreover, mentoring plays a vital role in enhancing teachers' professional knowledge and skills, enabling them to effectively educate and prepare students for the future. However, for mentoring programs to be effective, they must be well-developed, considering their complexity, process, and function. In conclusion, this study emphasizes that classroom management and mentoring skills are two of the most important attributes of teachers, as a well-managed classroom significantly impacts students' academic success, particularly in the early stages of their education.

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