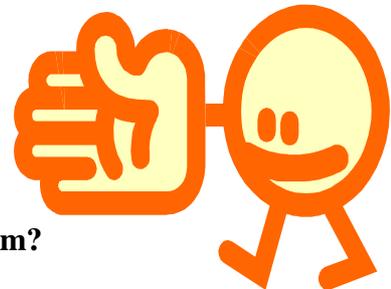


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GOLDEN AREAS: classroom management

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- 1. Classroom management and pupils behaviour**
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1. Classroom management and pupil's behaviour

Definitions of 'classroom management' are varied, but usually include actions taken by the teacher to establish order, engage students, or get their cooperation (Emmer and Stough 2001). Contemporary classroom management research was influenced by the studies of Jacob Kounin and his colleagues (1970).

Kounin follows an ecological psychology model, focused in environmental features and its influences on children behaviour. He identified a set of teacher behaviours and lesson characteristics including involvement, smoothness, overlapping and group alerting.

1. Involvement – To pay high attention in classroom and personal process, always knowing what is going on.
2. Overlapping – the ability to deal with many things at the same time.
3. Smoothness – to react in a proper way when things are critical and to secure that classroom processes are fluently.
4. Variation – to change and reorganize when they are not going too well.

He was also interested in whether managerial behaviours that work with regular students have the same effects on students identified as disrupted in the class. The answer is yes, at least in a whole class behaviour setting (Kounin 1970). These researches helped to move the focus from reactive strategies to preventive strategies and from teacher personality to environmental and strategic components of management.

These investigations and their results helped to change the focus of interest, from "reactive" strategies of management to "preventive" strategies of control, and knowing how to act for preventing problems. Also it went from characteristics and personality of the teaching staff to show the relevance of the strategic and environmental components for controlling and how our abilities to influence in them. In other words, it has gone from more passive to more active perspective.

The classroom is a place with a lot of daily stress both for children and teacher. Following Nordahl, teachers have to cope with four different behaviours that influence the classroom-learning climate (Nordahl 1998).

A.- Behaviour, which influence upon the teaching process and the pupils learning process. It is about distraction, small talk, disturbing others and teacher etc (30 to 60 % of the pupils are participating in that kind of behaviour sometimes or regularly)

B.- Social isolation, which includes loneliness, withdrawal, depression and lack relations. (10-30 %)

C.- Out acting behaviour with conflict making, aggression, opposition and testing classroom rules and regulations. (12-30%)

D.- Norm breaking and criminal behaviour that consist of severe bullying, stealing, violence, truancy etc (1-2%)

A lot of teachers are having daily strain about such problem behaviour and it erases a lot of personal feelings. There are several reasons why teachers get upset about pupils behaviour. One reason is that it is testing out the teacher's ability in class leadership. Another reason is that it inflects the teachers feeling about coping and mastering his job in general. The third reason is that problem behaviour very often is felt as a personal attack on the teacher's integrity and values. Roland (1991) points out 5 essential factors which is common for those teachers:

- (1) They are not good at dealing with turbulence in classroom and to manage difficult conflicts and situations,
- (2) They are not good at confronting pupils with normal classroom behaviour and standards,
- (3) they are not good at taking the pupil's perspective in classroom situations,
- (4) They lack competence in organising classroom activities and to plan and perform a good educational session and
- (5) They are not spontaneous and use very little humour.

Teachers who cope with classroom management often have quality in classroom processes. There are three important skills concerning classroom management.

- (1) One is the ability to be predictable and clear.
- (2) The second is to be able to manage conflicts and turbulent situations.
- (3) And the third one is to be able to reflect upon your own strategies and reactions and to be able to change.

Therefore classroom management is not only related to strategies play out in the class, it has also another important area, teachers' attitudes, beliefs and interpretation of the situation, which is one of the keys to improve classroom management skills.

2.- How are we understand the leadership in the classroom?

Teachers can have different perspectives in their leadership. One teacher is "strategic" which means that the most important thing for him is to fulfil what he had planned for the session. Pupil's questions and pupils own experience is an obstacle and he does not allow matters, which can stop him or change the structure. The opposite is a "communicative" teacher. He is very interested in dialogue with pupils, pupils understanding is important for him, pupils relevance and pupils engagement. Often a teacher has balance between these two roles in order to manage classes.

A teacher who bases his management upon dialogue and relations will also be called a pupil – oriented class leader. Interaction with pupils and between pupils is essential, and critical and reflective pupils are his main objective to create. He uses a lot of group –work activities and cooperation. Pupils attitudes and pupils values as well as classroom climate is important issues to develop.

The opposite is the traditional teacher. It is based on routines and rules, control and monitoring and emphasize upon pupils fulfilling the classroom role by being quiet, listening to the teacher and following the teacher’s guidelines. The teacher is active, the pupils are passive, so it is called adult-oriented-class leader. The teacher is introducing new matters to the class, then he is asking question to see if it is understood, and at last pupils solve individual tasks.

There is a big difference between the teacher being seen by the pupils and the pupils being understood by the pupils. The first one is a teacher shouting and screaming, having a high-volume voice in general and who often set ultimatums with a lot of prestige connected to it. The latter is a teacher who is working systematically with misbehaviour on a private level and who is dealing with problems in a communicative way that is approved by and understood by the pupils. They understand why and find the teachers strategies appropriate.

The teacher oriented to the pupils, is a teacher who is systematically working with the bad conduct at a low level that approaches the problems of a communicative form (relational) that doesn’t have solutions, but that share what knows and are validated and included/understood by the students. All students understand him/her and find the appropriate strategies.

In spite of the different perspectives, teachers can have also different attitudes leading classes. Different authors point out different classifications, and basically they defend a continuum. In one extreme is the attitude of **non-control**. The teacher’s leadership is weak and he does not confront pupils with standard behaviour. The reason for this can be his own insecurity, his low competence or perhaps his desire of being very popular with his students by not confronting them. Under such leadership significant pupils in class will often play an important role and the class will rule the field. The opposite attitude is the **over-controlling** teacher who is monitoring everything all the time. All details are important and all misbehaviour should be focused on. This teacher role often creates a lot of classroom stress and negative fuss. One extreme attitude is the paranoia. The teacher is regarding all misbehaviour as a personal attack upon himself in person or on his classroom management and teaching process. This teacher will often loose his temper and will often find scapegoats among the pupils. In the middle of this continuum will be the attitude of control, a safe teacher using **clear strategies** and who is able to create a positive learning environment with positive feelings and relations towards the class and the individual student.

In the same line of enquiry Lewis (1999) shows another classification of attitudes into three theoretical models, referred to as interventionist, interactionist, and non-interventionist. The first reflects government by guardianship, this view presumes that students are not able to govern themselves; the other two approaches provide opportunities for students to have voices.

Different experiences are being carried out in this sense, including aspects related to teacher's emotional support and positive effects on students (Bru, Boyesen et al. 1998). Bru, et al. point out five important factors (Bru, Stephens et al. 2002):

- (1) A teacher whom the pupils feel as a safe emotional base.
- (2) A teacher who is skilled at imparting his own subject to the pupils.
- (3) A teacher who allows pupils to have influence in their own learning process.
- (4) A teacher who overviews classroom activities.
- (5) A teacher who can adjust his classroom management to the individual pupil without favouring pupils.

In the same direction, Norris has developed the Social and Emotional Learning method (Norris 2003), or Zipora Shechman, from Israel, who is working with affective teaching as method to enhance classroom management (Shechtman and Leichtentritt 2004).

3.- GOLDEN 5: proposal of key steps

In fact, several authors have begun to reconnect classroom management with instruction and teachers' personal traits such as caring (Weinstein 1998), morality (Hansen 1993), or manners (Richardson and Fallona 2001). Manner in teaching is referred to a teacher's virtuous conduct or traits of character as played out or revealed within a classroom context. Virginia Richardson examined continuity and changes in teachers' manners. The moral and intellectual traits of character that emerged in her analysis included fairness, caring, commitment to educative goals, and critical analysis of one's own practices and theories (Richardson and Fallona 2001).

Style or modes is understood by the virtuous conduct of a teacher or the revealed characteristics of character within the class context. Virginia Richardson examined the continuity and the changes in the styles of the teachers. The intellectual and moral characteristics that emerge from their analysis include: justice, consideration, commitment with the educational objectives and critical analysis of the own practices and theories.

Different experiences are being carried out, including aspects related to emotional support and positive effect on students (Bru, Boyesen et al.1998); students mention the most important five factors for them (Bru, Stephens et al.2002):

- (1) Teachers with solid and sure emotional bases
- (2) Teachers with skills and expert on their topic
- (3) Teachers that allow students to influence their own learning process
- (4) Teachers that supervise in a global way the activities in the class.
- (5) Teachers that can pass go from a global control management to personalise one

In the same research line, Norris has developed the Emotional and social learning method (Norris, 2003), and the Israeli Zipora Shechman, is working with the affective teaching as a methodology to encourage the control of the class (Shechtman and Leichtentritt, 2004).

In order to contribute to this field, we propose a serial of steps that can help teachers to improve the structure of the classroom, the relation and control, and the values and solving problems.

1.- Starting up

***KEY STEP: Progression:** Build up a system of managing behaviour using non-verbal cues for group attention, (as it could be raising hands), informing about expected behaviour, being a model of relations, such are get nearer to pupils, talk low, etc...*

The next structure is the teacher's focus. What kind of strategies will he use if he wants the class to listen to him, giving instructions, explaining something? Some teachers will shout, some will be quiet and wait for the class to calm down, some will nag, some will moralise. Others will use clear strategies as to clap three times or other distinct signs to the class. What you do in this structure is very important. Do your strategies make more stress and fuss, or do they help you to be in focus.

***KEY STEP: Attention:** Pay attention to and praise in whole class positive behaviour or behaviour you want more of.*

The third structure is the activity process, the pupils work session. In this process flow and continuity is very essential. The teacher has to focus upon the pupil's activity and to maintain the pupils' concentration at task. The easiest way of doing this is to have focus on helping pupils, stimulating pupils, get their attention toward the books and the task, focusing of positive behaviour and what the teacher want the pupils to do. Bad behaviour and disturbing activities must be dealt with in a private matter and be solved with as little energy as possible.

***KEY STEP Flow and continuity** (do not let behaviour interrupt lessons or work in classroom, by trying to go on and deal with behaviour at the same time. Examples we can use is look at the person into his eyes, resolve conflicts in low levels.*

The fourth structure is transitional stage, when class activities change from one to another, from one classroom to another, from one subject to another. These transitional stages have to be made smooth and often have to have the right momentum.

***KEY STEP: Momentum:** Be sure that you organise activities and give messages in natural following sequences.*

The fifth structure is the conclusion of the session. This is the reflection part, what have we achieved, what was good, what did we learn, what is the teacher satisfied with and what do we have to have focus on next time.

***KEY STEP: Anchoring and prospecting.** This step consist in organise time for anchoring and prospecting at the end of each lesson. It is important for the students what have been done and learnt, what went good last time and what are we going to learn and do today or in this lesson.*

2.- Relations and control

On the first level the task is to establish control by using strategies, to be well prepared So that you can deal with misbehaviour in a proactive way.

*KEY STEP: **Proactivity:** Solving problems on low levels (private, low voice, near the pupil, before or after class)*

*Non-verbal cueing
Incidental language
Take-up time
Behavioural direction
Rule reminder
Blocking (stop), partial agreement
Thanks, at the end instead of please*

The next issue is to secure control by keeping up the pupil's concentration by communicating with pupils and do small corrections and regulations.

*KEY STEP: **Visual help:** Some teachers over-rely on an auditory approach to teaching, however we know the importance of visual cueing: write all your messages and prescriptions for work on the blackboard or on the working sheet (Rogers 2002), pp. 45.*

The third task is to see signs of and be aware when you loose control. In this phase pupils are less concentrated, don't listen to the teacher, make more noise and the stress in classroom is increased.

*KEY STEP: **Preactivity:** Think out what can happen and be prepared*

*KEY STEP: Show **unexpected behaviour.** Look for behaviour-patterns between pupils or between you and the pupils and try to break them by doing something else than you normally do.*

3.- Values and problem behaviour

Sorting problems in classroom often needs strategic effort on three levels.

*KEY STEP. **Timing :** Deal with the problematic behaviour as soon as possible.*

The first level is called the adjusting level. Here the teacher uses closeness, low talk, eye contact, reminders, walks among the pupils, give the pupils alternative ways of behaving i.e.

*KEY STEP: Developing a **plan of rules and rights.***

*KEY STEP: **Matching:** Sort out that your reaction adjusted and seems reasonable to the problematic behaviour. It is important not escalate the conflict, as it is high level at the beginning, go down again, smile, thanks, and look into the eyes.*

*KEY STEP: **Reactivity**: Talk to the pupil after lessons and make agreements of what to do next lesson or talk about alternative behaviour or inform upon your reaction/consequences if negative behaviour continue*

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