
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT MODULE

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METHODS FOR LEARNING
DISORDERS IN YOUTH



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Classroom Management

HOW TO CREATE A GOOD LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Key concepts: Classroom Management, Learning Environment, Relational Skills, Learning Difficulties

OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of this chapter are:

- Achieve a basic understanding of classroom management
- Learn how to create a positive learning environment
- Understand the importance of relational skills
- Learn some practical tools to develop your relational skills



What is classroom management

There have been several different approaches to defining what classroom management is, but most definitions have one thing in common, and that is the emphasis on the teacher as a leader for the class. Hence, the teacher needs to take charge and is the one with the responsibility for the classroom and learning environment.

According to Carolyn Evertson and Carol Weinstein, the authors of Handbook of classroom management, classroom management can be defined as the actions the teacher does in order to create an environment that supports and facilitates both professional and social-emotional learning¹. This is also supported by John Hattie².

This means that classroom management equals classroom environment, where both learning and social skills are important. Furthermore, the teacher is responsible for the learning environment. This also means that the teacher have a certain responsibility for poor motivation in students along with weak learning outcomes, also for problem behavior in class. However, this does not mean that the teacher is to blame for this, only that the teacher has an opportunity to influence students in a positive direction.

Classroom management can be divide into three parts. First, it regards how the teacher organizes the classroom and the teaching. How is the classroom arranged, and does it invite all students to a good and effective learning environment? Moreover, does the teacher varies the lessons with individual and group work, classroom discussions, practical lessons and so on? These things clearly impacts the environment and the students' learning. Second, classroom management addresses behavior issues. The teacher needs to set rules and regulations for behavior in the classroom, and most important of all, this needs to focus on preventing any problems instead of trying to put out fires. Classroom management is proactive and not reactive. Third, as mentioned earlier, good classroom management facilitates learning in the students. In addition to these three parts, it is important to mention that one of the most essential elements of classroom management is how the teacher builds relations with the students. Good teacher-student relations can prevent stress and negative emotions in the student. The essentials of teacher-student relations will be explained in depth later on.

Why classroom management

Why is it necessary to focus on classroom management? Isn't teachers supposed to just concentrate on teaching? First of all, if the class is poorly managed, it is not very likely that learning can take any

¹ Evertson & Weinstein, 2013

² Hattie, 2012



place. If the students are misbehaving, they are not focused on learning. Second, for students with learning difficulties, it can actually have an indirect impact on preventing bullying and social exclusion, and also prevent early school leaving³.

LINKS AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

Listen to professor Sigrun K. Ertesvåg from Læringsmiljøsentret at the University of Stavanger give an introduction to classroom management [here](#) (in Norwegian).

Creating a positive learning environment



³ Læringsmiljøsentret, 2015



As mentioned before, teacher-student relations are easily recognized as an significant element of classroom management and an important key on how to create a positive learning environment. This also impacts on the relations between students, as the teacher is a crucial role model for the students, especially in social matters.

Also, how the teacher leads the class regarding behavior issues is very important. A clear and predictable use of rules in the classroom helps students to learn how to behave, especially is this important for students with a problem behavior. According to Baumrind⁴ there are two dimensions for classroom management styles, control and warmth/involvement towards students. These can be seen in the table below.

	High warmth/involvement	Low warmth/involvement
High control	Authoritative	Authoritarian
Low control	Indulgent	Permissive

“The **authoritative** style is characterized by behavioral principles, high expectations of appropriate behavior, clear statements about why certain behaviors are acceptable and others not acceptable, and warm student-teacher relationships.

The **authoritarian** style tends to be characterized by numerous behavioral regulations, is often seen as punitive and restrictive, and students have neither a say in their management, nor are they seen to need explanations; the teacher's character is sometimes perceived as being cold, even punishing.

The **permissive** style is characterized by a lack of involvement, the environment is non-punitive, there are few demands on students, and there is a lot of freedom.

⁴ Baumrind, 1971



The **indulgent** style presents an environment where there are no demands on the student of any sort, and the students are actively supported in their efforts to seek their own ends using any reasonable means.”⁵.

The most sought after management style is the **authoritative**, where one is high on both control and warmth. This is the teacher who is clear and strict when it comes to classroom behaviors and following the rules, but also does this with empathy towards the students. This also helps students learn why it is important to behave the way they should, not only in order to avoid consequences as punishment or similar. In this matter, it is also essential that the teacher encourages what one would call prosocial behavior. It is vital to focus on behavior that is desired rather than negative behavior. This leads to students experiencing that they actually master the situation, which then again gives them motivation to uphold the desired behavior. A punitive, or **authoritarian**, management style focuses on what the student is unable to do. For students with learning difficulties this is a classic recipe for low motivation, which again leads to more behavior problems. The **indulgent** style is characterized by warmth and involvement towards students, which can be a good thing, but at the same time it sets no demands on the students, or no expectations. This along with the permissive style can lead to poorer social skills and unfortunate learning results.

Another important, but often forgotten, element when creating a positive learning environment, is to have a decent collaboration with the parents or guardians for the students. The families of the students know them better than anyone, and can deeply influence how the student feels about school in general, and the teacher and class in particular.

⁵ Wenning, 1998



What are relational skills

Relational skills can be defined as skills, abilities, knowledge and attitudes that will establish, develop, maintain and repair relations between people⁶. This means that teachers need to be aware and focus on the quality of their communication in the classroom, and not just the school subjects. Furthermore, it is a set of skills and knowledge that the teacher needs to master and possess. Why is this important? Through research we can see that high-quality teacher-student relations can lead to more positive social-emotional outcomes for the students⁷. It also is important in preventing problem behavior in school.

According to Spurkeland⁶ relational skills consist of several dimensions, where there are four that are extremely important:

- 1. Human interest**
- 2. Trust**
- 3. Emotional maturity**
- 4. Performance support**

Human interest

This puts the person in center, and is a foundation for all relational skills. It regards how one acts when meeting and communicating with others. For instance how you greet the students. The teacher needs to put the student in center of his or hers attention, this leads the student to feel recognized and appreciated.

Trust

Trust is the basis of any positive relation, and without it any relation will be weak and ineffective. It needs to be built on what Spurkeland calls natural authority, which is an authority built on relations, and not on power and positions. That is what he calls artificial authority, and will impact the relation in a negative way.

⁶ Spurkeland, 2015

⁷ Reeves & Mare, 2017



Emotional maturity

Emotional maturity is a really important skill for teachers when creating relations with the students. It regards how one communicates with emotions. It is positive to show emotions in situations where it is appropriate. Teachers who are cold and who does not show any emotions will not be able to obtain a true and natural relation with the students.

Performance support

This does not only focus on improving performance, but first and foremost supporting students at the level and area they actually are. Spurkeland divides this into three areas:

1. Help another person feel mentally stronger
2. Help another person become more competent
3. Help another person in realizing their strengths

This means that the teacher needs to contribute to others development and outcomes.

Developing relational skills

The most important element in effective relational skills is that one regards the student as a whole person, and not just his or hers school work. In addition to school subjects, one have to take into account the family, interests and hobbies, background, and future thoughts the student may have. Be attentive to the students. You have to ask questions about these things, and be truly interested. This also requires a decent memory. For instance, if you ask a student what he or she is planning for the weekend, on Monday you have to ask follow up questions. This makes the student feel recognized and seen.

As mentioned earlier, how you greet the students have a significantly impact on the relation to the student. It is good to use first names when addressing the students, and also have eye contact. Teachers who doesn't greet properly when they communicate with the students will have fewer opportunities in building positive relations. Furthermore, you must be aware of your body language and how it may impact the relations with the students. Make sure it supports your communication, making your behavior predictable and comforting for the students.

In building trust, it is important to also show that you trust the students. Give them responsibilities and trust that they can complete and fulfill the tasks. Give positive feedback when appropriate. Also, make sure they understand that you enjoy spending time with them. This is hard to fake, and most students can easily see through it. Use humor and have fun!



Much of the relational skills comes down to interpersonal skills and traits, but these are skills that can be trained and improved. It is crucial that you work on this systematically, and realize that it is an ongoing and dynamic process, that will change with different students and as you and your students grow and develops.

SUMMARY

In this chapter, you have learned about classroom management, how it impacts students development and learning, and how you can create a positive learning environment. Furthermore, the impact on relational skills have been emphasized as vital for an effective classroom management, and you have been given a few ideas on how to improve your own relational skills.

SELF ASSESSMENT

The goal of this section is to assess the new knowledge acquired after the realization of the module, the questions should be related to the objectives stated at the beginning of the chapter.

- a) My knowledge of classroom management has improved.
- b) I know how to create a positive learning environment in the classroom.
- c) I have a better understanding of relational skills and how to improve my own skills.



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NOTES and OBSERVATIONS

Write down any thoughts you may have after reading about classroom management and relational skills here:

