

# CLASSROOM BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT SKILLS: A KEY TO TEACHERS SUCCESS IN INCLUSIVE EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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## Abstract

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*This paper discusses classroom behaviour management skills as the key to teachers' success in inclusive education classroom. Behaviour management in an inclusive classroom is very important because many heterogeneous students are mixed together and they exhibit multivariuous behaviour that requires prompt attention and action in the events of classroom interactions. This is because students with diverse background are usually found learning along-side peers with multi-dimensional distractions. It becomes of great importance to examine how these groups of learners can study together without inhibiting one another in a good educational atmosphere with their teacher guiding them. The authors x-rayed some ways that teachers can apply to manage their classroom in an inclusive setting in order to get the best out of their students. In doing so, the following sub-topics were delved into, including: concept of behaviour and conduct disorders common with heterogeneous children, goals of behaviour management, situations that create management crisis, practical approaches to behaviour management in an inclusive education classroom. As well as, factors affecting classroom management, in an inclusive education classroom. Conclusions were also made with some recommendations.*

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## Introduction

Classroom management is used by teachers to describe the process of ensuring that classroom lesson run smoothly despite disruptive behaviours by student (Wikipedia, 2014).

Behavior management is similar to behavior modification. It is a less intensive version of behaviour therapy. In behavior modification the focus is on changing behaviour, while in behaviour management focuses on maintaining order. Behaviour management skills are of particular importance to teachers in the

educational system. Behaviour management include all the actions and conscious inactions that enhance the probability that people, individually and in groups, choose behaviors which are personally fulfilling, productive, and socially acceptable (Wikipedia, 2004).

From experience, the most complex and demanding task of special educators and teacher educators, who work with special needs children in inclusive education setting, is the day-to-day management of their behaviour in the classroom. Children who are chronically disruptive, defiant, withdrawn, and aggressive or who engage in non-functional stereotypic behaviour and possess minimal social or functional communicative skills are often difficult to handle, even in one-to-one (IEP) situation. The teachers who work with such children must be able to manage them in group settings, in an orderly classroom environment, in which one implement IEPs and one needs to work on specific behaviour at a time.

There will be no meaningful progress in the class if the classroom atmosphere is chaotic or is in a constant state of crisis and students can not learn or gain adequately in such environment. Planning and operating a positive and productive classroom environment are important elements for success in teaching special needs children at all level. Without behavioral management, teachers and children are both likely to be dissatisfied with the time they spent together in school.

The behaviour of children with special needs may not be totally or near under control, when they just start school and when they are not properly managed, and may increase the probability of crisis situation occurring in the classroom.

In this paper, the authors try to bring out good practices that can enhance good classroom management and the factors that can cause crisis in inclusive education classroom. To do this, the issues were discussed under sub topics: goals of behavior management, situations that create management crisis, practical approaches to behavior management in an inclusive education classroom, as well as factors affecting classroom management in an inclusive education classroom.

### **Goals of Behaviour Management**

An issue of overwhelming concern among teachers in an inclusive education classroom is that of managing acting out and disruptive behaviours in students. This issue becomes more difficult when the students behaviour is seen in a group setting and when the teacher is challenged to respond to behaviour concerns of more than one student at a time. One of the most challenging roles of teachers of special needs in inclusive classroom is to help guide their behaviour. This can be

achieved by demonstrating respect, kindness, and persistence when interacting with young people.

All children display undesirable behaviour at some time. The ability to manage young students behaviour in a positive manner is often challenging and complex; however, the effective guidance of young students requires a patient and nurturing teacher, who understands the tasks of all children at various ages, is aware that normal young/special needs children are naturally curious, active and impulsive, and recognizes that the main goals of positive management are to assist children to develop responsibility, to learn and develop skills to control themselves, and to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

Porter (2001) said that the primary goal of behaviour management especially for students exhibiting problem behaviour is to help bring their behaviour under stimulus control. The skill to positively manage young children in the classroom often requires that teachers make some important shifts in their thinking about managing children. Some of these shifts in thinking and practice are:

- Set long term goals for the students in our care beyond the short term goal of keeping peace - Long term goals of helping children to develop responsibility for their own behaviour.
- Recognize that a change in a child's behaviour usually occurs when there is a change in the teacher's behaviour or practice.
- Avoid engaging in power plays, struggles with children -YOU WILL LOSE AND SO WILL THE CHILD.
- Recognize that positive attitudes of encouragement, understanding, and respect by the teacher are the basic conditions for desirable behaviour in children - Avoid the use of threats, put-downs, embarrassing statements, and criticisms to control children's behaviour.
- Keep in mind that children are social beings who have a need to belong and feel significant and important - Provide/create opportunities for the students to share, to be independent, to be recognized, to receive praise, and to be involved in chores.
- Keep in mind that children are decision-makers - Create an environment where children are encouraged to make choices and are actively involved in planning activities for the day.
- Recognize that acting out behaviour in young children is often related to their language development - Young children's language capacity assists them to express their needs. Children may feel and express frustration when they have

not yet developed the language to effectively communicate their wants and needs.

- Make time-out a tool for building self-control. For example, let the child decide when he is ready to cooperate and return to the group. This practice helps children to begin to take responsibility for their own actions.
- Catch a child doing something right instead of catching him/her doing something wrong. Many times when a child is behaving desirably, such as playing

The teacher who has control over the student's behaviour experiences:

- Minimum of crisis situation
- Both teacher and student work in an orderly and productive atmosphere
- Students following simple commands
- Remaining in sit and finishing a task

Teachers are also concerned about behaviours that are dangerous, disruptive, or incompatible with the completion of academic task. The majority of students likewise wants to achieve the goals set, therefore, it is prudent to involve the students when setting expectations for classroom behaviour. In fact values and social skills have to be taught and modelled by teachers, since learning to become responsible human beings and make responsible choices require practice, including making mistakes to learn from without punitive consequences.

### **Situations that Create Management Crisis**

Any discipline used must relate to the child's action and be handled without prolonged delay on the part of the teacher, so that the child is aware of the relationship between his or her actions, and the consequences of those actions. There are issues that care should be taken in administering to the children:

- Isolating a student is on its own good practice in an inclusive classroom, but a child is not to be isolated in a closet, darkened area, or any area where the child cannot be seen and supervised by a staff member or the teacher.
- Where a child's behaviour harms or is likely to result in harm to the child, others or property, or seriously disrupts or is likely to seriously disrupt group interaction, the child may be separated briefly from the group, but only for as long as is necessary for the child to regain enough self-control to re-join the group. The child must be placed in an area where he or she is in the view of, and can be supervised and supported by, a staff member or the teacher. Interaction between a staff member and the child must take place immediately

following the separation to guide the child toward appropriate group behaviour. Separation of a child from the group in a manner other than that which is appropriate is discouraged.

- Corporal punishment: in this situation knowing that the class is made up of children with and without disabilities need not be used. In-fact, the term corporal punishment may means punishment inflicted directly on the body including, spanking, biting, shaking, slapping, twisting or squeezing; demanding excessive physical exercise, prolonged lack of movement or motion, or strenuous or bizarre postures; and compelling a child to eat or have in the child's mouth food, hot spices or other substances.
- Discipline must be administered by and supervised by the staff/teacher of the institution.
- Methods of discipline, interaction or toilet training which frighten, demean or humiliate a child are not to be used.
- Another potential cause of crisis situations involves setting goals or selecting curricula that are inappropriate for particular students. Appropriate goals and curricula are those that are fair, functional, differentiated and meaningful to students.

Behaviour management practices that are not carefully and thoughtfully chosen, that involve little or no student input, and that consist largely of reacting negatively to inappropriate student behaviour, are to be avoided. This will minimise if not eradicate crisis in an inclusive education classroom.

### **Practical Approaches to Behaviour Management in an Inclusive Education Classroom**

Preventing poor behaviour from happening requires a framework of rules to be in place. Students need to be aware of and buy into these rules. Preferably they should have a part in establishing the rules (Kelly, 2007).

(1) Rules need to be:

- Negotiated and agreed
- Seen to be fair
- Able to be taught to pupils
- Few, simple and clear
- Consistently applied
- Short and to the point
- Phrased positively

- Easy to enforce and reinforce
- Related clearly to rights, responsibilities and routines.

Pupils need to understand that they have rights, as do teachers. For example, pupils and teachers have a right to:

- Be/Feel safe
- Be valued
- Be respected
- Learn/Teach. Teachers and students all have a role to play in making sure that rights are maintained. If the first 3 bullets are not in place then it is unlikely that the bullet 4 will be achievable.

(2) Teachers need to ensure that students are aware of their rights and have their rights upheld. However, students also need to understand that other students and teachers also have rights, and the rights of all have to be balanced against each other. They therefore have a responsibility to consider the rights of others and not only their own. For example, both students and teachers have a responsibility to allow others to feel they are safe, accepted and respected. Teachers also need to ensure that students are supported in meeting their responsibilities. In addition, teachers need to make sure that they meet the full range of their own responsibilities (French, 2007).

(3) It is through routines that teachers teach the rules and consolidate rights and responsibilities. Routines help a class run smoothly and may relate to things such as:

- Entering and leaving the classroom
- Gaining, using and putting away equipment, books and other resources
- Movement around the classroom
- Changing between activities
- Asking questions and asking for help.

Routines should be established at the start of the year, rehearsed with pupils, reviewed at the start of each term and reinforced through ongoing interaction.

(4) Rewards are likely to encourage students to repeat a behaviour. (People Repeat behaviours that are rewarded.) For some students, this reward may be as simple as adult attention. Positive consequences (rewards) are the key to the promotion of effective classroom behaviour in an inclusive classroom. Rogers (2006) found out that systems that emphasise praise are consistently more successful in teaching students to make more positive choices. Rewards are more effective if they are:

- Given straight away, so that students can see the link between the behaviour and the reward
  - Issued consistently by all staff, for the same behaviours, in the same way
  - Distributed fairly and not used to 'bribe' particular pupils. Teachers need to recognise the range of rewards that are available to them. They will include both informal (smiling, verbal praise, tone of voice, catching them being good, showing them trust) and formal rewards (certificates, points system). Informal rewards are likely to differ according to teacher style, but formal rewards should be consistent and school wide. In addition, rewards must be genuinely motivating to a student, who genuinely earned it and should be sincerely given. There are many good reasons for using rewards, such as, they:
    - Help to build and maintain positive relationships
    - Help make the school experience more enjoyable for both regular students and special needs student
    - Encourage students to repeat desirable behaviours and make positive choices
    - Contribute to developing students' self-esteem.
- (5) Praise is essential in promoting effort and desirable behaviour. However, if praise is not given sensitively it may, cause embarrassment (especially if given publicly), could sound patronising, and can breed complacency in students if the praise is not really warranted. It is important to use rewards appropriately and not to over use them as this could actually become a de-motivator. Duckworth, Akerman, MacGregor, Salter, & Vorhaus (2009) stated that "Rewards may strengthen behaviour in the short term, but, they can undermine motivation in the long run because they reduce the individual's perception that they are doing that task of their own free will. Instead, the person gets a sense that they are engaging in the task simply to gain the reward" Duckworth et al suggests that praise for performance should:
- Reward students for performing a task to a specific standard rather than just completing it
  - Use unexpected rewards as bonuses for particularly impressive performances
  - Make sure any reward is clearly linked to improved work or behaviour
  - Encourage reflection by asking students why they think they are being rewarded

- Verbally encourage more than reward
- Praise students in a way that encourages them to reflect on their own motivation. Teachers should seek to constantly reinforce positive behaviour, as this will have a greater and longer lasting effect than constant punishment for negative behaviour. However, even when effective rules, rights, responsibilities, routines and rewards have been established and consistently applied, some students will not always work within the framework. In these cases sanctions may be necessary.

Sanctions should be used only:

- Where effective rules, rights, responsibilities, routines and rewards have already been established and consistently applied
- When all other options have been tried
- In conjunction with a wide range of classroom management strategies and rewards (It has been suggested that rewards should be applied in a ratio of at least 4 to 1 to sanctions). Where sanctions are used, it is important that they are:
  - Fair and reasonable
  - Known and understood by all pupils (as well as parents and carers)
  - Consistently applied
  - A logical and proportionate response to the behaviour
  - Applied at the lowest level possible to achieve a result.

Teachers should note that:

- Those who over rely on sanctions as a form of control can find themselves feeling that they are fighting for control with pupils
- Any system that seeks to rely largely, or wholly, upon sanctions will simply teach pupils how to become effective at avoiding them
- Sanctions may discourage inappropriate behaviour but they do not teach or directly encourage the desirable behaviour. Some pupils may need to be taught what it is that they should do
- Pupils are likely to keep misbehaving if that is how they get the most attention. Teachers need to decide whether to reward positive behaviour, by giving attention to the pupil who is behaving and getting on with the task, or to reward poor behaviour by paying attention to the pupil who is misbehaving and being disruptive. Teachers need to work towards a situation where pupils feel they control themselves, with the teacher there to lead, guide and support pupils in their self-management. Pupils should feel that they have given the



teacher both the right and the responsibility of leading them. Getting to this situation is not easy and will require:

- Shared understanding of core rights and responsibilities efforts and determination by the teachers to effectively manage the group and individuals within it
- Efforts to communicate with respect and care
- A willingness to reach individuals as well as groups goals

### **Factors affecting Classroom Management in an Inclusive Education Classroom**

Effective teachers have learned and experienced that behavior problems are relatively rare in classrooms where children are actively involved and interested, and in which they are appreciated for *who* they are, *where* they come from and *what* they are able to contribute. Effective teachers have also learned that they need to know their students very well and their individual needs, as well as background, in order to understand non-academic factors that may impact learner's behavior, participation and learning. Motivation to learn and to behave is contingent on interest. If a teacher teaching can harness the curiosity of children, he can be able to elicit a willingness of students to learn and behave. Interest satisfying teaching, motivate children far more effectively, than coercing them to tasks they consider irrelevant and boring. Positive teacher students relationships have also been found to be associated with students social and emotional well being behaviour and academic performance and in promoting their sense of belonging. In essence, the classroom working alliance provides a framework for understanding the emotional and collaborative component of positive-teacher-student relationships, which serve to enhance learning and school success.

To develop such a learning environment in an inclusive education classroom, the teachers, may need to reflect on the following and similar quality issues by asking themselves:

- Do all students seem happy?
- Do teachers know their students and where they come from?
- Is there a sense of enthusiasm and joy for learning and teaching?
- Are the differences in children's learning styles, developmental levels, and interests recognized and celebrated?
- Is there evidence (in both verbal and nonverbal interaction) that children and adults have mutual respect and regard for each other?

- Is there evidence that the processes of learning, as well as the outcomes, are valued?
- Is there time in the students' schedules for relaxation and using their imagination in arts, music, dance, games and sports, and for just pondering about problems to be solved?

Teachers face many challenges in an inclusive classroom; some that are within the realm of their control as well as some that are not. Among the most important things one can remember is that one cannot solve every problem for every student. Some students have academic, speech, hyperactivity or affect issues that are well beyond the scope of things a teacher can deal with in a classroom. This can seriously affect classroom management at all times, but the teacher is to remain focused and engage the services and supports of other professionals in a collaborative ways. It is important for a teacher to investigate how his style of teaching can affect progress and behaviour of different students. Timing of teaching learning interactions, is an essential part of classroom management, and many behaviour problems can be avoided by improved management of the classroom environment and timing of classroom activities. Teacher need to be physically close to their students, especially those who experience problem with learning. A teacher who manages his classrooms by walking around, can be close to every learner at different times. Therefore a pair of comfortable walking shoes may be necessary. teaching tools. Research shows that students seating farthest away from the teacher have fewest interactions and are the least involved in classroom activities and they have the lowest achievement scores.

Aside what have been said on inclusive education classroom, other issues that can effect classroom management more than what can be seen in other education setting are:

- Ability of teacher to manage the class differences
- Classroom arrangements
- Number of students constituting the class
- Class accessibility and space
- Curriculum differentiation and its adequacy
- Availability of instructional materials
- Proper placement of students
- Provision of support services
- The space in the classroom
- The lighting of the classroom

- The type of rules and regulations in the school and classrooms
- The availability of recreation space and other recreational facilities and equipment
- Provisions of virtual learning environment and computer hyperlinks and portals

The management of the school can contribute to these factors affecting classroom management, especially in inclusive education classroom by:

- Inadequate/wrong employment of teachers
- Not involving specialised personnel in assessment and placement of students
- Not providing support services in the classrooms of the school
- Non provision of vital instructional materials
- Non provision of adequate classroom blocks
- Over admitting students for each class

Parents are not left out of this confusion in the classes of inclusive education. Parents of both special needs students and the regular students have different ways of contributing to the factors affecting classroom management in Nigeria. Inclusive education is not well established in the country and it is likely one meets things as these:

- Selection of classes problems
- Disruption of classes
- Non-compliance to regulations of the school by students and parents
- Withholding students back from classes
- Late resumption of students
- Non provision of materials for learning
- Advocating for skipping of class

The school family also contribute to the factors that can affect classroom management. This can be done from different angles of the school staff and they include:

- Teachers labelling children and teachers in a particular class
- Giving of unkind names to students
- Laziness on the side of some teachers and support staff
- Lack of knowledge in the use of the instructional materials on the side of the teachers and the support services staff.
- Lack of important interaction with parents and significant others, such as multi professionals and adherence to their information and advice.

## **Conclusion**

The importance of good classroom behaviour management cannot be over emphasised. Looking at the class situation in an inclusive education class, there is great need to look at the behaviour of each member of the class on the different level. The rules set by the students and the teacher need to be adhered, in order to foster peaceful atmosphere for better learning. Schools and classroom environments play a crucial role in children's development, and interactions within these contexts are critical in understanding the student success. More so, environmental stimuli influences behaviour, hence the teacher needs to learn multiple techniques to reward positive and negative behaviour in the classroom. In addition to positive and aversive consequences, environmental variables such as antecedent stimuli, contingency stimuli, (both reinforcement and punishment), the contiguity of reinforcement, and the schedules as well as, the agents controlling the available consequences further affect students behaviour. It is also of importance that, teachers and all those involved with inclusive practices understand that everything and everybody are important in inclusive classroom, and should be treated thus. There are some practices that can create crisis situation in an inclusive class and should be seriously managed. In fact, If all things work according to plan, inclusive education classroom can be successful and enjoyable, and no student will be left behind.

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