



TEACHERS' PROACTIVE BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR ETHICAL CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN ANAMBRA STATE



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Abstract

This study ascertained the teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies for ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State. One research question guided the study. The descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. Population for the study comprised 5,674 teachers from 259 public secondary schools in the 6 education zones in Anambra State. Sample size of the study constituted of 851 (15 percent) teachers from 207 (80 percent) public secondary schools in the 6 education zones selected using the stratified random sampling technique. A 7-item researcher-developed questionnaire structured on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used for data collection. The instrument was face validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one Measurement and Evaluation expert from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Reliability of the research instrument was established through a pilot-test carried out once on a single administration sampling 20 teachers in some selected 4 public secondary schools in Enugu State, which was not part of the study. Data collated after the pilot test were measured using Cronbach Alpha statistics which gave internal consistency reliability value of 0.80. The instrument was distributed to the respondents by the researcher with the help of five research assistants. Data collated were analyzed using mean scores rated at 2.50 and standard deviation statistics. The conclusion in the study was that reinforcement strategies were found essential for addressing and mitigating conflicts before they escalate, ensuring a stable learning environment. Based on the findings of the study, it was among others recommended that school administrators and educational authorities like the Post Primary Schools Service Commission (PPSSC) should provide continuous enhanced professional development programmes focusing on proactive behaviour management and classroom management skills, that will assist teachers in ensuring ethical classroom management.

Keywords: Teachers; proactive behaviour management strategies; Ethical classroom Management; Secondary Schools.

Introduction

Management is a very important element in the school system. It is the unifying force that brings together both the human and material resources to achieve the desired goals or objectives of the school as a formal organization. It is the coordination of an organization's resources through the act of planning, organizing, directing, and managing all energies aimed at accomplishing organizational goals. Management includes the act of running or controlling anything, as well as, the

ability to handle with people or situations in such a way as to achieve the predetermined goals. Every aspect of the school organization needs management. Without proper management, the classroom will be chaotic and no meaningful teaching or learning will take place.

Operationally, classroom management consists of conduct management – which refers to the set of procedural skills that teachers employ in their attempt to address and resolve discipline problems in the classroom; content management – which is related to teachers managing the space, materials, equipment, and the movement - this focuses on the classroom group as a social system that has its own features that teachers have to take into account when managing interpersonal relationships in the classroom. In support of this, Nwankwo, Omebe and Anikeze (2019) stated that a good classroom manager is able to prevent undesirable classroom behaviour and thereby foster desirable behaviour. One of the main objectives of a teacher is to impart useful knowledge to his or her students in order to enhance their moral, physical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual elements.

Classroom management has a profound impact on the teaching-learning process. Problematic behaviour in a classroom increases the stress levels for the teacher and students alike, and disrupts the flow of lessons. In this regard, ethical classroom management results in minimal behavioral disruptions and improves academic engagement of students; however, the use of punishment has proved ineffective in minimizing the occurrence of classroom misbehaviour. Further, unethical classroom management practices have negative impacts on student learning outcomes, teacher-student relationships, and on teachers with the likelihood to suffer stress and burn out. Again, punitive discipline may damage teacher-student relationships, lead to loss of instructional time, and perpetuate inappropriate behaviour. The discourse so far has brought out two approaches to classroom management which include the reactive classroom management approach and the proactive classroom management approach. According to Eze, Nwankwo, and Umeobi, (2020), the characteristics of the two approaches are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Main Characteristics of Classroom Management Approaches

Reactive classroom management	Proactive classroom management
a. Remedial in nature	a. Preventive in nature
b. Negative reactions to misbehaviour	b. Adopts positive strategies
c. Involves punitive interactions	c. Setting expectations; positive relationships; mutual respect; praising appropriate behaviour
d. Reprimands and sanctions	d. Students participate in behaviour management

Reactive behaviour management encompasses reactions which may involve punitive interactions such as public reprimands that embarrass students. Reactive strategies, as noted by Idu, (2012), are teacher behaviours which occur in response to students' inappropriate behaviour (e.g. providing an inappropriate consequence). Reprimands and sanctions are two common strategies which teachers use as a response to students' misbehaviours. According to Nwankwo, (2022), reactive discipline strategies are mainly remedial in nature. Teachers adopting reactive strategies tend to react negatively to students' inappropriate misbehaviors. Historically, classroom management has relied more on reactive rather than proactive strategies (Enwezor, 2021). Given the ineffectiveness of reactive behaviour management, teachers are required to employ proactive classroom management strategies.

According to Nwachukwu, and Uzokife (2022), proactive classroom behaviour management involves preventing negative behaviours before they occur by focusing on creating a positive learning environment and fostering student engagement. This approach emphasizes establishing clear expectations, consistent routines, and positive reinforcement to minimize disruptions and maximize learning. It is also important to note that proactive strategies are behaviours that teachers can employ to reduce the likelihood of learners' misbehaviour and involve the alteration of a situation before it worsens (e.g., establishing rules and praising appropriate behaviour). Proactive discipline strategies stress on prevention and use a positive approach to classroom management. Teachers tend to use positive reactions to student appropriate behaviours. The literature strongly suggests that classroom

behaviour management is considered to be most effective when proactive approaches are used. The use of proactive classroom management increases student on-task behaviour and lessens teacher stress. Teachers should teach and model classroom behaviour by setting rules of acceptable behaviour (expectations).

Key Principles of proactive classroom management (PCM)

As noted by Nwankwo, Omebe and Anikeze (2019), the three key features distinguishing PCM from other classroom management approaches include:

1. It is a preventive approach which aims at enhancing academic engagement and thus minimise problematic behaviour that hinders learning.
2. It integrates teaching with classroom management strategies into a unified classroom system.
3. There is an emphasis on the use of strategies targeting the classroom as a whole rather than focusing on individual learners.

Proactive classroom management rests upon some key principles which distinguish it from reactive classroom management. Such principles include setting behaviour expectations, establishing positive learning environments, and involving learners in behaviour management.

Expectations: Ethical classroom management is mainly proactive, with an emphasis on the prevention of inappropriate behaviour by intentionally using strategies like clearly establishing behavioural expectations and acknowledging appropriate behaviour. Classroom environment consists of routines and the physical arrangement, but learning dynamics are also shaped by teacher-student relationships. The establishment of routines forms the basis for teachers to classroom management. It is significant to be consistent, especially in setting expectations and following through with consequences. Follow-up procedures can be time-consuming; nonetheless, they are necessary to prevent the persistence of misbehaviour among students.

Positive learning environments: The usual response to inappropriate behaviour is to identify the student(s) involved as “the problem”, to see them mainly as a source of “trouble” and to employ strategies to tackle their behavioural issues. However, a classroom is an environment with its own ecology, including teacher, students and their interrelationships, the physical environment, study materials and a variety of activities which all interact to impact the behaviour of the room’s inhabitants. In this regard, in order to ensure effective teaching and classrooms that function positively with minimal levels of inappropriate behavior, planning and consistency are key requirements. Proactive behaviour management strategies create positive teacher-student relationships and thus a positive learning environment (Enwezor, 2021). This is achievable through ethical classroom management.

The ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State can be significantly enhanced by teachers' application of proactive behaviour management strategies in the classroom situations. Through proactive behaviour management strategies, teachers will be able to create and sustain a productive learning environment. These strategies not only improve students' behaviour and academic performance but also contribute to the overall academic engagement.

Though, the relevance of proactive behaviour management strategies in promoting ethical classroom teaching and learning processes are well-known by teachers, yet, many teachers seem not to apply them in the classroom. Researchers' personal observations show that many secondary schools in Anambra State seem not to have settled learning environment. In such schools with unsettled learning environment, they are faced with such challenges like disciplinary problems, students' unrest and disruption of academic activities, including, conflicts, and general classroom disorder are also prevalent issues in such schools. These challenges undermine educational outcomes, student engagement, and overall school climate; therefore, making it almost impossible for quality teaching and learning to take place. Although, the teachers in these secondary schools are qualified to teach, yet, many cannot manage their classrooms efficiently and effectively. Okeke, Okaforcha, and Ekwesianya (2019)

complaining about the poor quality of teaching and learning in schools which seem to be attributed to unethical classroom management, observed that teachers in most secondary schools in Nigeria, Anambra State inclusive, complained that one of the challenges they encounter in the course of their profession is classroom management and its worrying consequences on quality education. The teachers are observed to use punishment more often in the classrooms than positive reinforcement and rewards, thereby making students to be afraid of them rather than respect them (Orakwue & Ajaegbo (2020). Also, students in classrooms sleep while classes are on, make noise, move in and out of the classroom, fight, and chew gum, among other vices in the presence of the teacher in the classroom. With this scenario, misbehaviour and poor performance become the order of the day in most schools. This ugly trend should not be allowed to continue.

The concern for quality teaching and learning has been at the core of the motivating forces for reforms in education, secondary schools inclusive. This implies that quality teaching focuses on enhancing and improving the processes of teaching and learning in order to produce students who are worthy in character and in academics. This means that the learning environment in secondary schools in Nigeria and in Anambra State, must be conducive and safe enough for quality teaching and learning to take place. According to Akosubo-Ogori, Nwankwo and Nweke (2020), parents and students are often seen complaining about the classroom activities of the teachers in some secondary schools. Teachers on the other hand complain of students' inattentiveness, disruptive behaviour and lack of cooperation among others. This seems to be the case in secondary schools in Anambra State. Teachers in the State often complain that one of the challenges they face in carrying out their duties as teachers is how to manage their classes that are most times over populated and lack sufficient learning and teaching resources which are all obstacles to ethical classroom instruction for quality teaching. The effect of this is that the students are constantly sent out of the classrooms, punished, suspended and sometimes expelled from school. As a result of this, indiscipline among students abounds and quality teaching and learning hindered (Eze, Nwankwo & Umeobi, (2020).

From all the above discussions, teachers' ethical classroom management has a lot of benefits which includes: providing a conducive climate, atmosphere and learning environment for students' learning, creating opportunities for meaningful teaching and learning, fostering attainment of both instructional and educational goals, among others. For Nwankwo et al (2019) and Akudo (2020), ethical classroom management creates an environment that is conducive to teaching and learning. Unethical classroom management often creates chaos. Likewise, ineffectively managed classrooms have boredom and failure in achievement of educational goals as their characteristics. In essence, organizing the classroom efficiently and effectively for positive learning outcome is largely dependent on the ability of the teachers. Nwankwo et al (2019) stated that good classroom management helps to prevent unnecessary discipline problems by students in the classroom and promotes good behaviour and better academic results. From a pedagogical standpoint, teaching and learning can only occur in an orderly classroom. Orderliness here does not only imply quiet or rigid classroom but it refers to classroom whose activities indicate engaging students in meaningful learning. The teacher does this by adopting some workplace strategies. Therefore, school teachers are expected to continuously innovate their classroom strategies and management using effective workplace strategies in order to maintain their educational quality (Asiyai, 2011). Workplace strategies as applicable to teachers' classroom management as described within the context of this study are skills applied by teachers to organize, control, coordinate and manage activities going on inside the classroom. In the same vein, Nwachukwu and Uzokife (2022) and Nwankwo et al (2019) opined that teachers' workplace strategies are several strategies and techniques applicable to ethical classroom management. They can also be referred to as those measures, strategies and strategies employed by teachers to maintain decorum in the classroom and, as a result, establish a healthy and conducive learning environment for achievement of educational objectives (Nwachukwu & Uzokife, 2022). When strategies are executed effectively, teachers minimize the deviant and unruly behaviours that impede learning for both individual students and groups of students, while maximizing the behaviours that facilitate or enhance learning. In the light of the above,



this study investigated the proactive behaviour management strategies for ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies for ethical classroom management in secondary schools. Specific objective of the study was to determine teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies for ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Research Question: What are the teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies for ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Research Method

The descriptive survey research design was employed in the study. This design was used to collect data from a sample of public secondary school teachers in Anambra State from their large population using the questionnaire in order to showcase their opinions as regards to the present study. Information gathered from all the sample were analyzed with appropriate statistics of mean and standard deviation in order to conclude the study. Population for the study comprised 5,674 teachers from 259 public secondary schools in the 6 education zones in Anambra State. Sample size of the study constituted of 851 (15 percent) teachers from 207 (80 percent) public secondary schools in the 6 education zones selected using the stratified random sampling technique. Justification for selecting the sample of teachers and public secondary schools at 15% and 80% respectively, was as a means to enable the researcher to have controllable sample size of the teachers' population in Anambra State. An 8-item researcher-developed questionnaire structured on a 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was used for data collection. The instrument was titled "Teachers' Proactive Classroom Behaviour Survey (TPCBS)". Construction of the questionnaire was guided by the literature reviewed, purpose of the study and research questions. The TPCBS was face validated by three experts from the Department of Educational Management and Policy, and one Measurement and Evaluation expert from the Department of Educational Foundations, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. These experts determined the face and content validity of the research instrument. They equally made useful corrections on some of the items in the questionnaire which was incorporated before the final print out of the instrument. Reliability of the research instrument was established through a pilot-test carried out once on a single administration sampling 20 teachers in some selected 4 public secondary schools in Enugu State, which was not part of the study. Data collated after the pilot test were measured using Cronbach Alpha statistics which gave internal consistency reliability value of 0.80 for TPCBS, showcasing that the questionnaire was reliable for the study. TPCBS was distributed to the respondents by the researcher with the help of five research assistants who were residence from the six education zones where the sampled public secondary schools were located in Anambra State. An on-the-spot method was adopted by the researcher and the research assistants to distribute copies of the questionnaire to ensure maximum recovery of the questionnaire administered. These research assistants were equally briefed about the intention of the study likewise on how to meet with the teachers in order to collect the necessary data for the study. All the copies of the questionnaire distributed to the respondents were recovered back by the researcher and research assistants within a period of seven working days at a return rate of 100%. Data collated were analyzed using mean scores rated at 2.50 and standard deviation statistics. The decision rule for interpreting the scores on each statement on the questionnaire was based on the mean scale, which was benchmarked on 2.50 rating. Only mean scores of the respondents' statements which rated 2.50 and above were regarded as an indication of Agree (A), and therefore, accepted. While mean scores of the respondents' statements which rated below 2.50 was regarded as an indication of Disagree (D), and therefore, not accepted.



Presentation of Results

Results

Research Question: What are the teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies for ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State?

Table 5: Mean Scores and SD Ratings of Teachers on their Proactive Behaviour Management Strategies for Ethical classroom Management in Secondary Schools in Anambra State

S/N	Please give your opinion concerning the proactive behaviour management strategies which promotes ethical classroom management in your school. Teachers' strategies in:	SA	A	D	SD	X	SD	Decision
1.	creating a predictable environment at the beginning of each term using clearly defined rules, routines likewise procedures where students know what is expected of them, reducing the likelihood of misbehaviour in the classroom	390	330	51	80	3.21	0.92	Agree
2.	creating a positive classroom climate which helps students feel valued and engaged, essential for preventing behavioural issues which reduces the likelihood of disruptive behaviour in the classroom	355	375	89	32	3.24	0.78	Agree
3.	consistently monitoring students' behaviour including providing immediate feedback to quickly address minor issues before they escalate likewise maintain order and keep students on task in the classroom	390	312	99	50	3.22	0.87	Agree
4.	engaging students through well-planned lessons such as interactive and hands-on activities, group work, integration of technology can make lessons more engaging, in order to keep students interested and focused, thereby, reducing opportunities for misbehaviour in the classroom	439	321	52	39	3.36	0.79	Agree
5.	proactively reinforcing positive behaviour through praise and rewards to encourage students to continue behaving well in the classroom	396	354	41	60	3.28	0.85	Agree
6.	anticipating potential behavioural issues and addressing them before they occur using pre-correction and reminders strategy in order to enable students adhere to classroom rules, preventing misbehaviour before it starts in the classroom	372	388	53	38	3.29	0.77	Agree
7.	integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum which helps students develop self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills which help students build these competencies likewise confidence in the classroom	402	334	49	66	3.26	0.88	Agree
8.	maintaining regularly open lines of communication with parents which helps in creating a supportive network for students overall academic development and successes in the classroom	366	378	70	37	3.26	0.79	Agree
Overall Mean Score & SD =						3.26	0.83	Agree

Analysis of data from Table 5 indicated that all the items from 1 to 8 were rated above 2.50 of the criterion mean score to show the respondents (teachers) agreement with these statements. None the items were rated below 2.50 of the criterion mean score to show the respondents (teachers) disagreement with these statements. Their overall mean score and SD is 3.22 and 0.84 respectively, indicating closeness in their responses. However, this result indicated that teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies promoted ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that teachers' proactive behaviour management strategies promoted ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding included that when teachers efficiently employed such proactive behaviour management strategies as: creating a predictable environment at the beginning of each term using clearly defined rules, routines likewise procedures where students know what is expected of them, reducing the likelihood of misbehaviour in the classroom, creating a positive classroom climate which helps students feel valued and engaged, essential for preventing behavioural issues which reduces the likelihood of disruptive behaviour in the classroom, consistently monitoring students behaviour including providing immediate feedback to quickly address minor issues before they escalate likewise maintain order and keep students on task in the classroom, engaging students through well-planned lessons such as interactive and hands-on activities, group work, integration of technology can make lessons more engaging, in order to keep students interested and focused, thereby, reducing opportunities for misbehaviour in the classroom, proactively reinforcing positive behaviour through praise and rewards to encourage students to continue behaving well in the classroom, anticipating potential behavioural issues and addressing them before they occur using pre-correction and reminders strategy in order to enable students adhere to classroom rules, preventing misbehaviour before it starts in the classroom, integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum which helps students develop self-awareness, self-regulation, and interpersonal skills which help students build these competencies likewise confidence in the classroom, and maintaining regularly open lines of communication with parents which helps in creating a supportive network for students overall academic development and successes in the classroom; all these strategies promoted ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding corroborates with the findings of Nwachukwu and Uzokife (2022) study which indicated that male and female teachers were conversant with various classroom management strategies, techniques and strategies in Anambra State. This previous finding also affirmed that orderliness and good conduct of students were very vital for effective management of the class. In other words, the findings revealed that teachers responded to a high extent about classroom management strategies. Classroom management techniques were also a crucial part of a teacher's success in creating a safe and effective learning environment for students' quality education. Consequently, teachers were encouraged to know how to use and apply techniques that will allow and also help students to learn. There was a high extent to which teachers ensure discipline as a classroom management strategy in senior secondary schools in Anambra State. This finding is in line with the study of Cameron and Pierce (2021) which revealed that various classroom management techniques were utilized by teachers as preventive and maintenance-oriented approaches in the management of students' classroom behaviours. All the findings of this present study, when pulled together, indicated that teachers' proactive behavioural strategies promoted ethical classroom management in secondary schools in Anambra State.

Conclusion

The proactive behaviour management strategies identified in this study can be utilized by teachers and other educators to enhance ethical classroom management and, consequently, improve educational outcomes. In conclusion, the adoption of these ethical classroom management strategies can significantly impact the quality of education in secondary schools in Anambra State. By implementing the strategies investigated in this study, this would create more effective and supportive learning environments, ultimately benefiting both students and teachers. This study serves as a foundational step towards achieving sustainable improvements in classroom management strategies in secondary schools across the country.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that principals and the PPSSC should support teachers to utilize technology tools and platforms to aid provide teachers with information about proactive behaviour management strategies such as behaviour tracking apps, digital



communication tools, and online conflict resolution resources that streamlines classroom management processes, provide real-time data, and facilitate better communication between teachers and students, which also enables teachers to promote ethical classroom management.

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