

THE ROLE OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT IN CONDITIONS OF LOWER SECONDARY LEVEL OF EDUCATION IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC

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Abstract. *The issue of classroom management is relatively little known in the territory of the Slovak Republic, and in our point of view, it is very important because it creates the way for good teaching. In this paper, the author therefore theoretically and empirically addresses issues of classroom management in conditions of the lower secondary level of education in primary schools in the Slovak Republic. According to the fact that there is not given sufficient attention to issues of classroom management within the undergraduate teacher training, candidates are insufficiently prepared for the performance of class teacher roles, they do not have adequate opportunity to become familiar with workload before they start to teach. In this context, the paper will focus on the analysis of classroom management, with an emphasis on competencies and skills of the class teacher, which are essential for its successful implementation. The aim of the research is to analyze the competencies and skills of the class teacher, which he/she should dispose of in order to manage effectively a class. The research was carried out at the lower secondary level of education (ISCED 2) in primary schools in selected regions of Slovakia. The research sample consisted of class teachers at that level of education. In order to evaluate our findings, we applied a quantitative research method. As a tool for collecting research data, we used a specially designed questionnaire, containing 26 items. Based on the data allowance author analyzes and evaluates information in relation to the competencies that should class teachers dispose in order to the effective implementation of classroom management. Based on the research findings, the author formulates recommendations in relation to the management of schools and proposes solutions for improving the work of classroom teachers themselves. The research carried out to help school leaders improve the work of classroom teachers and help teachers to adapt themselves to the role of class teacher.*

Keywords: *class teacher; classroom management; teacher competencies; the lower secondary level of education; questionnaire.*

Introduction

Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a poorly managed classroom. The importance of a quality classroom management is confirmed by the Ch. Eichhorn study. Based on the research findings, it showed that the performance of students at teachers with a high competence good management improves by up to a whopping 52 percent. The weaker teacher management approach can improve student performance by 14 percent. The rate of effectiveness of education depends on the degree of success

of schools in meeting their educational goals. Effective teaching and learning cannot take place in classrooms with low levels of classroom management (Jones & Jones, 2012; Marzano Marzano & Pickering, 2003; Van de Grift, van der Wal & Torenbeek, 2011). Without this, classes are disorganized and chaotic, and provide very little space to learning processes are carried out (Elias & Schwab, 2006, p.309).

The results of many studies also confirmed that teachers play a key role in shaping effective learning (Hattie, 2009). Given that within the undergraduate teacher, education students are not given sufficient attention to the rights issue of classroom management are poorly trained candidates for the post of class teacher, do not have adequate opportunity to become familiar with the job description. In this context, the paper will focus on the analysis of classroom management, with an emphasis on competencies and skills by the teacher, which are essential for its successful implementation.

The essence and the importance of classroom management

Management of the class is the first professional activity to be undertaken in the early teaching career, and represents the most significant difficulties, especially for beginning teachers (Zabalza & Marcelo, 1993). Numerous research efforts have shown that the issue of management of classroom activities is the essence of concern, even for an experienced teacher, and is a critical factor in what is predetermined (Doyle, 1977, 1979, 1981, 1986; Dreeben 1973; Emmer, 1987).

Authors Obdržálek and Horvathova (2004) aptly defined classroom management as "Summary of activities a teacher, usually the class teacher, resides in the system concept of organizing the conditions, processes and activities in the school room. It focused attention in particular to coordinate the educational action of teachers and educators on their interaction with the actors' extra-curricular education and training and to guide the pupils collective."

Evertson and Weinstein (2006) refer to the definition of class management as an action of the teacher, which aims to create a favorable environment for academic, social-emotional learning students. This strategy helps the teacher to control the class. We understand them tools that teachers can use to create an environment, including actions to improve teacher and student relations, and rules to regulate student behavior. According to Corps (2008, pp.41-66), there are several strategies for classroom management:

1. *Create an effective learning environment* - Classroom management is about creating appealing and attractive environment for student learning. When all three skills sets are present, you provide a positive classroom environment for student success.

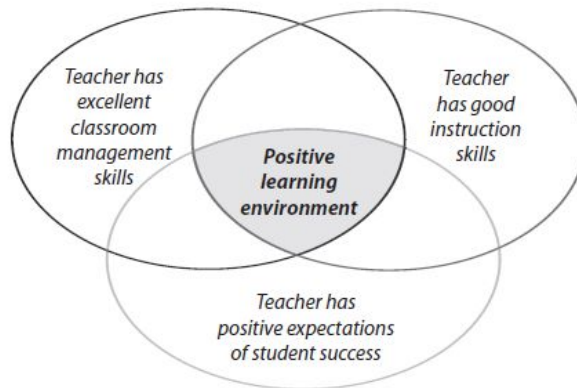


Figure 1. Positive learning environment (Corps, 2008, p.13)

2. *Establish classroom procedures* - Teach procedures for routines in the classroom so that the environment is predictable and well structured.

Procedure + Practice = Routine

3. *Create a motivational environment.*

4. *Make every minute count - To maximize learning and teaching time*

5. *Keep everyone engaged* - Challenging students to think actively involves them in learning and develops critical skills. Expect both low and high achievers to participate in classroom discussions and answer questions.

6. *Teach life skills and good learning habits* - As you work to create an organized learner-centered classroom you can teach students many important skills. Sometimes called character skills or life skills, these are the skills that enable students to become mature, confident, and successful adults who contribute positively to their communities and society as a whole. UNICEF and numerous ministries of education recognize the importance of life skills training. The relative value of a life skill and how the skill is expressed in daily behavior are culturally dependent. For example, most Americans highly value initiative, effort, and curiosity, while other cultures may be more likely to place a high value on respect, patience, and cooperation.

Based on the above, the concept of classroom management can be seen as:

- *Management of classroom* - a set of activities performed by the teacher in the management of the educational process.

- *Classroom management* - within which attention focuses primarily on the classroom manager - the function of class teachers, particular competencies, and skills.

The class teacher is irreplaceable in the process of management of the educational process. Only that person is able to look objectively at the holistic educational progress of each individual child. Partial view of the various teaching subjects and their boundaries can and must balance the right class teacher, and compares the positive sense of the word influence. The child may have vastly different results in individual subjects, but also vastly different behavior or approach to subjects and teachers. It must be acknowledged that the origin may not be with the child, and it is, therefore, necessary coordination educational view of class teachers and activity (Trojan cited in PISOŇOVÁ, 2014, p.71).

Competencies and skills of the class teacher

Current conceptions of teaching competencies emphasize teaching aspect as an entity in accordance with the requirements of the company. The role of teachers in society is changing; the increasing importance of cultural and social skills, distinctive orientation is the personality of the child. The importance of competencies of a class teacher, teaching the correct diagnosis and the appropriate use of diagnostic methods. We are talking about major class teacher competence, which we will discuss in this chapter. Due to this fact, we investigated which competencies are necessary for the effective implementation of class management and more we analyze them. Turek (2001, p.18) highlights specific professional competencies that reflect the quality performance of each profession. These are the same skills and competencies for effective implementation of the profession. In the light of the above requirements, it is an increasingly inflected requirement of professional development educator, who is also a teacher. Pavlov (2013, p.23) understands the professional development of teachers as a tool for the professionalization of teaching, permanent coping with changes, resulting in a long-term impact on quality of education (Pisoňová, 2016, p.85).

Furthermore, the creation of teacher and school leader training programs, based on required professional competencies, belongs to highly supported programs of National Strategic Framework of all EU member countries, as each country wants to have their teachers and school leaders prepared appropriately for their job (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008). School leader training programs should involve managerial, economic, personnel, legislative and other aspects, as these aspects of the school management influence also the whole quality of education processes carried out by schools (Bitterová, Hašková & Pisoňová, 2014, p.115).

Accurately grasp of the concept of competence can be found in the terminological and explanatory dictionaries from the authors Obdržálek and Horvathová (2004), which states: "Competence is a set of skills, competencies, powers and duties of a man, a specialist organization's governing body, which is necessary for the job or function, respectively the functioning of a body or organization." The competencies also stated in Act 317/2009 Coll - The teaching staff and specialists and on amendments to certain laws, according to § 2 paragraphs. b) of the Act: "Professional competence is proven capabilities required for competent performance of educational activities or qualified exercise of professional activities." From the above, we suggest that every teacher in our case, the class teacher should be during their studies of teaching subjects familiar with each one of given competencies.

Own experience and practice should be made to improve the competence to ensure effective implementation of the teaching profession. The issue of competence is mainly engaged in Turek publications in Teacher Education for the 21st Century (2001, p.83). Concisely list the types of competencies that should be every teacher at the university acquired. It discusses the importance of each individual and provides the following competencies:

- *Professional and subject* - thorough knowledge of the content of the curriculum subjects which the teacher teaches.
- *Psycho-didactic* - creating favorable conditions for learning - motivation of students; activation of their cognition, thinking, creation; creating a favorable social, emotional and working atmosphere; manage the process of learning that is oriented individually

to each student; optimal choice of methods, resources, organizational forms of teaching.

- *Communication* - the ability to communicate effectively with students, parents, colleagues, superiors and the social partners.
 - *Diagnostic* - analyze and timely detection of problems of students; fair and objective evaluation of the educational performance of students.
 - *Organizational and management* - planning and design teaching; maintain order and system in the classroom.
 - *Advisory and consultative* - as an adviser for students to solve problems, not only study.
 - *Reflection of own work* - evaluating their own work in order to improve the future.
- When we think of each one competency, we will realize that being a teacher is not only to teach. Teaching profession consists of several teaching roles (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Roles of the classroom manager (Pisoňová, 2014, p.61)

Research methodology

The aim of the research was to analyze the competencies and skills by the teacher, who should possess the effective implementation of classroom management. The research was carried out at the lower secondary level of education (ISCED 2) in selected regions of Slovakia (Bratislava, Orava). We chose a quota sample (intentional) the selection of the survey sample, as our criterion for the choice was up to date features class teacher at the lower secondary level of education. The research sample, therefore, consisted of class teachers at that level of education.

Table 1. Research sample

Research participants	Region	Total number
Class teachers of ISCED 2	Bratislava	40
Class teachers of ISCED 2	Orava	47

The identification of the sample of the survey, we focused on issues that investigated sex, whether a school is in a village or in the city, the length of the performance of the class teacher, classroom teachers' age group and last but not least we were interested in and graduating specialists. At the Bratislava and Žilina region and in female-dominated (85 % of Bratislava, 89 % of Orava). Given the number of respondents was not reached in our study sufficiently a representative number of teachers from villages and towns. From Bratislava, they responded only teachers from the city, of Orava, engage mainly teachers from the villages (63%). The largest percentage of classroom teachers in Orava performs the function ranging from 11 to 20 years of experience (31,91%). From Bratislava, it is the range of 0-5 years (32,50%). Orava highest percentage of teachers comprises over 51 years (35%), and in Bratislava, the teachers are in the range 31-40 years (44,68%). Respondents in most cases coincide. The most numerous group consisted of graduating aprobácia languages - English, German, Russian and French. Another large group was teachers of mathematics, Slovak language, biology, chemistry, and physics. Especially in Orava, some teachers have graduated from religion, which was mainly attributable to strong religious belief in Orava.

To evaluate each observation, the use of quantitative research methods in which we as a tool for collecting research data used a specially designed questionnaire containing 26 items. In the questionnaire, we used closed items, which offered ready-made answers. For some items, the ability of multiple choice. We used the open items of which we have tried to establish a subjective opinion. These questions we chose very little, given the scale of the survey sample. Most of the items in the questionnaire contained semi-closed items that offer choice answers, and we offered the choice of the open end. The respondent can choose either one of the offered alternatives or continue writing your reply. In the questionnaire, we used a system of scale type questions with answers in the five-point numerical range. Variants, we define the "least important" to "most important" value and frequency variant "never" to "always".

The obtained data were analyzed and evaluated through the answers to the research questions. Given the potential magnitude of the contribution, the author presents the interpretation of selected parts of the research findings. The main finding of the research findings with the remit research question:

What kind of responsibility prevails for classroom teachers?

Respondents were asked two questions to measure the importance of individual competencies in the first question, respondents were addressed to indicate the order of importance of the values ranging from numbers 1 through 5, the competence with which it should enjoy the class teacher (*professional and subject competence, psychopedagogic, communication, diagnostic, organizational and management, advisory and consultative, reflection of own work*). The second question contained the same alternatives, with the difference that they attributed value in its sole discretion, respectively. Which competencies they themselves consider important or less important. In most cases, the answer to both questions coincides, but there were also differences. Of all the responsibilities that we theoretically explained, class teachers most highlighted *communication competencies* (Orava – 68%, and Bratislava – 80%), *organizational* (Orava – 45%, Bratislava – 55%) and *reflections on their work* (Orava – 49%, and Bratislava 53%). When a working class teacher is important to have acquired

communication skills, particularly in relation to pupils, other teachers who work in the class and parents, organizational abilities and skills again in relation to the effective implementation of classroom management. With the appointment of competencies is closely linked competence *reflection of their own work*. We asked respondents the reflection in schools and many have indicated that this is an excellent tool for introspection and improvement is. Therefore, we attach great importance reflection of the effective functioning of the educational process and the classroom management. The lowest degree of importance attributed class teachers to *professional and subject-specific competencies* (25 % of the value of the number 5). Nearly 1% of the people interviewed stated at values ranging 1, *the psychosocial and psycho-didactic* competencies. Significantly above responsibilities between them are relevant and necessary in carrying out work with people. Significant differences between the answers of respondents in Bratislava and Orava occurred during the evaluation of psycho-didactic competencies. Class teachers from Bratislava values shown competency 22% greater degree of importance than class teachers from Orava. On the contrary, psychosocial assessed class teachers from the Orava higher degree of importance of values ranging numbers 4, 10% more than class teachers from Bratislava. In connection with the powers, we specifically pay attention to diagnostic skills. *Counseling and diagnostic competence* of respondents indicated the importance of values and assigned the number 5 and 40% consulting and diagnostic 34 %. Given the findings, we see considerable limits on the acquisition of competencies. Class teachers have problems with the proper diagnosis of the pupil, whether the use of adequate instruments or in collaboration with parents to further our understanding.

Research question: *How does the class teacher realize a diagnosis of students*, we concluded that the most common methods include observation (on average 86% of the respondent classroom teachers) and interview (93% of respondents). Other methods of diagnosis such as history, sociometry, questionnaires and surveys, class teachers are used to a lesser extent, or not at all.

What interventions can implement the class teacher to improve their skills?

Class teachers attach great importance to their capacity, thus we do not see a reason for underestimating feature class teacher. The amount of work performed by class teachers, calls for admiration and increasing the class teachers together with the implementation of changes to improve the work. First, we would like to recommend a school psychologist as an expert advisor in the educational problems of pupils in situations of stress for teachers, but also in their personal growth. We conclude that based on the data collected from respondents at their disposal expert advice, especially *school psychologist*. We met with the views of teachers who would appreciate the *advice and experience of their colleagues and school administration* (17,43 % of respondents). We would, therefore, propose that the teachers and class teachers with each other more inspired, listened, and offered a helping hand and personal experience to their colleagues. The next step is to improve self-assessment of its work by the teacher. *Reflection and self-reflection* are tools that are used to close the gaps and to deepen the substance of the values and qualities. *Know yourself, your strengths and weaknesses are a step for the better*. Bounce back from their strengths, build on them and try to change, reduce weaknesses. If they do not know yet, hardly we will move somewhere further. Reflection of own work is, therefore, an important element to meeting the educational and training objectives. The answers that we have obtained

through a questionnaire, in most cases, coincide. They have been associated with these competencies. Closest possible we might have noticed in the organizational competence. Respondents who reported a high level of importance wrote one of its strengths organizational skills. In most prevalent communication and psychosocial competence. Teachers who practice range from 20 to 30 years, noted as a strength of years of experience and practice in the field. Otherwise, teachers, ranging from 0 to 5 years of experience mainly attributed to weaknesses in the teachers' lack of experience.

The biggest pitfall of the teaching profession, teachers especially are given time. 68% of respondents in their particular weaknesses reported a lack of time and too busy with different activities. About how important the feedback from the teacher's work is, we have already mentioned. Therefore, we asked respondents whether there is on the school self-assessment of its work by the teacher. We found that 37 % of the teachers attended the school self-evaluation. This means that 63% of respondents rating school does not implement its own teaching staff. Unfortunately, after analyzing the data obtained, we found that the root of the problem is in the management of schools. Due to this fact, respondents who have never participated in school self-evaluation indicated that it would like to participate. Only slight 2% of teachers indicated that although he never participated, present so wish. The experience of teachers who participate in an annual self-evaluation, showing efficient work by the teacher, collaboration between colleagues and senior managers. The most common methods of self-evaluation, respondents reported questionnaires and personal interviews with senior managers, self-reflection, and various meetings or lectures.

What options has the class teacher to improve the quality of classroom management?

To improve the quality of class management must take into account the possibility that a class teacher available. Through the acquisition of data, we found that approximately 17,43% of respondents said their colleagues and school leaders as one of the alternatives to the improvement of the functioning of the class management. Respondents also indicated as an aid in the function of the experts, 10% of them said even in this issue help school psychologists, special education teachers, educational counselors and other professionals as an opportunity to improve the quality of class management.

Other alternatives were presented in the notice classroom teachers predominated introspection classroom teachers (5,34%), analysis of school management (3%), self-study through literature (7,25%).

With which restrictions, the class teacher meets at improving the quality of class management?

Pitfalls and limitations accompanied the teaching profession, recorded and addressed respondents. The main sources of class teachers see the parents (27,50 % in Bratislava and 14% from Orava). Establish and maintain a positive relationship with the parents of students is often very strenuous. Most parents have different ideas about the quality of class management and are not always in conformity with the class teacher. Effective classroom management is made and the good relations between students and classroom teachers. 34 % classroom teachers see improvements in restrictions on the

lack of time in getting to know individual students in the classroom. 11,35 % from 34% as previously mentioned language teachers who do not have much time for exploring the students during the teaching process. They noted that during classroom hours are not enough opportunities for exploring relationships in the class interests of pupils and evaluation of the atmosphere in the classroom. On the other hand, 7% say that the problem may also be the pupils themselves and their unwillingness to collaborate with classroom teachers.

Based on the research findings, we formulated the following recommendations in relation to the management of schools and propose solutions for improving the work of classroom teachers themselves:

- *The need to strengthen enhanced in communication, organizational competencies and reflections on their work.*
- *On diagnostic competence recommended in good diagnostic methods applied and others*
- *such as case history, sociometry, questionnaires, and surveys.*
- *The need to strengthen self-evaluation in schools.*
- *The need to direct the work of school psychologist in schools.*
- *Mutual assistance of colleagues, experts and parents.*

Conclusions

International research shows that no other parameter of classrooms is not so clearly and firmly connected with the performance levels of performance and progress as a management of a class (Helmke, 2003, p.78). Efficient management of a class is a precondition for demanding to teach. Effective implementation of classroom management is closely related to competencies and skills of the teacher, who should possess. Change established ways and methods of work, which we believe to be correct, it is not an easy process. To develop the required competencies and skills as the implementation of innovations, it is necessary to create favorable conditions and provide support from the school management, parents and the pupils themselves. The research carried out has, therefore, help school leaders improve the work of classroom teachers and help teachers to adapt themselves to the role of class teacher.

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