Teacher as Reflective Practitioner: Best Practices in Classroom Management

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ABSTRACT: Teaching is a complex activity and requires constant and deep reflection. Reflection is a way of thinking that involves the ability to use information to make rational choices. Reflection helps teachers to learn what to teach and to be aware of how he/she can teach. Reflection emphasizes on authentic positive transformation. Classroom management is set of teacher actions to create a learning environment that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning and self-motivation. Classroom management facilitates both academic and social-emotional learning. Teacher has to act as reflective practitioner in the classroom to manage students effectively. Teachers must look upon their work as knowledge- or information-based and develop habits of deep, substantive thinking and reflection. Hence, the present paper is an attempt to deal with what kind of qualities that teacher requires to become reflective practitioner and what sort of best practices are needed to manage classroom effectively.

Keywords: Reflection, Teacher, Reflective Practitioner, classroom management and best practices

I. INTRODUCTION

Teacher has to act as reflective practitioner in the classroom to manage students effectively. Teachers must look into their work as knowledge- or information-based and develop habits of deep, substantive thinking and reflection (Cole & Knowles, 2000) [4]. In the current era, instructing, motivating, following discipline and managing children in today's schooling environments is a challenge for the teachers. Effective teachers must be well informed on the current research on teacher student effectiveness and be able to make use of this information to strengthen and advance their practice. Reflection is considered a cornerstone of professional competence (Armsrong, *et.al.,* 1997) [1]. Reflection is *a way of thinking that involves the ability to use information to make rational choices and to assume responsibility for those choices; it requires that the teacher be introspective, open-minded, and willing to accept responsibility for decisions and actions.* Reflection facilitates learning and continued professional growth and is a key factor in teacher effectiveness (Burden & Byrd, 2013) [3]. The reflections that are without the goals are fruitless and meaningless. Refection is pivotal and beneficial for teachers in training, as well as for new and veteran teachers. This is an important aspect of both teaching and learning. Teachers learn actively from experiences that carry out reflection. From this critical process, teachers can begin to recognize differences from their own practices and can become successful practitioners; this is commonly viewed as an efficient technique for professional development and an effective way to more efficiently influence student academic success (Ferraro, 2000) [6].

In order to become reflective practitioner, primarily, teacher must be a motivator. Teacher as a motivator is an important functional activity in classroom situations. Educational research identifies that effective teachers are able to motivate students and establish positive, motivating learning environments. Sternberg (1999) identified a model for developing expertise and achievement in students with the following key elements [14]: (1) meta-cognitive skills, (2) learning skills, (3) thinking skills, (4) knowledge, and (5) motivation. All of these elements are dependent on the context for learning in the classroom. Critical to these elements is motivation. Motivation helps bring about the development of meta-cognitive skills which then influence the There are two challenges that teachers face in classroom situations today, viz., mastery-focused classroom and performance-focused classroom. The mastery-focused classroom that focuses on continuous improvement, understanding and effort represents the kind of environment most suitable for promoting student motivation (Eggen & Kauchak, 2013) [5]. This is as

opposed to the performance-focused classroom that emphasizes high grades with less effort, public displays of ability, and performance and achievement compared to others. Student motivation increases when teachers establish classrooms where students are at the center of all learning activities (mastery-focused classroom). The mastery-focused classroom is characterized by three important components: a) *Teacher, b) Learning Climate,* and c) *Instruction.*
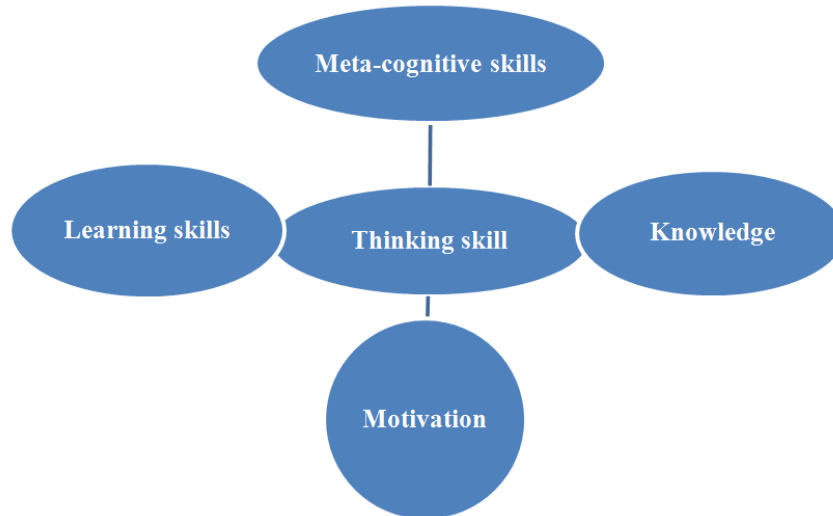

Fig. 1. Sternberg (1999) model for developing expertise and achievement.

Teacher should possess certain qualities such as: (1) Personal Teaching Efficacy: the belief that teachers can have an important, positive effect on student learning; the more this is believed, the more it will happen. (2) Modeling and Enthusiasm: teachers present information enthusiastically resulting in increased student self-efficacy, attributions of effort and ability, self-confidence and achievement, and through their own behaviors display or project positive learning models. (3) Caring: teachers empathize with and invest in the protection and development of their students.(4) Positive Expectations: teacher expectations are clearly linked to student achievement and become a part of the self-fulfilling prophecy; teacher expectations influence interactions with students; teachers treat students they believe to be high achievers differently from those they believe to be low achievers.

Learning Climate is to be associated with (1) Order and Safety: students learn and engage more in the learning activities when they see the environment as physically and psychologically safe; order and safety influence a climate variable that creates a predictable learning environment and promotes feelings of physical and emotional security. (2) Success: success is one of the most significant factors that contribute to students' believing in themselves. Situations where students

are successful contribute to ongoing success. (3) Challenge: success alone is not sufficient to increase student motivation; students need to experience success on tasks that they perceive as challenging.(4)Task Comprehension: learning increases when students understand the relevance of the task and see it as worth understanding.

Instruction mainly connects with (1) Introductory Focus: the teacher's lesson beginning attracts student attention and provides a conceptual framework for the lesson that follows. (2) Personalization: the teacher's lessons and topics are seen as personally meaningful and intellectually and/or emotionally relevant. (3) Involvement: the extent to which students are directly participating in an activity; student involvement is related to student achievement. (4) Feedback: providing information to students helps them understand their own personal progress in learning. Teaching strategies and behaviors related to student motivation in learning have also been organized into considerations being given to three basic classroom conditions. Namely, 1) The classroom must be relatively organized and free from constant interruptions and disruptions. 2) The teacher must be a patient, supportive person who never embarrasses students because they made mistakes. 3) The student's work must be challenging, but reasonable (Woolfolk, 2013) [15].

In motivating students to learn, the teacher should:

1. Use behavioral techniques to help students exert themselves and work toward remote goals.
2. Make sure that students know what they are to do, how to proceed, and how to determine when they have achieved goals.

3. Encourage low-achieving students to attribute success to a combination of ability and effort and failure to insufficient effort.

4. Encourage students to think of ability as a set of cognitive skills that can be added to and redefined, rather than as a fixed entity that is resistant to change, by praising the processes they use to succeed.

5. Encourage students to adopt appropriate learning goals.

6. Maximize factors that appeal to both personal and situational interest, and

7. Try to make learning interesting by emphasizing activity, investigation, adventure, social interaction, and usefulness.
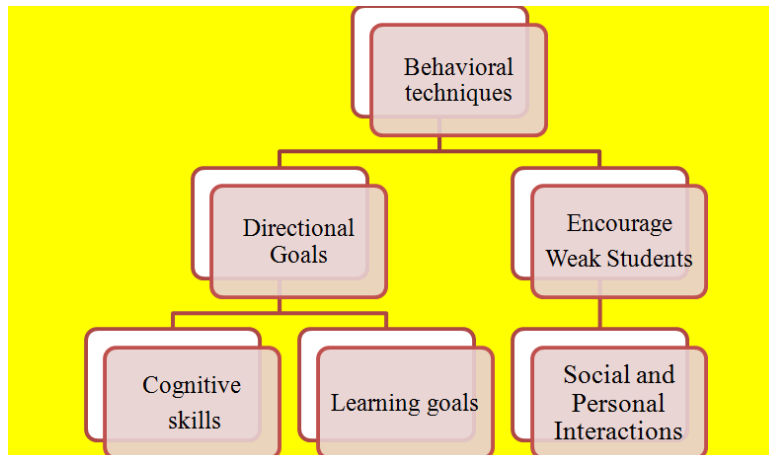

Fig. 2. Motivational model for students.

The teacher as reflective practitioner must know how to make use of knowledge, utilize decision making skills and know how to establish positive learning environments. Establishing positive classroom learning environment necessitates determining exactly what students expect from teachers and what teachers expect from students. Reflective practice is the combination/culmination of various forms of reflection e.g., reflective teaching, reflective thinking, reflective inquiry. The purpose of reflective practice is to think critically about oneself and holds teaching choices and actions (Cole & Knowles, 2000). The teacher who regularly reflects on his or her professional practice is considered to be a reflective practitioner

Following behaviors/attributes are characteristic of a reflective practitioner (Larrivee, 2009) [11].
• Reflects on and learns from experience.
• Engages in ongoing inquiry.
• Solicits feedback.
• Remains open to alternative perspectives.
• Assumes responsibility for own learning.
• Takes action to align with new knowledge and understandings.
• Observes self in the process of thinking.
• Is committed to continuous improvement in practice.
• Strives to align behaviors with values and beliefs.
• Seeks to discover what is true.

The Model for Reflection and Inquiry is provided as guide for teachers to formally analyze both motivation and management problems in the classroom.

1. Statement of the Problem
The problem is identified and clarified; the problem should be meaningful and manageable.

2. Development of a Hypothesis(es)
A hypothesis, i.e., educated guess, regarding a solution to the problem is formulated; there may be more than one hypothesis.

3. Collection of Relevant Data
Data or pertinent information relevant to the problem is collected and/or identified; references or sources of information are considered and reviewed.

4. Analysis of Data

Clarifications are made as to information collected; sources of data are considered and perhaps reconsidered. Relationships should be identified among data collected and data should be clearly organized and analyzed as to how this information relates to the problem.

5. Interpretation and Reporting of Results, Drawing Conclusions and Making Generalizations

Conclusions should be drawn and relevant generalizations made related to the accuracy of the original hypothesis.

II. BEST PRACTICES IN CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Rosenshine and Furst (1971) identified eleven teacher behaviors or variables (i.e., teaching characteristics or practices) related to student achievement; they are presented here in the order of the degree to which they are so related [13]. A) *Clarity:* Teachers who have the ability to explain concepts clearly and who are able to answer student questions so that their students understand the answers that they give are characterized by having clarity in their instruction. *B) Variability:* variability is represented by the teacher's diversity of information-sending techniques or strategies used during the presentation of lessons. Through this variety, especially when strategies are matched to student learning styles, students remain more interested in the learning activities. C) *Enthusiasm:* It also has been associated with the teacher's level of excitement, energy, involvement, and interest regarding both the subject matter and teaching itself. Teacher enthusiasm is related to the concept of teacher efficacy. *D) Task-Oriented:* Task-oriented teachers project that they know what they expect in student performance and the lessons that they teach and how to attain the student performance that they desire.

E) Criterion focused: Teachers who are criterion-focused in their teaching communicate to students their expected instructional outcomes. *F) Use of student ideas:* The use of student ideas by teachers during instruction and, in so doing, communicating to students that their ideas and input are important to enhance student achievement. Students have higher levels of meaningful participation and interest in their learning when their ideas are regularly incorporated into the learning process and they have greater academic success. G) *Criticism:* A negative relationship exists between the use of teacher criticism and student achievement. The use of criticism can create a threatening environment for students, push students away, and detract from the learning process resulting in lower student achievement. *H) Use of Structuring Comments:* important points which are to follow in the lesson, is highly recommended and supported by educational research. The use of structuring comments is appropriate at the start of lessons and at the start of different sections of lessons.

I) Types of Questions: The classic system of question categorization places questions into four categories: cognitive memory, convergent, divergent, and evaluative. It can serve as a guide for teachers to the different cognitive levels of questions that they may use in their teaching and the intellectual processing on the part of students. J) *Probing behaviors:* Probing behaviors occur when the teacher asks students to go deeper into their thinking or to elaborate on comments made or positions taken. The use of probing behaviors, typically through the use of probing questions, communicates to students that the teacher is interested in knowing more about their ideas. *K) Level of difficulty of instruction* If students perceive that the teacher's level of difficulty of instruction is beyond their ability, they may either withdraw from the instruction or act out against it. It is helpful for teachers to apply the concept of the zone of proximal development to their teaching. The zone of proximal development is defined as *a range of tasks that a student cannot yet do alone but can accomplish when assisted by a more skilled partner* (Eggen & Kauchak, 2013).

Five additional teacher characteristics that consistently appear in the teacher effectiveness research are organized into the broad categories of: *(1) lesson clarity, (2) instructional variety, (3) teacher task orientation, (4) engagement in the learning process, and (5) student success rat*e (Borich, 2011) [2].

(1) Lesson clarity: Lesson clarity refers to how well students understand their teachers' lessons. Teachers, who use vocabulary that students do not understand, or who are generally not well organized in their work, are not considered to be clear in their teaching. Preparing behavioral objectives in lesson; preparing unit pan for what prior learning is required for lesson and ask questions at beginning of the lesson.

(2) Instructional variety: It contributes to the perceived energy of the teacher and offers students different stimuli during lesson activities. Using different instructional approaches makes the teacher appear more interesting and exciting to students, natural curiosity to learn, and varies the stimuli in the classroom. Consequently, the teacher who is skilled in using a number of different types of strategies is more effective than the teacher who is limited to only a few approaches.

(3) Teacher task orientation: Having a high level of meaningful and successful time on task communicates to students that the teacher is well prepared. Students who are on task are less likely to present behavioral problems for their teachers.

(4) Engagement in the learning process Effective teachers use their time wisely and ensure that their students are active, not passive in the learning process problems of student management are frequently brought about by poor or inappropriate use of time in the classroom. Wasted or idle time leads to problems in management that should and could be avoided. Time in schools and classrooms is often broken down into the following four dimensions.

1. Allocated Time: the amount of time a particular teacher or

school designates to an identified course, topic, or activity.

2. Instructional Time: the portion of Allocated Time that is actually

devoted to learning activities.

3. Engaged Time: sometimes referred to as time-on-task, Engaged

Time is the portion of Instructional Time that students actually spend directly involved in learning activities.

4. Academic Learning Time: Academic Learning Time takes all other forms of time into account and is characterized by students not only paying attention during instructional activities, but also interacting successfully with the content that is being taught; it is that portion of classroom time where students are successfully engaged in meaningful learning experiences. Research supports that, the greater the amount of Academic Learning Time in the classroom, the greater the level of student achievement. The best use of time in the classroom is determined, to a large extent, by the degree to which the teacher is fully planned for instruction. The better planned the teacher is for instruction that is relevant to the interests and needs of the students in the classroom, and responsive to their learning styles and abilities, the greater will be the levels of student achievement that are reached.

(5). Student success rate it is defined as *the rate at which students understand and correctly complete their work.* Teachers need to know the abilities and interests of their students and plan their instruction accordingly based on this knowledge. Student success is directly related to the level of difficulty of the content being taught. Level of difficulty may be measured by the rate at which students understand and correctly answer questions asked of them Three levels of difficulty and related success levels are identified as follows:

• *High Success*: The student understands the subject matter taught and makes only occasional careless errors.

• *Moderate Success*: The student has a partial understanding of the subject matter but makes some substantive errors.

• *Low Success*: The student has little or no understanding of the subject matter. If teachers desire for their students to be successful in their learning, they must plan, teach, and evaluate in ways that ensure success for them. Use review, feedback, and testing sessions.

Jim Waters and Shelly Frei (2002) have given certain strategies to manage classroom behavior systematically. They are [9]:

Develop Respecting Students: It is important to accept the students teacher has, not the students teacher wishes he/she had. First teacher has to think of each individual student as a person who deserves to be treated with dignity, regardless of his/her intellectual abilities, primary language, social training, cultural background, or personal circumstance. Those who have been treated unfairly may become scapegoats or targets of violence by their peers. If teachers treat students fairly, they are more likely to respect one another.

Dignifying Students: By dignifying students' efforts, teachers in the classroom create an atmosphere where students feel welcomed, valued, and respected. Glasser (2000) even went so far as to suggest that teachers adopt seven connecting habits—caring, listening, supporting, contributing, encouraging, trusting, and befriending [8].

Keeping Control on Emotion: It is extremely important for you to control your emotions and not lose your temper. This sort of immediate reaction usually reflects a teacher's own lack of confidence in dealing with a given situation (Fischer, 2004). As the adult, you should model appropriate behavior even under highly stressful situations. If you lose self-control, it becomes more difficult for you to make the proper decisions under the circumstances and also to retain the respect of your students (Fischer, 2004) [7].

Eye Contact: Direct eye contact and nonverbal communication are effective classroom management tools. When a student is misbehaving or breaking a class rule, simply pause and look him/her in the eye. This is not to be intended as a threatening gesture, but one of authority. Many times, you won't even need to say a thing—the student will feel the power of your stare. Eye contact is also used as a preventative measure for discipline problems.

Praise and correction: Public praise in the classroom can be a very powerful tool. This can be a quick strategy that involves subtly recognizing a student with a positive gesture. When it comes to correction, it is generally more powerful and appropriate to correct students individually and privately.

*Encouragement: R*ather than using praise, teachers encourage their students. Encouragement differs from praise, as teachers offer specific honest and private feedback on improvement and effort, rather than using evaluative words publicly in order to manage and manipulate the work of all the children in the classroom.

Listen before You Discipline: It is important to listen carefully to students and to consider their points of view before disciplinary action is taken. Listening to students is particularly important when there is a situation in which you may not have all the pertinent or correct information.

Giving Directions: When you are confronted with a student who needs constant redirection, you might need to take these further steps: look the student in the eye, call him/her by name, use close proximity, and use appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues.

Avoiding Confrontations with Students: Never get into an argument with students regardless of what they may say. These confrontations are pointless, they are futile, and they make you appear unprofessional.

Eliminate the Use of Threats: Teacher should never threaten students. While threatening might cause temporary compliance, the strategy will not help children make ethical, wise decisions about behavior in the future (Kohn, 1994) [10].

Fig. 3. Modern teaching process model.

III. CONCLUSION

The use of best practices and models will play an informant role in the transformation of education system. Teachers should perform their roles as motivator and reflective practitioner to manage the students at higher level. Teacher has to follow inquiry model and teaching process model to manage the students in classroom systematically. Teacher has to reinforce the students to cultivate research in relation to fundamental, applied and action oriented. At higher level, teacher has to create learning environment where students can develop their critical and creative thinking skills as well as inter-personal and communication skills. This can be done through development of inquiry skills. Teachers have to formulate appropriate learning goals and provide necessary learning activities to reach the goals, and also use appropriate assessment strategies to know achievement level of the students at higher level. Teachers have to participate in national seminars, conferences, workshops and symposia in connection with classroom management in order to know recent trends and techniques to manage the students effectively in class room situations. Teachers have to focus on motivation, management, mediation, modification and monitoring for stabilizing the undesirable classroom behavior.

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