The Effects of Clinical Experiences
on the Understanding of Classroom Management Techniques

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For teacher educators, classroom management education is one of the least researched aspects of the profession. The purpose of this study was to determine if classroom management was most effectively learned through textbook analysis coupled with classroom discussion, or the experience of observing and practicing classroom management in the clinical experience. The results of this study suggest that the clinical experience is the major contributor to feelings of confidence in classroom management situations. There is a significant difference in confidence between the classroom understanding and the post-clinical experience in regard to general classroom management understandings and confidence.

Beginning teachers face many challenges upon entering the teaching profession. Because of this, teacher educators need to understand how students learn so that people in the field of teacher education can effectively monitor and modify classroom practices for the improvement of pre-service teacher education. Therefore, it is essential that teacher educators act as teacher researchers, just as classroom teachers should research their practices.

Some of the challenges that pre-service and beginning teachers face include lack of resources, lack of content knowledge, teaching out of field, classroom management, inadequate preparation, and isolation (Berry, 2005; Brock & Grady, 2000; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003). Sadly, current research shows that approximately 50 percent of instruction time is lost daily due to classroom management issues (Jones, 2007). An argument could be made that effective instruction can only occur in well-managed classrooms. Knowing the above to be true, it is alarming that many teacher preparation programs dismiss classroom management as a valid part of their curriculum. Evertson and Weinstein (2006) note that even though classroom management is a major concern facing new teachers, few researchers identify themselves with this field. What is even more alarming is that the majority of classroom management researchers are non-education affiliated professionals. Brophy (2006) explains that classroom management has an "orphaned status" because it has never been established as a true part of the teacher education curriculum. This becomes enigmatic and problematic because each semester

classrooms full of teacher candidates are eager and anxious to learn effective classroom management techniques. Based on personal experience, teacher education students are consistently vocal about classroom management fears and anxieties concerning the over abundance of data published each year revealing classroom management as the number one reason new teachers exit the profession within the first five years of teaching (NCES, 2008). Students also want to read about, understand, observe, and practice effective classroom management techniques.

Seeking to deepen the understanding of how teacher candidates gain classroom management confidence and hoping to add valid research to the classroom management field, the authors of this study chose to examine teacher candidates' classroom management confidence levels over the course of a semester. In essence, do teacher candidates feel more confident conducting classroom management techniques learned from reading our textbook and participating in discussions or do they feel more confident conducting these same classroom management techniques after observing and practicing them during lab experiences?

Teacher Researchers in Teacher Education

While action research and teacher research is often a part of both undergraduate and graduate programs in teacher education, the idea of the teacher as researcher for teacher education faculty is less studied. As Anderson, Standerford and Imdieke (2010) suggest that teacher educators need to examine not only their practices, but also the collective practices of teaching. O'Donnell and Hitpas (2010), used a teacher research project to redesign a major assignment for a teacher education course that ultimately, "proved to be more powerful in getting teacher candidates to understand [and] describe" (p. 1) the intended content. Both of these suggest that reflective teacher research is crucial to understanding the role of the teacher education, the improvement of teacher education programs, and the evolution of the profession.

The Evolution of Classroom Management

Yet understanding the history of classroom management is essential, not only for its intrinsic interest, nor just to avoid repeating the past. It is essential to move the field of classroom management from the arena of cheap huckstering and sloganeering to serious inquiry into the inevitable moral and political considerations implicated in every discipline decision. The

history of discipline in schools does not indicate unambiguously which practices 'work.' Most practices work splendidly in one setting or another; most fail with nearly as much certainty in other places or times.

> *-Ronald E. Butchard (1998) "Punishments, Penalties, Prizes, and Procedures:*
> *A History of Discipline in U.S. Schools"*

Reflecting back upon America's evolution of discipline in public education, many approaches to classroom management have been developed and practiced. First, corporal punishment must be acknowledged. For many years it was the most common means used for maintaining classroom order and control. During school hours, teachers were once viewed as stand-in parents and were expected to discipline students just parents did at home. Given that many parents spanked or hit their children because they looked to the Bible for guidance in child rearing, interpreting Proverbs 13:24, "Spare the rod and spoil the child" literally, paddling was (and still is in some states) an acceptable means of punishment. But soon corporal punishment began to have a negative stigma associated with its use, forcing many American public schools to discontinue its use. Currently, corporal punishment is illegal in thirty U.S. states.

Positive Behavioral Support (PBS) is a teacher-centered classroom management approach widely used in U.S. schools. Schools using this approach offer the following levels of support: 1) a school-wide behavior system is agreed upon by the faculty and taught to all students; 2) small group support is available for students who need more mediation in common areas; and 3) individualized behavior plans are developed in response to sever discipline issues. Schools implementing this approach report reductions in discipline referrals, as well as improvements in school climate and academic gains (Bloom, 2009; Horner et al., 2004). Similar to PBS, Lee and Marlene Canter's Assertive Discipline is also a teacher-centered classroom management approach that focuses on the wants, needs, and rights of teachers. Hardin (2012) reveals that the Canters developed Assertive Discipline because they "…realized that many of the problems found in classrooms were based on the failure of teachers to be assertive in having their needs met, resulting in many teachers feeling overwhelmed and powerless" (p. 43). The principles are basic; teachers are to promote positive behaviors by posting their classroom rules in a positive way, demonstrate expected behaviors, and use consequences and rewards consistently. Consequently, studies have revealed that both PBS and Assertive Discipline are

often criticized because of their immediate focus on changing student behavior during class time, not impacting student behavior for a lifetime (Butchart, 1998; Kohn, 1999; Marshall, 2001; Bloom, 2009).

Another popular management approach is Fredric Jones's Positive Classroom Discipline, which consists of a four-step model. The first component is the classroom structure, which literally stresses the importance of furniture arrangement in order to maximize proximity control and classroom procedures. The second component is limit setting, which simply means enforcing the classroom rules. The third component is responsibility training, which encourages students to become responsible for their own actions. Finally, the fourth component is the backup system, which is a collection of punitive responses set aside for repeat offenders (Jones, 2007). Rudolf Dreikurs's Logical Consequences and Linda Albert's Cooperative Discipline are unlike the management approaches mentioned above where teachers simply control students' behavior. The goal of these approaches is for students to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviors. Dreikurs and Albert assert that students misbehave because they hope to seek attention, gain power, seek revenge, or avoid failure. Once the goal of the misbehavior has been identified, teachers can intervene with logical consequences that match the offence. The overall goal of this approach is to build a classroom community where the teacher and students can connect (Albert, 1996; Dreikurs & Loren, 1968).

New to the field, Effective Behavioral & Instructional Support (EBIS) is considered a problem solving management approach. According to the EBIS handbook, each school year, EBIS teams are assigned to analyze school-wide behavior and academic data with the specific tasks of evaluating the effectiveness of existing programs and identify students needing additional academic and/or behavior support. EBIS teams are also responsible for developing and implementing interventions for identified students. The overall goal of EBIS is to help encourage responsible student behavior in order to reduce the amount of time students spend removed from classroom instruction due to negative behaviors.

Discipline vs. Management

Some teachers believe that the terms classroom management and discipline are synonyms that can be defined as the process of controlling student behavior. Others argue that classroom management is not discipline. In order to make an informed decision, it might be helpful to

reflect on the following question: Is discipline a noun, a verb, or can it be considered both? For many in education, discipline is viewed as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, discipline is defined as the rules and procedures established to maintain order within the classroom. As a verb, discipline is defined as what teachers do to encourage and help support positive student behavior. Either way, discipline and misbehavior go hand-in-hand.

Back in 1990, Doyle noted that preventing misbehavior was the "dominant theme in classroom management" (as cited in Hardin 2012, p. 4). Landon Beyer accurately portrayed the mentality of the current education system as well as educator training programs through this statement: "Those traditions depict the school as a system within which people may be trained to offer the correct responses and behaviors, with regularities imposed upon both students and teachers designed to enforce compliance, couched in the values of efficiency, predictability, and control." (as cited in Butchart & McEwan, 1998, p. 52). More recently the concept of discipline "has been replaced by a more comprehensive body of knowledge on how to increase students' achievement by creating classroom communities in which students' personal and academic needs are met" (Jones & Jones, 2007, p. 4). As noted above, there have been a number of changes in classroom discipline. As a consequence of these changes, new teachers are faced with many questions about how to best deal with potential classroom misbehaviors.

New Teachers and Discipline

Considerable research reveals new teachers' concerns about classroom management. Classroom management is the most common concern expressed by new teachers (Kronowitz, 2012; McCormack, 2001). New teachers report that poor classroom management skills and disruptive students are the two most significant barriers to professional success (Fideler & Haskelhorn, 1999). It is especially disappointing that new teachers feel unprepared to deal with issues related to classroom management. According to Pipho (2000), "Beginning teachers are generally highly critical of the quality of professional training they receive in the area of classroom management. They frequently place the blame for their lack of preparation squarely on a lack of adequate classroom management coursework in their education programs" (as cited in Jones & Jones, 2007).

New teachers often struggle because they have not had time to adequately develop their classroom management skills. While they are qualified to teach according to state guidelines, the

practical side of the profession, such as paperwork, time management and classroom management, are deficient.

The Study

Because teacher education is a combination of theory and practice, it is important for teacher educators to understand the influence of all methods that are used. This practice of teacher research will allow teacher educators to focus the content and delivery of information for students. As noted previously, the focus of this study was on the benefits of learning about classroom management from a textbook versus experiencing classroom management issues in a laboratory experience. For the lab experience, students were required to observe in an elementary school for 90 hours over a one-month period. The textbook selected for this study was *Teach Like a Champion: 49 Techniques that put Students on the Path to College* by Doug Lemov. This textbook was selected because a number of our lab schools read and implemented the techniques describe in this book during the 2009-2010 school year. The following techniques were chosen as part of our study:

- Strong Voice – using the following five principles in order to establish control, command, and the benign authority that makes the use of excessive consequences unnecessary: economy of language, do not talk over, do not engage, square up/stand still, and quiet power
- Wait Time – delaying a few strategic seconds after you finish asking a question and before you ask a student to begin answering it
- Precise Praise – praising only when the exceptional has been achieved
- The J-Factor – finding moments of joy in the work of learning
- Public Props – public praise for students who demonstrate excellence or exemplify virtues

The major question that was addressed was, "Do students gain more confidence in dealing with classroom management methods from a textbook and discussion or from lab experiences?" In order to address this question, a survey was created that was given after the reading about classroom management for a required education class, and given again after a one month laboratory experience. In independent samples t-test was used to determine if there were significant gains after the lab experience. The reason for using an independent samples t-test as

opposed to a paired samples-test was that the experiences in the lab settings were varied because of place, time and classroom teacher. The overall experiences could have been quite varied due to uncontrollable variables. Therefore, it was the intent of this study to analyze the overall effect of the lab experience.

Participants

The participants in this study were undergraduate students in an elementary education program at a Master's level university in the South. The population was three sections of a classroom management class that were engaged in learning about classroom management techniques. There were 49 students in the combined sections of the course with all students taking the pre-lab experience survey. The survey was given after learning about classroom management through class readings and discussion. The survey was given a second time after the previously mentioned lab experience. Forty-six students took the post-lab experience survey.

Instrument

For the purposes of this study, an instrument was created to gauge the comfort level students felt with major issues and techniques related to classroom management. The questionnaire was composed of seven questions of which two were used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The question addressed the following classroom management techniques:

- Strong Voice
- Wait Time
- Precise Praise
- The J-Factor
- Public Props

The final question, "Think about managing the classroom while teaching your four Language Arts lessons. Rate your overall classroom management confidence level going into your four week lab experience," was added as a summative measure of the overall confidence level the students felt.

The first seven questions had a six point Likert scale ranging from 1=Strongly Agree to 6=Strongly Disagree. The students were not given the option of N/A. The final question reversed the scale with 1=Low Confidence and 6=High Confidence.

The post-lab experience survey had the same first seven questions. The summative question was changed to be, "Think about how you managed the classroom while teaching your 4 LA lessons. Rate your overall classroom management confidence level after your 4 week lab experience. The question was change to reflect the lab experience.

Results

To further this teacher research study, a series of analyses were conducted to help determine the influence of textbook knowledge and practical experience. An initial analysis of the data was completed by addressing the descriptive statistics of the group prior to the lab experience. The descriptive statistics can be found in Table 1. The last two items are adjusted scores due to the reversal of the scale for the negatively worded questions. Note that the mean for each question is below 3, which suggest that there was a moderate, level of comfort with each classroom management method after the initial learning experience. The summative question had a mean of 3.97, which on the reversed scale, shows moderate confidence.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Students Prior to Lab Experience Along with T-test results

	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD
I feel comfortable with knowing how to project my strong voice when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	49	1.00	5.00	2.367	3.90586
I feel comfortable using wait time when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	49	1.00	4.00	2.163	3.85017
I feel comfortable using precise praise when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	49	1.00	5.00	2.142	9.91287
I feel comfortable using the j-factor during my four Language Arts lessons during my four-week lab experience.	49	1.00	4.00	2.122	4.83248
I feel comfortable giving public props to students during my four-week lab experience.	49	1.00	4.00	2.306	11.0042
Think about managing the classroom while teaching your four Language Arts lessons. Rate your overall classroom management confidence level going into (and after) your four-week lab experience.	49	3.00	6.00	3.979	6.66112
Valid N (listwise)	49				

An independent samples t-test was conducted to compare the comfort level and confidence of pre-service elementary teachers regarding classroom management strategies. There were significant differences in the items:

- I feel comfortable with knowing how to project my strong voice when necessary during my four-week lab experience.
- I feel comfortable using precise praise when necessary during my four week lab experience.
- Think about managing the classroom while teaching your four Language Arts lessons. Rate your overall classroom management confidence level going into (and after) your four-week lab experience.

The complete t-test results can be found in Table 2.

Table 2: Group Statistics for Pre and Post Lab Experience

	Time	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	T
I feel comfortable with knowing how to project my strong voice when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	PreLab	49	2.3673	.90586	.12941	2.210*
	PostLab	46	1.9783	.80247	.11832	
I feel comfortable using wait time when necessary during my four week lab experience.	PreLab	49	2.1633	.85017	.12145	1.690
	PostLab	46	1.8913	.70642	.10416	
I feel comfortable using precise praise when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	PreLab	49	2.1429	.91287	.13041	2.309*
	PostLab	46	1.7609	.67280	.09920	
I feel comfortable using the j-factor during my four Language Arts lessons during my four-week lab experience.	PreLab	49	2.1224	.83248	.11893	1.240
	PostLab	46	1.9130	.81175	.11969	
I feel comfortable giving public props to students during my four-week lab experience.	PreLab	49	2.3061	1.00424	.14346	1.807
	PostLab	46	1.9348	.99782	.14712	
Think about managing the classroom while teaching your four Language Arts lessons. Rate your overall classroom management confidence level going into (and after) your four-week lab experience.	PreLab	49	3.9796	.66112	.09445	
	PostLab	46	4.4130	.85832	.12655	12.75**

* Significant at .05 Level

** Significant at .01 Level

After completing the t-test, an Eta Squared calculation was conducted to determine the effect size. For the majority of the items, the effect size was below .06 (6%). Cohen (1998) as cited by Pallant (2007) considers this to be a small effect. However, for the final item, "Think about managing the classroom while teaching your four Language Arts lessons….Rate your overall classroom management confidence level after your four week lab experience," the effect size was .636. This suggests that the lab experience, while having little overall effect on the individual strategies, for the overall confidence level, almost 64% of the change was due to the lab experience. This will be discussed more later.

Table 3: Effect Sizes

Item	Effect Size
I feel comfortable with knowing how to project my strong voice when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	.05
I feel comfortable using wait time when necessary during my four week lab experience.	.03
I feel comfortable using precise praise when necessary during my four-week lab experience.	.054
I feel comfortable using the j-factor during my four Language Arts lessons during my four-week lab experience.	.016
I feel comfortable giving public props to students during my four-week lab experience.	.034
Think about managing the classroom while teaching your four Language Arts lessons. Rate your overall classroom management confidence level after your four-week lab experience.	.636

Discussion and Implications

As stated earlier, teacher preparation programs should conduct more classroom management research by analyzing the effective teaching and learning of classroom management techniques. This teacher research is a key part of the evaluation of our teacher education programs. As stated in or literature review, considerable research reveals new teachers' concerns about classroom management. Therefore, understanding our practice will help us make better decisions about classroom management content and delivery.

The important roll lab experiences play in allowing teacher candidates to gain confidence in dealing with classroom management techniques was highlighted. There is a growing consensus that much of what teacher candidates need to learn must be learned in and from practice rather than in preparing for practice (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Hammerness, Darling-

Hammond, & Bransford, 2005; Zeichner, 2010). While an argument could be made that students can learn effective classroom management techniques by reading a textbook, their confidence level goes up through observation and practice.

Looking at the results, it is obvious that the short time the students were in the classroom observing and practicing did little to increase their comfort with practice, specifically for specific classroom management techniques. While there was significant growth in confidence for many of the techniques, the effect of the laboratory experience was really a small contributor to the practice of classroom management. However, the lab experience (the combination of observation and practice) did have a great effect on the students overall confidence level regarding classroom management. In fact, the level of confidence went up dramatically.

As noted previously, one of the greatest fears that students have is classroom management. Perhaps it is the fear of the unknown or the thought of having to have a semblance of control over another human being. This study suggests that the lab experience, when completed in a meaningful fashion, has a great influence over confidence levels. This increase in confidence could lead to an increase in effectiveness in classroom management.

A limitation of this study was that it involved data collected from one semester. Because of the contracted time frame, generalizing this to other grade levels or places might be difficult. However, the results of this study suggest that classroom management courses need an experiential component for no other reason than to increase confidence. Naturally, further research needs to be conducted. Despite this limitation, the results of this study provide indications that practicing classroom management techniques during lab experiences significantly increases teacher candidates' classroom management confidence levels.

Darling-Hammond concluded from current studies conducted in strong teacher education programs that "…the most powerful programs require students to spend extensive time in the field throughout the entire program, examining and applying the concepts and strategies they are simultaneously learning about in their courses… learning to practice *in* practice, with expert guidance, is essential to becoming a great teacher…" (2010, p. 40). Similarly, the findings of this study indicate that teacher candidates who are given the opportunity to observe and practice the classroom management techniques listed above during lab experiences have higher confidence levels with regards to classroom management. This conclusion is supported from comments given by the students. One student stated, "I feel confident that I can manage a classroom well

because of my lab experience." This sentiment was echoed by another student, "During my last week of lab, I saw great improvements in the way I handled different situations. I think that teaching is one of those things where you learn as you go. I think that it takes practice with handling different types of discipline problems" (personal communication, 2011). Finally, future research about how to build teacher candidates classroom management confidence levels is warranted.

Conclusion

For teacher education programs to continue to develop, it is important that teacher educators engage in teacher research. While many programs might focus on best practices that have been researched over time, the investigation of particular students in particular places is just as important. This study, focusing on classroom management, led the researchers to more fully understand the importance of the clinical experience and the framing of the clinical experience. This lab situation, while not necessary to build skills, does help students gain confidence in classroom management. Perhaps, in the future, having students understand the concepts of classroom management, coupled with a focus on the importance of confidence, is key to helping students develop better teacher skills.

Finally, a study done at the University of Texas found that people are influenced/impacted by: 10 percent of what they read; 20 percent of what they hear; 30 percent of what they see; 50 percent of what they see and hear; 70 percent of what they say; and 90 percent of what they do and say (Metcalf, 1997). This study further supports these findings. This study suggests that the lab experience (the combination of observation and practice) has a great influence over teacher candidates' confidence levels in dealing with classroom management issues.

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